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DOES SCRIPTURE SUPPORT THE PRE-TRIBULATION THEORY?

Testing the Foundations of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture by Scripture's Own Words

A Continuous Jubilee Calendar Study

"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." — John 17:15 (KJV)

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Author's Note on Terminology: This paper uses the traditional Christian terms "Old Testament" and "New Testament" for clarity. The author recognizes that the books of the Old Testament are the Hebrew Bible, the Tanakh, which Jewish tradition holds as complete Scripture in its own right, and quotes them with respect for that tradition.

Introduction

Scripture alone sets the timeline of the end, and it shows God keeping His people through the great tribulation, not removing them before it.

Many sincere Christians believe the church will be taken to heaven before a seven-year Tribulation begins. This belief is called the pre-tribulation rapture (pre-trib, for short). The rapture is the gathering of believers to meet Christ "in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17); the question is when it happens. The pre-trib view grows out of a larger system of Bible teaching called dispensationalism, which divides history into ages ("dispensations") and keeps Israel and the church on separate tracks. This paper respects those who hold it. Many of them love God's Word deeply, and they are right about something important: God's wrath is not meant for His people.

This paper asks one simple question. Does Scripture's own wording support the foundations of that view? Each pillar is tested against the text, one at a time, under one rule:

Rule 1: No Scriptural conflicts. No conclusion may contradict any passage of Scripture.

Two themes run through every section:

- **Only Scripture can set the chronology.** God measured the timeline of prophecy Himself. No teacher, however sincere, has the authority to break it.
- **God shepherds His people through the storm.** He does not abandon them in the great tribulation, and He does not need to remove them to protect them. Faith in Him is their shelter.

The paper first tests the three foundations the pre-tribulation view stands on: an unbroken count of Daniel's seventy weeks, the covenant of Daniel 9:27, and one people of God. It then answers the main supporting arguments one by one. It closes with the pattern Scripture repeats from Genesis to Revelation: God keeps His people in the trouble and brings them out on the other side.

Scripture is quoted from the King James Version. Pronouns for God and Christ are capitalized in the author's own words; KJV quotations are left as written.

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A few terms used throughout: “Tribulation” with a capital T means the seven-year period pre-trib teaching expects; “great tribulation” is Scripture’s own phrase (Matthew 24:21; Revelation 7:14). Numbers such as G3952 or H5057 point to Strong’s Concordance, where readers can look up the original Greek (G) or Hebrew (H) word. “This research” refers to the Continuous Jubilee Calendar (CJC), which counts Scripture’s sabbath years and Jubilees, the year of release after seven cycles of seven years (Leviticus 25:8–10). Days 1,260, 1,290, and 1,335 are Daniel’s countdown (Daniel 12:7, 11–12), counted from the start of the great tribulation; see “The Shepherd’s Gathering.”

Pillar 1: The Missing Seven Years

What pre-trib teaches

Pre-tribulation teaching says Daniel’s seventy weeks stopped after the sixty-ninth week, when Messiah was cut off. According to this view, God paused the clock, and the final week, seven years, has been on hold for about 2,000 years. It will start again as a future seven-year Tribulation, and the church is removed before it begins.

What Scripture says

Gabriel did not give Daniel a loose estimate. He gave a measured count: “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city” (Daniel 9:24). The seventy weeks were cut out and decreed, a fixed length of time. Gabriel then counted it out in order: seven weeks, then threescore and two weeks, then the final week. Nowhere in the passage does he say the clock will stop.

Every time God counts time in Scripture, the count runs straight through:

- **The 400 years in Egypt.** They ended “even the selfsame day” (Exodus 12:41).
- **The 70 years of captivity.** They ran their full course “to fulfil threescore and ten years” (2 Chronicles 36:21).
- **The 40 years in the wilderness.** They were counted year for year: “each day for a year” (Numbers 14:34).

The seventy weeks are built on the same pattern God gave Israel for the Jubilee: “thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years” (Leviticus 25:8). A Jubilee count was never paused. The land kept its sabbaths whether Israel obeyed or not (2 Chronicles 36:21). The seventy weeks are ten of those Jubilee cycles, counted the same way.

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Supporting Note: A Piece Cut From a Larger Count

In Daniel 8, Daniel saw a vision of 2,300 “evening and morning” days, but it was not explained. Daniel wrote, “I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it” (Daniel 8:27).

In chapter 9, Gabriel returned with the explanation: “understand the matter, and consider the vision” (Daniel 9:23). The word for “vision” here is the same word used for the 2,300-day vision in Daniel 8:26. Gabriel then said, “Seventy weeks are determined.” The Hebrew word for “determined” means “cut out” or “decreed.” The seventy weeks were a piece cut from the larger 2,300 and share its starting point.

That starting point is Artaxerxes’ decree to Ezra in 457 BC (Ezra 7), and from there the count runs straight through without a break:

- **483 years (69 weeks):** AD 27, when Messiah the Prince was revealed at His baptism (Daniel 9:25).
- **The midst of the final week:** AD 30, when Messiah was cut off and caused “the sacrifice and the oblation to cease” (Daniel 9:26–27).
- **The final week ends:** AD 33, a sabbath year.
- **490 years:** AD 34, a Jubilee, exactly 490 years after the decree.

A piece cut from a measured count has to keep the count’s measure. Placing a 2,000-year gap inside the seventy weeks would break not only Gabriel’s count but also the larger vision it was cut from. Scripture gives no such break.

Two ways to count the seventy weeks

The pre-trib count. The best-known pre-trib calculation comes from Sir Robert Anderson’s *The Coming Prince* (1894), later revised by Harold Hoehner (1977). It makes four changes:

- **A different starting point.** It starts with Artaxerxes’ letters to Nehemiah (445 or 444 BC), not his decree to Ezra (457 BC).
- **A shorter year.** It shortens each year to 360 days, a “prophetic year,” based on the 1,260 days of Revelation 12:6.
- **A different end.** It counts 69 weeks × 7 × 360 = 173,880 days and ends at Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem (AD 32 or 33), not at His anointing.
- **A paused clock.** It stops the clock there and moves the seventieth week to the future.

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The CJC count. The Continuous Jubilee Calendar counts the seventy weeks the way Leviticus 25 counts sabbath years: ordinary years, seven at a time, with no pauses. It uses one simple formula anyone can check with a pencil:

- **B (the year count):** for a BC year, B = 1438 − year; for an AD year, B = 1437 + year.
- **Cycle:** (B − 1) ÷ 49, rounded down, plus 1.
- **Year in the cycle (Y):** B − (Cycle − 1) × 49. Y = 1 is a Jubilee.

Event	Year	B	Cycle, Year	Check
Decree to Ezra (Ezra 7)	457 BC	981	Cycle 21, Y 1 (Jubilee)	The start
Messiah anointed at His baptism	AD 27	1464	Cycle 30, Y 43	1464 − 981 = 483 years (69 weeks)
Messiah cut off	AD 30	1467	Cycle 30, Y 46 (the middle year of its seven)	The midst of the seventieth week
Seventy weeks complete	AD 34	1471	Cycle 31, Y 1 (Jubilee)	1471 − 981 = 490 years

What the comparison shows:

- **Year length.** Scripture's sabbath years are ordinary years, counted by sowing and harvest (Leviticus 25:3–4). Changing them to 360 days changes the unit Gabriel used.
- **Where 69 weeks ends.** Gabriel counted "unto the Messiah the Prince" (9:25). "Messiah" means Anointed One, and Jesus was anointed at His baptism (Acts 10:38): AD 27, exactly 483 years.
- **The gap.** The pre-trib count must stop the clock after 69 weeks, and nothing in the text says to. The CJC count needs no gap. It runs from a Jubilee (457 BC) to a Jubilee (AD 34), unbroken, with the cross in the middle of the final week.
- **Who can check it.** The CJC uses whole years and simple subtraction, so anyone can verify every number.

Answering pre-trib's three supports

1. "Jesus stopped reading mid-verse in Isaiah 61, so prophecy can have gaps."

In Nazareth, Jesus read from Isaiah 61 and stopped at "the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:19). He closed the book before reaching "the day of vengeance of our God" (Isaiah 61:2). Then He said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21).

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He stopped because He read only what was being fulfilled that day. Isaiah 61 speaks the language of the Jubilee: liberty to the captives and the acceptable year. This was the heart of His mission: He came as the Savior from sin, to set free those held in sin's prison. The law could show what sin is, but it could never set anyone free from it. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," God did by "sending his own Son" (Romans 8:3), and "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). Jesus proclaimed the acceptable year at the time it was fulfilled. The day of vengeance was not cancelled. It belongs to a later time: prophecy often spans centuries in a single verse, and Isaiah 61:2 moves from His first coming to His second.

Isaiah 61 has no count of years to break. Daniel 9 does. *(See "God's Clock — Messiah's Reading of Isaiah 61": Isaiah 61:1–2; Luke 4:16–21; and "Art Thou He? — Jesus Fulfills Isaiah's Messiah": Luke 7:19–22.)*

2. "Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70, after the 490 years ended, so the count must stretch."

Daniel 9:26 says that after the sixty-two weeks, Messiah would be cut off. Then "the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." The destruction is the result of the covenant being rejected; it is not part of the count. The seventieth week ended on time in AD 33, and AD 34 opened a Jubilee, 490 years after the decree. The judgment followed later. Jesus warned, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matthew 23:38), "because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19:44).

Some point to "This generation shall not pass" to tie all of Jesus' words to AD 70. But Jesus separated the two events. In Luke 21, He first describes Jerusalem "compassed with armies" and "trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (21:20–24). This is the first abomination of desolation. Luke's "compassed with armies" explains what Matthew calls "the abomination of desolation" (Matthew 24:15): Roman armies standing on the holy ground around Jerusalem before its fall in AD 70 (Daniel 11:31). Daniel also names a second abomination, still ahead, set up on day 1,290 of the great tribulation (Daniel 12:11). The two are different events, and each comes true once. (See "The Jubilee Calendar and the Story of the End": Daniel 9:26–27; 11:31; 12:11; Matthew 24:15–16; Luke 21:20–21.) Only after that does He turn to the sky: "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars" (21:25). The generation He speaks of is the one that sees those signs: "when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand… This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled" (21:31–32).

Matthew places the same signs "immediately after the tribulation of those days" (24:29). Revelation shows them at the sixth seal: "the sun became black as

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sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth" (6:12–13). This comes just before "the great day of his wrath is come" (6:17).

Jesus gave these signs to His followers to watch for. A church removed years earlier would have no reason to watch the sky for them.

A second verse is often paired with it: "There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matthew 16:28). All three Gospels place that promise right before the Transfiguration, where three disciples saw His glory "in the holy mount" (2 Peter 1:16-18). It was a preview, kept within days of the promise, not the coming itself. (See "The Shepherd's Gathering," "Other Views, Answered Fairly.")

3. "Daniel 9:24's six promises aren't fulfilled yet, so the final week must be future."

Each promise is fulfilled in Christ:

- **"To finish the transgression… make an end of sins… make reconciliation for iniquity."** "He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26), and "we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Romans 5:10).
- **"To bring in everlasting righteousness."** "That we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- **"To seal up the vision and prophecy."** A seal confirms a document as true. Jesus confirmed that "all things must be fulfilled, which were written… concerning me" (Luke 24:44).
- **"To anoint the most Holy."** "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power" (Acts 10:38), at His baptism in AD 27, right on Gabriel's count.

Who holds the clock

The authority over time belongs to God alone: "he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings" (Daniel 2:21). God set the seventy weeks, and He fulfilled them on time. No teacher, however sincere, has the authority to stop a clock God started: "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee" (Proverbs 30:6).

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A Note on Names: Many Antichrists, and THE Antichrist

Scripture speaks of antichrists in two ways. John wrote, “as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists” (1 John 2:18). He described a “spirit of antichrist” that was “even now already… in the world” (1 John 4:3), and he called every deceiver who denies Christ “a deceiver and an antichrist” (2 John 7).

So history has seen many smaller antichrists: rulers and teachers who opposed Christ and persecuted His people. They are real parallels, and each shows the same spirit at work. But a parallel is not the fulfillment. None of them is THE Antichrist of the end.

Revelation names the main players of the final conflict:

- **The dragon**, “that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan” (Revelation 12:9). He is the power behind it all, and in this research he is THE Antichrist.
- **The beast**, to whom “the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority” (Revelation 13:2).
- **The false prophet**, who works signs and enforces the mark (Revelation 13:11–17; 19:20).

The Antiochus Question

Antiochus IV fairly belongs among the “many antichrists.” He opposed God and defiled His Temple. The question is whether he *fulfilled* Daniel’s prophecy, and Scripture’s own test says he did not.

What many commentaries teach

Antiochus IV Epiphanes was a Greek king who defiled the Temple in 167 BC. Many commentaries teach that he fulfilled, or at least foreshadowed, Daniel’s “abomination of desolation.” The verse they apply to him is Daniel 11:31: “they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.” That is the first abomination of desolation, the one Jesus told His followers to watch for (Matthew 24:15) and Luke explains as Jerusalem “compassed with armies” (Luke 21:20). Scripture ties it to a set of events: Messiah is cut off first, and then the city and the sanctuary are destroyed (Daniel 9:26). It was fulfilled in AD 70. The second abomination, in Daniel 12:11, is still ahead. From there they teach that a future human Antichrist will do the same, after making and breaking a seven-year covenant. This is the foundation of the pre-trib reading of the “he” in Daniel 9:27.

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How a side note became the mainstream

The idea that Antiochus fulfilled Daniel did not come from Scripture. It grew in steps, and each step added more weight than the last:

When	Who	What they did with Antiochus
About 100 BC	**1 Maccabees**, a Jewish history book that is not part of the Bible	Used Daniel's phrase to describe Antiochus's pagan altar (1 Maccabees 1:54). A side note in a history book, not a claim of fulfillment.
About AD 270	**Porphyry**, a Greek philosopher who wrote against Christianity	Claimed the book of Daniel was written after Antiochus, as history dressed up to look like prophecy. Making Antiochus the fulfillment was his way of saying Daniel never predicted anything.
AD 407	**Jerome**, a church scholar best known for translating the Bible into Latin	Defended Daniel against Porphyry, but still kept Antiochus as a "type," meaning an early preview, of a future Antichrist. His commentary became a standard reference for over a thousand years.
1560	**The Geneva Bible's** study notes	Printed Antiochus as the "little horn" of Daniel 8 in the margins of a popular English Bible.
1800s to today	**Two modern roads**	University scholars revived Porphyry's view: Daniel was written about 165 BC, and Antiochus is the fulfillment. Dispensational teachers kept Jerome's "type" and built on it a future Antichrist and a seven-year treaty. The Scofield Reference Bible (1909) carried that reading into millions of homes.

Notice how the idea traveled. It began as a side note, became a critic's weapon against prophecy, survived as a defender's compromise, and spread through study notes printed beside the text, until many readers could no longer tell the note from the Scripture. It grew by repetition, not by Scripture.

A theory that began by denying Daniel could predict the future is not a safe foundation for reading his prophecies.

Scripture's test

A prophecy is fulfilled only when every part of it is fulfilled. Antiochus fails every event Scripture ties to the first abomination:

- **Jesus pointed forward.** About two centuries after Antiochus, Jesus said, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet" (Matthew 24:15). He even attended the feast of the dedication (John 10:22), the feast that celebrated the Temple's cleansing after Antiochus. He knew that history well, and He still placed Daniel's abomination in the future.
- **It comes after Messiah.** The city and sanctuary are destroyed after "Messiah be cut off" (Daniel 9:26). Antiochus came almost two hundred years before Messiah.

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- **It destroys.** Daniel 9:26 says the city and the sanctuary are destroyed, and Luke 21:20 ties the desolation to Jerusalem "compassed with armies." Antiochus defiled the Temple but destroyed neither the city nor the sanctuary. The Temple was cleansed and back in use about three years later.

Daniel 8's little horn. Commentaries also apply the little horn of Daniel 8:9–13 to Antiochus. But this is where Daniel's prophecy moves beyond the Greek kings toward the great enemy of the end. The ram "became great" (8:4), the goat "waxed very great" (8:8), and the little horn "waxed exceeding great" (8:9). Antiochus ruled only one piece of Alexander's divided empire, and he was not greater than Persia or Alexander. The vision also reaches "the time of the end" (8:17) and "shall be for many days" (8:26). A prophecy is fulfilled only when every part of it is fulfilled, and Antiochus meets neither claim.

How Daniel 11 reads instead

Daniel 11:30–35 points to Rome, the destruction of AD 70, and the long persecution that followed. The chapter then shifts to the end-time king at about 11:36. *(See "The Jubilee Calendar and the Story of the End," which reads Daniel 10:1–11:35 as the warning fulfilled in AD 70 and 11:36–12:13 as the prophecy still ahead.)*

Without Antiochus as its pattern, the idea of a future human Antichrist making a seven-year treaty in Daniel 9:27 loses its main support. That leads directly into the covenant question.

Pillar 2: Whose Covenant Is It?

What pre-trib teaches

Daniel 9:26 mentions "the prince that shall come." Pre-trib teaches that this prince is a future human Antichrist. Then, because "he" in 9:27 comes right after, they say the Antichrist is the one who will "confirm the covenant with many for one week." He makes a seven-year treaty with Israel, breaks it halfway through, and stops the sacrifices in a rebuilt temple. The whole seven-year Tribulation is built on this one pronoun.

What Scripture says

1. The passage is about one Prince.

Gabriel's message centers on "Messiah the Prince" (9:25), who is "cut off, but not for himself" (9:26). The word for "prince" in 9:25 is *nagid* (H5057). The "prince that shall come" in 9:26 is the same word, *nagid*. Nothing in the text introduces a

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second, evil prince. The Prince who comes is the Messiah Gabriel has been describing all along.

Also, in 9:26 the prince does not act. It is "the people of the prince" who "destroy the city and the sanctuary." The Romans who destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70 served as His instruments of judgment. God once called Nebuchadnezzar "my servant" when He sent Babylon against Jerusalem (Jeremiah 25:9). Jesus told the same story in His own parable: the king "sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city" (Matthew 22:7).

2. "Confirm," not "make."

Daniel does not say the prince will *make* a covenant. He says "he shall confirm the covenant." To confirm something is to make firm what already exists. The New Testament uses the same idea for Christ: He came "to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" (Romans 15:8), and the gospel "was confirmed unto us by them that heard him" (Hebrews 2:3).

In Daniel, the word "covenant" (*berit*, H1285) always means God's covenant. Daniel opens his prayer in this very chapter with "keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him" (9:4). In chapter 11 it is "the holy covenant" (11:28, 30). A treaty signed by a future dictator appears nowhere in the book.

3. "With many."

These are covenant words, and Jesus used them at the Last Supper: "this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many" (Matthew 26:28). Isaiah said the Servant would "justify many" and "bare the sin of many" (Isaiah 53:11–12). And "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" (Hebrews 9:28).

4. "In the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."

In AD 30, in the middle of the final week, Christ offered Himself. The veil of the Temple was torn in two (Matthew 27:51), and "there is no more offering for sin" (Hebrews 10:18). The sacrifices did not stop because a tyrant banned them. They ended because the true Sacrifice had been made. No rebuilt temple is needed to fulfill this verse. It was fulfilled at the cross, right on God's clock.

The rest of 9:27: who makes it desolate?

Bible translations read the end of the verse in two ways, so both are shown here.

The KJV reading: "for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." In this reading, the Prince Himself declares the judgment.

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Jesus said it in person: “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Matthew 23:38). The Roman armies carried it out, and the desolation continues “until the consummation.”

The NASB (New American Standard Bible) reading: Here, the verse speaks of “one who makes desolate,” and the decreed destruction is poured out “on the one who makes desolate.” In this reading, the destroyer is the unseen enemy behind the ruin, Lucifer himself. His desolations continue until God’s wrath is finally poured out on him (Revelation 20:10).

Neither reading has a human Antichrist signing a seven-year treaty. In the KJV, the Prince judges the city that rejected Him. In the NASB, the destroyer is Satan, whose end is already decreed. In both, the covenant belongs to Christ.

The answer

Pre-trib takes the covenant Christ confirmed with His own blood and hands it to His enemy, and it does so on the strength of one pronoun. Scripture keeps the covenant where it belongs. One Prince confirms it, one Sacrifice ends the offerings, and one clock keeps the time. Without a seven-year treaty, there is no seven-year Tribulation for the church to be removed from.

Pillar 3: One People of God

What pre-trib teaches

Dispensational teaching holds that God has two separate peoples, Israel and the church, with two separate programs. Its own scholars call this distinction the heart of the system. The reasoning goes like this:

- **The seventieth week belongs to Israel.** The seventy weeks were “determined upon thy people” (Daniel 9:24), so the final week is Israel’s alone.
- **The church is a “parenthesis.”** It is a “mystery” the prophets never saw, inserted between week 69 and week 70.
- **The church must leave first.** Before God can resume His program with Israel, the church has to be removed.

What Scripture says

1. One olive tree.

Paul does not describe two trees. He describes one. Believing Gentiles are wild branches “graffed in among them,” and “with them partakest of the root and

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fatness of the olive tree" (Romans 11:17). Natural branches that were broken off will be grafted back in "if they abide not still in unbelief," into "their own olive tree" (11:23–24). There is one tree, one root, and one sap. Branches are added or removed by faith.

A note on the two olive trees. Zechariah saw "two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side" (Zechariah 4:3). Revelation says of the two witnesses, "These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth" (Revelation 11:4). Some may ask whether these two trees are Israel and the church. But Scripture defines each picture where it uses it. Zechariah was told the trees are "the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth" (Zechariah 4:14). Their purpose is to supply oil for the light, and the message of the vision is "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit" (4:6). Revelation calls them "my two witnesses" (11:3), who testify for 1,260 days. In this research, the two witnesses are the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, acting together through God's sealed servants: the trees supply the Spirit's oil, and the lampstands hold up the light of the Word. *(See "The Shepherd's Gathering": Revelation 11:3–4; Zechariah 4:6, 14; John 15:26–27.)*

Paul's olive tree is a different picture with a different purpose. Its root is God's promise to the fathers, and its branches are people, grafted in or broken off by faith (Romans 11:16–24). Zechariah's trees give light. Paul's tree is the people who receive it. Mixing the two would make one symbol answer a question Scripture assigns to another.

2. One fold, one Shepherd.

Jesus said, "other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring... and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16). The Shepherd does not keep two flocks on two schedules. He gathers one.

3. One household.

Before Christ, Gentiles were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel" (Ephesians 2:12). In Christ they are "fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (2:19). He "hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition" (2:14). Gentiles are brought into Israel's commonwealth. They are not given a separate one.

4. What the "mystery" actually is.

Pre-trib calls the church a mystery the prophets never saw. Paul tells us exactly what the mystery is: "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same

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body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Ephesians 3:6). The mystery is that Gentiles join the *same* body, not that God starts a separate one.

5. One seed, one promise.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek… for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:28–29). The promise was made "to thy seed, which is Christ" (3:16). Everyone who belongs to Him shares it.

6. One new covenant.

God promised the new covenant "with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah" (Jeremiah 31:31). Jesus gave it to His apostles at the Last Supper: "This cup is the new testament in my blood" (Luke 22:20). Hebrews applies it to every believer (Hebrews 8:8–13). There is one covenant for one people.

7. "Thy people" received their week.

The seventy weeks were given to Daniel's people, and they received them in full. Messiah confirmed the covenant with Israel first: "Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you" (Acts 3:26). The first believers were Jews, thousands of them in Jerusalem (Acts 2:41; 4:4). The apostles were Jews. The covenant was confirmed with "many" of Daniel's people, right on schedule. No future week is needed to finish what was already fulfilled.

8. One city.

At the end, the New Jerusalem has gates bearing "the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel" and foundations bearing "the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Revelation 21:12, 14). Israel and the church are not in two cities. The tribes and the apostles are built into one.

This is not "replacement"

Some will say this view teaches that the church replaced Israel. It does not. In Paul's picture, the Gentiles are grafted *into Israel's* tree, and the natural branches are welcomed back by faith, "and so all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26). God has never had two peoples. He has one, gathered from every nation into the promise He first gave to Abraham. *(See the Author's Note on Terminology.)*

The answer

The pre-tribulation rapture needs two peoples, so that one can be removed while God finishes His work with the other. Scripture gives one tree, one fold, one

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household, one covenant, and one city. If God has only one people, there is no second program to clear the stage for, and no reason to remove the church before the storm.

Two Different Comings in Matthew 24?

What pre-trib teaches

This is one of the strongest pre-trib arguments from the Gospels. It says Jesus described two different comings:

- **A rapture coming** (Matthew 24:36–25:30; Luke 17:26–35). It happens on an unknown day, during normal life, with no warning signs. Christ comes secretly, like a thief, to take His people away.
- **A Second Coming** (Matthew 24:27–31; 25:31–46). It comes years later, after many signs, in power and glory, seen by every eye.

What the text says

What pre-trib teaches	What the text says
Matthew 24 describes two different comings.	The disciples asked about one coming: “what shall be the sign of thy coming” (24:3). Jesus answered with the same word, *parousia* (G3952, “coming” or “arrival”), in verses 27, 37, and 39. Nothing signals a second event.
“That day” in 24:36 is a different day from the coming in verses 29–31.	“But of that day and hour” points back to what was just described (*ekeinos*, G1565, “that”). The nearest day is the coming and gathering “Immediately after the tribulation of those days” (24:29–31), the only gathering in the chapter.
Luke 17 describes two different “days of the Son of man.”	Luke 17 ends with one day: “Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed” (17:30). It is a day of revealing, not hiding.
The rapture comes with no warning, as in Noah’s and Lot’s days.	Noah was “warned of God” (Hebrews 11:7). Lot warned his sons-in-law, “but he seemed as one that mocked” (Genesis 19:14). The people “knew not” (Matthew 24:39). They were unaware, not unwarned. Jesus also gave a sign to watch for: “when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors” (24:33).
Like Noah and Lot, believers are removed years before the judgment.	In both of Jesus’ examples, rescue and judgment happen on the same day: “In the selfsame day entered Noah” (Genesis 7:13); “the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire” (Luke 17:29).
The thief image means a secret coming for believers.	The thief image is for those who are not watching: “If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief” (Revelation 3:3). Believers “are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief” (1 Thessalonians 5:4). Jesus uses the thief image during the sixth bowl (Revelation 16:15).
Christ comes alone and quietly for His church.	“The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God” (1 Thessalonians 4:16). He comes “with all his saints” (1 Thessalonians 3:13), with “a great sound of a trumpet” (Matthew 24:31).

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What pre-trib teaches	What the text says
The parables show Christ coming with no signs.	The parables teach readiness, not the absence of signs. Before the bridegroom arrived, “at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh” (Matthew 25:6). A warning came first.
“Taken” in Matthew 24:40 means raptured.	The word is *paralambanō* (G3880), the same as “receive you unto myself” (John 14:3), so the ones taken may well be believers. But the taking happens at His coming, and Matthew places the gathering after the tribulation (24:29–31).
The Second Coming is really His third coming.	Scripture counts it as the second: “unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time” (Hebrews 9:28).
The Second Coming falls on a known day, but the rapture’s day is unknown.	Jesus said no one knows the day of His coming (24:36), and the coming in that chapter is the one after the tribulation. Daniel’s countdown starts from an event, not a calendar date, so no one can use it to set a date.

Where Matthew 24 turns from AD 70 to the end

Matthew 24 does have a turn in it, but not between two comings. Jesus warned the believers in Judea to flee when Jerusalem was surrounded (Matthew 24:15-20; Luke 21:20-21), and that flight came in AD 70. Then He said, “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:21). The words “For then” tie it to what came before, so why do I see a turn there? Because of what Jesus says about this tribulation next. It is the worst there will ever be, in the same words Daniel uses for the trouble that ends with the dead raised (Daniel 12:1-2). It threatens all flesh: “except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved” (Matthew 24:22). And His coming follows it at once: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened” (Matthew 24:29). His coming did not follow AD 70 immediately, so the tribulation of verse 21 is the one right before His return. Prophecy often moves from a near event to a far one with little warning, because the near event is a pattern of the far one. (*What Was Fulfilled in AD 70, and What Is Still Ahead* covers this in full.)

As It Was in the Days of Noah

Jesus chose His own picture of the end: “But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matthew 24:37). Pre-trib uses Noah to argue for a sudden escape. But when the story is read in full, Noah shows the opposite. God shut His people *in*, then carried them *through*.

The ark was covered by atonement. God told Noah to “pitch it within and without with pitch” (Genesis 6:14). The word “pitch” is *kaphar* (H3722), the same word Daniel uses for Messiah’s work “to make reconciliation for iniquity” (Daniel 9:24). The ark was protected by the same covering that protects God’s people today.

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God shut the door. Noah did not shut it. “The LORD shut him in” (Genesis 7:16). Once that door closed, the time of mercy for the world outside was over. Jesus used the same picture: “they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut” (Matthew 25:10).

Revelation’s door closes the same way. Near the end, the temple in heaven is filled with smoke, and “no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled” (Revelation 15:8). Then the final word is given: “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still... and he that is holy, let him be holy still” (Revelation 22:11). Mercy closes, and every person’s choice stands.

In Noah’s day	At the end
God’s longsuffering “waited in the days of Noah” while the ark was prepared (1 Peter 3:20), and Noah was “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5).	The everlasting gospel goes “to every nation” (Revelation 14:6), and the two witnesses prophesy 1,260 days (Revelation 11:3).
“The LORD shut him in” (Genesis 7:16).	Mercy closes: “let him be unjust still... let him be holy still” (Revelation 22:11; 15:8).
Noah was sealed inside the ark.	God’s servants are sealed in their foreheads (Revelation 7:3).
The flood fell on the world, and the ark carried Noah through it. Eight souls “were saved by water” (1 Peter 3:20).	The bowls fall on “the men which had the mark of the beast” (Revelation 16:2), while His people are kept: “neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling” (Psalm 91:10).
“And God remembered Noah” (Genesis 8:1) and brought him out onto a cleansed earth (8:16).	“At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book” (Daniel 12:1). They are gathered at the last trump to be with the Lord, and after the thousand years they are brought onto the earth made new (1 Thessalonians 4:17; John 14:3; Revelation 20:4; 21:1).

Peter draws the lesson himself. Right after Noah and Lot, he writes, “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished” (2 Peter 2:9). Noah was not taken out of the world before the flood. He was shut in, sealed, and carried through it, and the same God who shut the door stayed with the ark until the waters were gone.

The answer

Jesus answered one question about one coming. He warned His followers about that coming and gave them signs to watch for it. Splitting it in two requires reading a second event into words the text uses for one.

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Does the Church Disappear After Revelation 3?

What pre-trib teaches

The word “church” appears often in Revelation 1–3, in the letters to the seven churches, and then not again until 22:16. Pre-trib reasons that if the church isn’t mentioned while the trumpets sound and the bowls are poured out, it must already be in heaven.

What Scripture says

1. The saints are there the whole time.

The word changes, but God’s people do not. Revelation 4–19 speaks of them again and again, and always on earth:

- The beast was given power “to make war with the saints, and to overcome them” (13:7).
- “Here is the patience and the faith of the saints” (13:10).
- “Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (14:12).
- The harlot was “drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (17:6).
- “Come out of her, my people” (18:4).
- The dragon makes war with those “which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (12:17).

Who are the saints? Paul wrote “unto the church of God which is at Corinth… called to be saints” (1 Corinthians 1:2). In Scripture, the church *is* the saints. John himself was exiled “for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:9), the very mark of the people the dragon wars against in 12:17.

2. Jesus speaks to the church during the sixth bowl.

In the middle of the bowls, Jesus breaks in with a personal message: “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame” (Revelation 16:15).

These are the words of the letters to the churches. To Sardis, He said, “I will come on thee as a thief” (3:3). To Laodicea, He offered “white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear” (3:18). Jesus repeats His warnings to the churches while the bowls are being poured. He would not urge watchers to keep their garments if no one were left on earth to hear Him.

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3. The whole book was written to the churches.

“I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches” (Revelation 22:16). Revelation 4–19 is part of “these things.” Jesus gave the warnings about the beast, the mark, and the plagues to the churches, because the churches would need them.

4. The same call to listen.

Each of the seven letters ends, “He that hath an ear, let him hear” (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). In the chapter on the beast, the same call returns: “If any man have an ear, let him hear” (13:9).

Pre-trib points out that “unto the churches” is missing there. But the very next verse says who is listening: “Here is the patience and the faith of the saints” (13:10). The call goes out to everyone who will hear, and the saints are there to answer it.

5. Silence is not proof.

The word “church” never appears in the Gospels of Mark, Luke, or John, or in 2 Peter or Jude. No one concludes that God’s people are missing from those books. An argument built on a missing word is an argument from silence. The text is not silent here: it names the saints, the faithful, and “my people” on earth through the trumpets and the bowls.

The answer

The church is not missing from Revelation 4–19. It is called by other names: the saints, His people, those who keep the faith of Jesus. It is right where Jesus said it would be, enduring, watching, and keeping its garments, until the last trumpet gathers it home.

God’s Wrath Is Not for His Church

What pre-trib teaches

“For God hath not appointed us to wrath” (1 Thessalonians 5:9). Jesus “delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Pre-trib reasons that since the Tribulation is God’s wrath, the church must be removed before it begins.

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Where I agree

This is true, and Scripture says it plainly: God's wrath is not for His people. The real question is *how* He keeps them from it. Does He remove them before the trouble, or protect them in the middle of it?

1. Two kinds of wrath in Revelation

Revelation shows two different sources of wrath, aimed at two different targets:

	Satan's wrath	God's wrath
Who pours it out	The dragon: "the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath" (Revelation 12:12)	God: "the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God" (Revelation 15:1)
Who it targets	The saints: "the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed" (Revelation 12:17)	Unbelievers: those "which had the mark of the beast, and... worshipped his image" (Revelation 16:2)
What the saints do	They endure and overcome: "they loved not their lives unto the death" (Revelation 12:11)	They are kept from it

The persecution saints suffer in Revelation is the dragon's wrath, not God's. Tribulation (*thlipsis*, G2347) is what believers face from the world. John was already their "companion in tribulation" (Revelation 1:9). God's wrath is His judgment on those who reject Him.

2. God's wrath is aimed with precision

- **The trumpets.** The locusts may hurt "only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads" (Revelation 9:4).
- **The bowls.** The sores fall "upon the men which had the mark of the beast" (Revelation 16:2). The waters turn to blood because "they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink" (Revelation 16:6).
- **Who cries out.** Those who say "hide us... from the wrath of the Lamb" are the kings and mighty men of the earth (Revelation 6:15–17), not the saints.

3. God has done this before

- **Egypt.** "I will put a division between my people and thy people" (Exodus 8:23). The hail did not fall in Goshen, the region of Egypt where Israel lived (9:26), and "all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings" (10:23). On the night of judgment, the Lord would "not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses" (12:23). Israel stayed in Egypt through the plagues, and God put a division between His people and the judgment falling around them. Several of the bowls mirror these plagues: sores, water to blood,

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frogs, and darkness. *(See "The Five Exoduses": Exodus 8:22–23; 12:23; Revelation 16:2–4, 10, 13.)*

- **Jerusalem in Ezekiel's day.** The faithful received a mark, and the destroyers were told, "come not near any man upon whom is the mark" (Ezekiel 9:6). Revelation's sealing follows the same pattern (Revelation 7:3).
- **Isaiah's promise.** "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers... hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth" (Isaiah 26:20–21).
- **The psalm of the plagues.** "Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked... There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling" (Psalm 91:8, 10).

4. Reading 1 Thessalonians 5:9 in its setting

Paul contrasts two groups. On "them," "sudden destruction cometh... and they shall not escape" (5:3). Believers are "not appointed... to wrath, but to obtain salvation" (5:9). The contrast is about *destiny*, which group the wrath is for, not about *location*. Likewise, "we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Romans 5:9) speaks of salvation, and those saved are still living on the earth.

Protected from wrath is not spared from persecution

Scripture is honest about this, and so is this paper. Saints die for their faith in Revelation: the martyrs under the altar at the fifth seal (6:9–11). Like Paul, they can say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). Near the end, a death decree is set against all who refuse the mark (13:15). It comes on day 1,290, during the bowls, as the plagues stir the wicked to fury rather than repentance: "they repented not to give him glory" (16:9), for the devil knows "he hath but a short time" (12:12). The sealed who remain recognize it from Daniel's abomination prophecy (Daniel 12:11) and hide, as Isaiah says, "until the indignation be overpast" (Isaiah 26:20). God shelters them until He gathers them shortly after: "at that time thy people shall be delivered" (Daniel 12:1). Both the martyrdom and the decree come from the dragon, not from God. Being kept from God's wrath has never meant being kept from the enemy's rage, and the saints who face it "overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony" (12:11).

This is true of the 144,000 as well. They are sealed before any harm is allowed (7:3), so they are most likely spared the actions of the fourth seal (6:8) and the trumpets (9:4). But the seal does not shield them from Babylon, the one-world church-state, who is "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (17:6). They give their lives when their testimony is

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finished: “when they shall have finished their testimony” (11:7). Then they are raised and taken up as “the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb” (11:11–12; 14:4), while the souls under the altar, the faithful martyrs of every age, wait for them and for the saints still alive, who are caught up together with them at the last trump (6:9–11; 1 Thessalonians 4:17). *(See “The Shepherd’s Gathering”: Revelation 6:9–11; 11:7; 14:4; 20:4.)*

The answer

God’s wrath is never meant for His bride. Pre-trib is right about that. But Scripture shows how He keeps her from it. He doesn’t take His people out before the storm. He shelters them in it, as He did in Goshen, behind the blood, and under His seal. The wrath falls on those who chose the mark, and the Shepherd keeps His flock until the last trumpet gathers them home.

The Restrainer of 2 Thessalonians 2

What pre-trib teaches

Paul wrote, “he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed” (2 Thessalonians 2:7–8). In the KJV, “letteth” means “holds back.” Pre-trib teaches that this restrainer is the Holy Spirit living in the church. When the church is raptured, the Spirit is “taken out of the way,” and the man of sin can appear.

What Scripture says

1. Paul never names the restrainer.

Paul told the Thessalonians, “ye know what withholdeth” (2:6), because he had explained it in person: “Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?” (2:5). He did not write the name down, so any identification should be held with care, and no doctrine should rest on it alone.

2. “Taken out of the way” is not “caught up.”

When Paul describes the gathering of the saints, he says they are “caught up” (*harpazō*, G726) to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17). In 2 Thessalonians 2:7, he uses entirely different words. The restrainer comes to be “out of the midst” (*ek mesou*, G3319), meaning he steps out of the way. Paul had the word for a rapture, and he did not use it here.

3. The Holy Spirit is promised to remain with God’s people.

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"Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" (Psalm 139:7). Jesus promised that the Comforter would "abide with you for ever" (John 14:16) and said, "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).

Pre-trib also teaches that many people will be saved during the Tribulation. But "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Corinthians 12:3). If the Spirit were gone, no one could be saved. The theory contradicts itself.

4. The Spirit is at work in Revelation.

God's two witnesses prophesy "a thousand two hundred and threescore days" during the Tribulation (Revelation 11:3). In this research, those witnesses are the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, carried to the world by His sealed servants: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6). *(See "The Shepherd's Gathering": Revelation 11:3–4; Zechariah 4:6, 14; John 15:26–27.)* Far from leaving, the Spirit is one of the two witnesses, giving the Word to the whole world.

5. Paul's own order settles it.

The verses about the restrainer come right after Paul's clear order of events. He says "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and… our gathering together unto him" will not happen "except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed" (2:1–3).

So the restrainer steps aside before the man of sin is revealed, and the man of sin is revealed before the gathering. When the restrainer steps aside, the church is still here to see the man of sin appear. Verse 7 cannot overturn what verses 1–3 plainly say.

What Scripture does show

Throughout Scripture, God holds evil back until His set time. Four angels hold the winds of judgment with the command, "Hurt not the earth… till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads" (Revelation 7:3). Zechariah tells us whose winds these are: God's horses are "the four spirits of the heavens" (Zechariah 6:5), and in Hebrew spirit and wind are the same word. God's Spirit is holding the harm back. The restraint is lifted on God's schedule, and His people are sealed, not removed, when it is.

Who is the restrainer?

Paul never names Him, but the most likely answer is the Holy Spirit. He holds back Satan's plans until God's appointed time: "greater is he that is in you, than

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he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). Paul calls the restrainer "he," and Jesus also called the Spirit "he" (John 16:13).

On this point, pre-trib and this paper agree. The difference is what "out of the midst" means. The Spirit does not leave the earth. Paul says evil is already at work, but Someone is holding it back: "the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let" (2 Thessalonians 2:7). In plain words, evil is busy, but the Holy Spirit is holding it back.

He keeps holding it back as long as mercy is open, while the two witnesses give their testimony for 1,260 days (Revelation 11:3). When their testimony is finished, mercy closes, and He steps aside. It happened once before. Before the flood, God said, "My spirit shall not always strive with man" (Genesis 6:3). Then "the LORD shut him in" (Genesis 7:16), and the door of the ark was closed.

Paul shows what happens next, and he is careful to say why. These are people who "received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved," who "believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:10, 12). They made their choice. So God lets them have it: "for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (2:11). He never takes away anyone's free will. He has always set the choice before us: "I have set before you life and death... therefore choose life" (Deuteronomy 30:19). Pharaoh hardened his own heart first (Exodus 8:15, 32), and only then did God confirm what Pharaoh had chosen (9:12). Paul saw the same in his day: because they "did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over" (Romans 1:28). The delusion is not forced on anyone. It is what they wanted. Revelation says it this way: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still" (Revelation 22:11). "And then shall that Wicked be revealed" (2:8). With nothing left to hold him back, he sets himself up "in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2:4), at day 1,290.

The answer

The restrainer steps aside, but the Holy Spirit is not missing from the end of the story. The last invitation in the Bible comes from Him and the church together: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come" (Revelation 22:17).

"Kept From the Hour" and "Come Up Hither"

What pre-trib teaches

Pre-trib leans on two verses that sit side by side:

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- **Revelation 3:10.** Jesus told the church at Philadelphia, “I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world.” Pre-trib reads this as a promise to remove the church from the earth before the Tribulation.
- **Revelation 4:1.** A voice “as it were of a trumpet” says to John, “Come up hither.” Pre-trib reads John’s call to heaven as a picture of the rapture, placed right before the seals open.

What Scripture says

1. “Keep thee from”: Jesus defines the phrase Himself.

The words “keep thee from” are *tēreō ek* in Greek, literally “keep out of.” John uses the same construction in only one other place, in Jesus’ prayer for His disciples: “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (John 17:15).

Jesus Himself defines the phrase: kept from evil while remaining in the world. In fact, He sets it directly against “take them out.” Revelation 3:10 uses His words with His meaning.

2. Who the hour is for.

The hour of temptation comes “to try them that dwell upon the earth” (3:10). In Revelation, “them that dwell upon the earth” are the unbelievers. They are the ones the martyrs ask God to judge (6:10), and the ones who worship the beast, “whose names are not written in the book of life” (13:8). The hour is aimed at them, just as the bowls are aimed at those with the mark. God keeps His people from it the way He kept Israel in Goshen.

3. One promise to one church, not all seven.

Philadelphia received this promise because “thou hast kept the word of my patience” (3:10). Smyrna received a different word: “ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (2:10). Jesus did not promise every church an escape. He promised every faithful church His keeping, whether through protection or through faithfulness unto death.

4. “Come up hither” was spoken to John.

The voice said to John, “Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter” (4:1). The purpose was to *show* John a vision. John says, “immediately I was in the spirit” (4:2), just as he had been “in the Spirit on the Lord’s day” while on the isle of Patmos (1:9–10).

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As the vision unfolds, John's viewpoint moves. He sees "another mighty angel come down from heaven" (10:1). He is told, "Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" (10:11), which is a commission for work among the nations. Later he is carried "in the spirit into the wilderness" (17:3).

John's call upward was the beginning of a vision, given so he could see and then tell. Nothing in the text says the church was taken with him.

5. The other "Come up hither" in Revelation.

The same words appear once more, to the two witnesses, and they come *after* their 1,260 days of testimony: "And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them" (11:12). The messengers who carry God's testimony, His sealed servants, are killed only when their testimony is finished (11:7). Their bodies lie "in the street of the great city" while the world rejoices (11:8–10). Then "the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet" (11:11). They ascend in a cloud before their enemies' eyes, and "the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven" (11:13). All of this comes after the 1,260 days, in public view, not at Revelation 4:1. This is not the resurrection of the saints. Like Lazarus, who was raised as a sign before the resurrection (John 11:43–44; 12:9–11), they are raised as a public sign, and their deaths are vindicated before the world. Their going up follows the firstfruits offering, the first sheaf presented to God before the harvest (Leviticus 23:10–11): they are "the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb" (14:4), taken up before the one harvest at the last trump (14:14–16; 1 Corinthians 15:52). Scripture does not say whether they receive the incorruptible body then or with all the saints; the pattern allows that they receive it just before the rest. It is not a separate rapture of the church: the gathering of God's people still comes once, at the last trump (1 Thessalonians 4:14–17). (See "The Shepherd's Gathering": Revelation 11:3–13; 14:4.)

6. The twenty-four elders.

Pre-trib also points to the twenty-four elders on thrones in Revelation 4 as the raptured church in heaven. But Revelation 4–5 is the same scene Daniel saw: "the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit… the judgment was set, and the books were opened" (Daniel 7:9–10). It is a heavenly courtroom being seated, not a reunion after a rapture. Daniel saw this court convene before the end, and he saw the saints on earth until "the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" (Daniel 7:22).

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The answer

Revelation 3:10 promises what John 17:15 promises: God protects His people while they are still in the world. He does not take them out of it. Revelation 4:1 is a vision given to John, not a picture of the church being taken. The only other "Come up hither" in Revelation comes after the 1,260 days, in full view of the world.

"No Warning"? Can the Rapture Happen at Any Moment?

The short answer: No. Scripture says no one knows the day or the hour, but it also gives clear signs and a clear order of events. The gathering of believers comes at the end of that order, not before it.

What pre-trib teaches

Pre-trib teaches that the rapture is "imminent": it could happen at any moment, with no warning and no sign that must come first. On this view, believers will be taken before any of the prophesied trouble begins.

What Scripture says, step by step

Step 1: Not knowing the day is not the same as having no signs.

Jesus said, "of that day and hour knoweth no man" (Matthew 24:36). But in the same chapter He gave a picture anyone can follow: "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors" (Matthew 24:32–33). Jesus did not point His listeners to a calendar date. He pointed them to the tree. When the fig branch turns tender and the leaves come out, you know the warm season of harvest is near, even before it arrives. In the same way, the signs tell the watcher that His coming is near, even though "that day and hour knoweth no man." In the very next verse, Jesus chose Noah as the picture of His coming (24:37). God told Noah, "yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth" (Genesis 7:4). Once the final count began, Noah knew the day, while the world "knew not until the flood came" (24:39). Paul told believers the same: "ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" (1 Thessalonians 5:4).

Step 2: Paul answered this exact question.

The believers in Thessalonica were worried they had missed Christ's coming. Paul wrote to them about "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our

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gathering together unto him" (2 Thessalonians 2:1), which is the very event pre-trib calls the rapture. His answer was plain: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed" (2:3). Two things must happen *first*. A gathering with things that must come first cannot be a gathering with no warning.

Step 3: Scripture's order of events.

Put the passages side by side, and the order is clear:

Order	What happens	Scripture
1	A falling away from the faith, and the man of sin revealed	2 Thessalonians 2:3
2	The great tribulation, when the beast makes "war with the saints"	Matthew 24:21; Revelation 13:7
3	Signs in the sky "immediately after the tribulation": the sun darkened, the moon not giving her light, the stars falling	Matthew 24:29; Revelation 6:12–13
4	The Son of man appears; the trumpet sounds; His people are gathered	Matthew 24:30–31; 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17

Pre-trib places the rapture before step 1. Scripture places the gathering at step 4. *(For how Daniel's 1,260, 1,290, and 1,335 days fit this order, see "The Shepherd's Gathering.")*

Step 4: What "escape all these things" means.

Luke 21:36 is often quoted as a promise of escape before the trouble: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." Read with the verses around it, it says something different:

- **Jesus had just warned His disciples of hardship.** They would be persecuted and imprisoned (21:12), and "some of you shall they cause to be put to death" (21:16). He was not promising them removal.
- **The danger is a trap for the unprepared.** Right before verse 36, He warned them to "take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged… and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth" (21:34–35).
- **The escape is from judgment, not from the earth.** Paul uses the same Greek word, *ekpheugō* (G1628), for the unbelieving world: "sudden destruction cometh upon them… and they shall not escape" (1 Thessalonians 5:3). The watchful escape what the careless cannot.

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- **The goal is to stand before Christ when He comes.** The unprepared cry out, “who shall be able to stand?” (Revelation 6:17). The faithful are able to stand.

Step 5: Where the “any moment” idea came from.

Christians have always watched for Christ’s return. But the early church expected the signs Paul named to come first. The idea of a signless, any-moment rapture before all prophesied events took its modern form in the 1830s as part of J. N. Darby’s pre-tribulation system. *(See also the table under “Two Different Comings in Matthew 24?”)*

The answer

The world will be caught off guard because it is not watching. The church is told to watch because it has been told what to watch for. Scripture gives the signs, the order of events, and the command to stay awake: “Watch therefore” (Matthew 24:42). It does not give a coming with no warning at all.

One Harvest, Not Two

A rapture years before the end requires two gatherings of God’s people: one before the Tribulation, and another for those who come to faith during it. Scripture shows one gathering, at one time.

What Scripture says

1. Paul’s order of the resurrection.

“But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming” (1 Corinthians 15:23). Paul gives two stages: Christ, then everyone who belongs to Him, at His coming. There is no third stage for a separate group.

2. The tares are gathered first.

“Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn” (Matthew 13:30). Until then, both “grow together until the harvest,” and “the harvest is the end of the world” (13:30, 39). A rapture reverses Jesus’ order: it removes the wheat first and leaves the tares behind.

3. The last day and the last trump.

Jesus said of every believer, “I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:40). Paul says the dead are raised “at the last trump” (1 Corinthians 15:52). A gathering seven years earlier would not be at the last day or the last trump.

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4. The first resurrection.

Revelation 20:4 describes those “which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark.” These are saints who lived through the Tribulation. Then it says, “This is the first resurrection” (20:5). If believers had already been raised at a rapture years earlier, this could not be the first.

5. One harvest day in Revelation.

On the same day, the Son of man reaps the earth, gathering His people, and the vine of the earth is cast “into the great winepress of the wrath of God” (Revelation 14:14–20). In this research, that day is day 1,335 (Daniel 12:12). The Shepherd also sorts His flock once, “when the Son of man shall come in his glory” (Matthew 25:31–32).

The pre-trib reply

Pre-trib scholars answer that the first resurrection comes in stages: Christ, then the raptured church, then the Tribulation saints. But Paul gives only two stages, and the second is “at his coming” (1 Corinthians 15:23). Calling the later believers a different people works only if God has two peoples, and Pillar 3 has shown that He has one.

No favoritism

A rapture before the Tribulation would also create two classes of saints: one spared the beast, and one left to face him. But “there is no respect of persons with God” (Romans 2:11).

It would also create a second judgment and a second chance. Those left behind at a rapture would have been found unready once, then given another opportunity at the end of the 1,335 days, an opportunity earlier believers never received. Scripture offers the same salvation on the same terms to everyone: “behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2), and “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

One coming, one harvest, one first resurrection: God gathers all His people together, on the day He has set.

Through the Storm: God’s Unbroken Pattern

From Genesis to Revelation, Scripture tells the same story again and again. When trouble comes, God does not take His people out before it arrives. He goes into it with them, keeps them through it, and brings them out on the other side.

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When the storm came	What God did	Scripture
The Flood	Shut Noah in and carried the ark through the waters	Genesis 7:16; 1 Peter 3:20
The plagues of Egypt	Kept Israel in Goshen while judgment fell around them	Exodus 8:22–23; 12:23
The Red Sea	Led them “upon dry land in the midst of the sea”	Exodus 14:29
The drought	Fed Elijah by the ravens while the land went hungry	1 Kings 17:4–6
The fiery furnace	Walked in the fire with them: “the form of the fourth is like the Son of God”	Daniel 3:25
The lions’ den	“My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths”	Daniel 6:22
The storm on the sea	Was in the boat with them, and calmed the wind	Matthew 8:24–26
The two houses	The storm struck both, but the house on the rock “fell not”	Matthew 7:24–25
The time of Jacob’s trouble	“He shall be saved out of it”	Jeremiah 30:7
The woman in the wilderness	She was “nourished” there through the long persecution	Revelation 12:6, 14
The great tribulation	“These are they which came out of great tribulation”	Revelation 7:14

Notice the words Scripture uses: *in* the midst of the sea, *in* the fire, saved *out of* it, came *out of* great tribulation. Each one assumes God’s people were there.

What Jesus promised

Jesus never promised His followers a world without trouble. He promised Himself in the middle of it: “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). He prayed, “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (John 17:15). And He promised, “lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20). The apostles taught the same: “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

Faith is the shelter

When the disciples panicked in the storm, Jesus did not ask why the storm had come. He asked, “Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?” (Matthew 8:26). Faith is what shelters God’s people when the winds blow. It is “the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (Ephesians 6:16), and “this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4).

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed” (Psalm 46:1–2). He is a help *in* trouble, not only a rescue from it.

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Kept does not always mean untouched

Scripture is honest about this, so this paper is too. Some of the faithful were delivered from the fire, and others were faithful unto death (Hebrews 11:33–37; Revelation 12:11). The three Hebrews understood both before they stepped into the furnace: “our God whom we serve is able to deliver us... But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods” (Daniel 3:17–18).

God’s promise is not that His people will never suffer. It is that nothing can separate them from Him: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Romans 8:35, 37).

Oil for the long night

Jesus told a parable about this very time: “Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom” (Matthew 25:1).

All ten were waiting for the bridegroom. All ten had lamps. And “while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept” (25:5). The difference between them was not whether they believed he would come. It was what they had prepared for. “They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps” (25:3–4).

What the lamp and oil picture. “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet” (Psalm 119:105). Oil in Scripture is the picture of the Spirit. When Samuel anointed David with oil, “the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward” (1 Samuel 16:13). Zechariah’s olive trees pour out “golden oil” for the light, “not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit” (Zechariah 4:6, 12). The Spirit and the Word are the two witnesses themselves, speaking through God’s servants through the great tribulation.

The night ran longer than expected. The foolish virgins had enough oil for a short wait. When the bridegroom tarried and the cry came at midnight, their lamps were going out. A teaching that expects God’s people to be gone before the trouble begins can leave believers prepared for a short wait instead of a long night. Jesus told this parable so His people would be ready for the delay.

Oil cannot be borrowed. When the foolish asked for oil, the wise answered, “Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you” (25:9). The wise were not selfish. A relationship with God cannot be handed from one person to another. Each must have their own. Ezekiel said the same: even if “Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness” (Ezekiel 14:14).

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Then the door was shut. “They that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut” (25:10). This is the same door as in Noah’s day. When the others came, saying “Lord, Lord, open to us,” the answer was “I know you not” (25:11–12). Jesus closed the parable with its lesson: “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (25:13).

The wise did not escape the night. They waited through it, with lamps burning and vessels full. That is the readiness Jesus asks for: not a plan to leave before the darkness, but faith enough to keep shining through it.

The Shepherd’s promise

This is the heart of the whole paper. God does not abandon His flock to the storm, and He does not need to remove them to protect them. He leads them through it: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me” (Psalm 23:4). “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned” (Isaiah 43:2). “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5).

Conclusion

The pre-tribulation rapture stands on three foundations, and Scripture’s own wording removes each one.

- **The clock.** Daniel’s seventy weeks are a measured count, cut from a larger vision and fulfilled on time from 457 BC to AD 34. Scripture never pauses a count God has set, and no teacher has the authority to insert a gap.
- **The covenant.** The covenant of Daniel 9:27 belongs to the Messiah, confirmed with His blood “for many.” No passage of Scripture gives it to a future human Antichrist or describes a seven-year treaty.
- **The people.** God has one people: one olive tree, one fold, one household, one covenant, and one city. There is no second program that requires the church to be removed.

The supporting arguments fall with them. Jesus described one coming, not two. The saints are on earth through the trumpets and the bowls. God’s wrath is aimed at those who take the mark, not at His bride. Paul places the gathering after the man of sin is revealed. And “keep thee from the hour” means what Jesus said it means: kept in the world, not taken out of it.

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None of this is meant to frighten God's people. It is meant to prepare them. The same God who shut Noah in, kept Israel in Goshen, and walked in the fire with the three Hebrews has promised to be with His people to the end. Pre-trib believers are right that God's wrath is not for His bride. Scripture simply shows how He keeps her: not by removing her before the storm, but by sealing her, sheltering her, and leading her through it.

The Shepherd does not abandon His flock. He walks with them through the valley, and at the last trumpet He gathers them home.

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- The Five Exoduses — God's Pattern of Deliverance
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