

### PREMILLENNIALISM

Premillennialism, of course, holds that it is Christ's return to the earth which begins the millennium and, indeed, makes it possible. Thus Christ's coming is premillennial (before the millennium) and, after His return, prophecies of a glorious kingdom on earth will be literally fulfilled. Allis states: "It was extensively held in the Early Church, how extensively is not definitely known." (Prophecy and the Church, p. 7) Originally this term designated merely the time of Christ's second advent--before the millennium, or the 1000 year earthly reign predicted in Rev. 20:1-6 (called Chiliasm in the early church). However, it has come to refer to a whole system of theology, because it became evident that the second advent of Christ is not an event which can be separated from other areas of Biblical truth, but is in fact integrally related to all major areas of revealed truth and, unless the second advent is properly understood, God's program becomes distorted beyond recognition.

Premillennialism teaches the literal fulfilment of the kingdom promises found in both the O.T. and the N.T. A clarifying word is necessary regarding the fact that the O.T. kingdom promises speak of an everlasting kingdom, whereas Rev. 20 speaks of a 1000 year reign of Christ. The millennium referred to in Rev. 20 is merely the first phase of God's eternal kingdom. The millennium is the final time age in God's dispensational dealings with man--this will be God's final test of man, demonstrating that man cannot please Him apart from His grace and that man can only triumph in grace through Christ. The N.T. also prophesies an eternal kingdom. Millennial conditions then give way to the eternal state.

Premillennialism is based upon the literal interpretation of the prophecies relating to the second advent of Christ. The opponents of premillennialism attack it because they do not accept the literal interpretation of passages relating to the millennium, although they accept other prophecies literally (in which fact we feel they are inconsistent).

#### Arguments for premillennialism include the following:

1. Both O.T. and N.T. state that kingdom blessings are ushered in by the second advent, e.g., Isa. 59:20ff; 61:2b, ff.; Jer. 23:5-8; 30-33; Ezk. 37:21-28; Dan. 2:44; 7:9-14; Hosea 3:4-5; Joel 2:28-3:21; Amos 9:11-15; Micah 5:3-15; Zeph. 3:14-20; Zech. 3:8-10; 12-14; Mal. 4; Mt. 25:31-46; Acts 15:13-18; Rom. 11; 1 Cor. 15:20-27; 2 Thes. 1:5-2:12; James 5:7-9; 2 Pet. 3:4-13; Rev. 11:15-19; 19:11-20:9.
2. The Man of Sin is to be destroyed by Christ's coming, 2 Thes. 2:8. This Man of Sin could not be reigning during the millennium.
3. Mt. 24:29-31, "immediately after the tribulation." The tribulation could not exist in the millennium.
4. The persecuted Church (2 Tim. 3:12) continues till Christ comes. There will be no persecution in the millennium.
5. Tares and wheat--Mt. 13:29--both grow together till harvest at the end of the age--not a picture of millennium.
6. The literal character of Christ's reign, Ezk. 21:27; 2 Sam. 7:16. This cannot be spiritualized to say Christ is reigning today and then say He will come at the end of the millennium.
7. Argument from resurrection, Rev. 20:4-14. The first resurrection is completed before the millennium begins, and the rest of dead do not live till the end of the millennium.

#### Types of premillennialism: non-dispensational and dispensational

The leaders of the Reformation dealt a severe blow to the allegorical method of interpretation by their advocacy of the literal-grammatical-historical approach. This emphasis upon the literal method resulted in the revival of premillennialism in the post-Reformation period.

Up to the 19th century, however, premillennialism did not exist as a codified system. Premillennial advocates simply looked for the Lord's return to establish His kingdom of glory upon the earth. During this period (c. 1525-1825) the Lord's return was viewed by premillennialists as but one event; that is, it was not then regarded as being in two phases, one relating to the Church and the other to Israel and the nations. Of course, many viewed the coming as imminent, but the clear-cut distinction between God's programs for Israel and the Church and the recognition of a future period of tribulation identified with Israel's 70th Week were not yet issues in theology. These distinctions are the result of the refinement of the premillennial system which began early in the 19th century and which continues today. This refinement is based upon the consistent use of the literal (plain, normal) method of interpretation of the Scriptures.

Because of the fact that up to the early 19th century premillennialists did not recognize the Lord's return as involving two phases, those who are now called post-tribulational rapturists assert that their viewpoint is that which has been held by premillennialists down through the centuries, and thus they refer to themselves as historical premillennialists.

However, such a claim is invalid because the doctrine of the Church's relation to the tribulation was not an issue previous to the 19th century. It is reasonable to assume that if the premillennialists prior to the 19th century had been presented the arguments supporting two phases to the Lord's return, many would have accepted that view. The fact that the two-phase view has been so well received by careful Bible students since the early 19th century supports that claim.

Post-tribulationism did not arise as a distinct position theologically until B.W. Newton opposed J. N. Darby on the issue of the pre-tribulational rapture. Therefore, it is fairer to classify premillennialists before that time as merely premillennialists generally, rather than as being specifically pre- or post-tribulationists.

There are two major types of premillennialism today:

1. Non-Dispensational Premillennialism: This form of premillennialism simply insists that it is the coming of Christ which makes possible His reign on earth, as opposed to post- and amillennialism.

Today there are four groups of non-dispensational premillennialists:

a. While disdaining dispensationalism, quite a few teach deliverance from wrath in the period of the 70th Week (in keeping with dispensationalists who are pre-tribulational rapturists).

b. Post-tribulational rapturists claim to have been the larger group historically, but since late in the 19th century in America they have been far outnumbered by pre-tribulational rapturists. The post-tribulational view is presently gaining in numbers through the books of men like Alexander Reese, George E. Ladd, Robert Gundry, etc., although the view has been more popular in England and Canada for a longer period.

c. Mid-tribulational rapturists have had a small following through men like Norman B. Harrison, J. Oliver Buswell, etc.

d. Partial rapturists have not been strong in America; even in England they have been comparatively weak, despite the writings of the able editor of The Dawn, D. M. Pantou, and men like R. Govett.

Excellent summaries of and answers to these views, especially b., c., and d. have been made by a number of men: John F. Walvoerd, The Rapture Question, Gerald B. Stanton, Kept From the Hour, Similar title pamphlets on the theme Will The Church Pass Through the (Great) Tribulation by C. I. Scofield, William R. Newell, H. A. Ironside, and Henry C. Thiessen (the best).

2. Dispensational Premillennialism: This view is a restoration of the early Church hope as taught by the apostles and represents a refinement of (a) non-dispensational premillennialism. It emphasizes a pre-tribulational rapture. Adherents feel this view has been held since God revealed it to Paul in answer to the Thessalonians' question concerning loved ones who had died (1 Thes. 4:13-18). The Holy Spirit explained that both living and dead believers will first be caught up "to meet the Lord in the air," then later return to earth with Him to share in the Kingdom reign. Not all who hold this view are dispensationalists, but all dispensation-

alists insist that since the Church had nothing to do with the 69 weeks (closing with the cross) it will have no relationship to the 70th Week (which concerns Daniel's "people" = Jews, and "city" = Jerusalem, Dan. 9:24ff.). Thus, the Church meets Christ in the air before that period of judgment begins, approximately seven years before the millennium.

a. Advantages of dispensational premillennialism:

1. Difficulties and apparent discrepancies in the Bible are easily reconciled, e.g., Gen. 4:15 and 9:6; non-observance of certain Mosaic commands today, such as the sacrifices, feast observance (Dt. 16:16), dress (Nu. 15:38), marital obligation of a brother (Dt. 25:5), etc.; Matt. 10:5 and 28:19-20; Mt. 23:1-3 with Rom. 6:14 and 2 Cor. 3. Also, the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the O.T., the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles can be adequately explained only from the dispensational position.

2. It reveals the true unity of the Word of God. It does justice to every area of Biblical revelation, no part being neglected. God's programs with Israel, the Gentiles, and the Church, though distinct, are all seen to be related to the two advents of Jesus Christ. Each program is part of the unfolding revelation of God and they are all tied together by the work of Christ at His first and second advents.

3. It is based upon sound hermeneutical principles. The literal-grammatical-historical approach to the Word of God is basic to dispensationalism. This is the only sane and safe approach to Scripture. Scripture as the unfolding revelation of God is thus seen to be the best interpreter of Scripture. Interpretation is not dependent upon the whims and the ingenuity of the interpreter when this method is followed.

b. Arguments for dispensational premillennialism:

1. The words of Scripture taken in their normal significance differentiate Israel, the Gentiles, and the Church. The opponents of dispensationalism admit this. (See Allis, Prophecy and the Church, 256-262.)

2. The doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the truth of the Church as a mystery indicate that the Church is unique and relates only to this age.

3. The 70th Week of Israel is seen to relate only to Israel and the Gentiles. The Church is not seen in the Scriptures that speak of that period.

4. The Church is promised deliverance from tribulation.

5. The covenants of Scripture taken literally anticipate the day when Israel will be saved nationally and righteousness will pervade the earth. This is seen to follow the second advent.

6. O.T. and N.T. prophecies concerning the second advent follow the pre-millennial pattern.

Contrasts between the Rapture (Translation) and the Return to Earth (Invasion)

RAPTURE (TRANSLATION)

1. Christ comes in the air for His saints Jn. 14:3. The Church is caught up to meet Him in the air, 1 Thes. 4:16-17.
2. It was not a subject of O.T. revelation ("a mystery," 1 Cor. 15:51).
3. It relates only to the Church--those "in Christ," 1 Thes. 4:16-17.
4. It occurs before Israel's 70th Week, because the Church is not related to Israel's program, and is exempt from God's wrath, Rom. 11:1-26, 1 Thes. 5:1-10.

RETURN TO EARTH (INVASION)

1. Christ comes to the earth with His saints at end of tribulation to execute His righteous judgments upon the earth, 2 Thes. 1:7-10; Jude 14-15; Mt. 25:31-46.
2. It was a major subject of O.T. revelation, Zech. 14:3-4; etc.
3. It relates primarily to the culmination of God's program for Israel and the Gentiles, Rom. 11:26-27; Mt. 25:31-46; Rev. 19:11ff.
4. It occurs after Israel's 70th Week, Dan. 9:24; Rom. 11:26-27; Jer. 30:7-9; 33:15-16. The everlasting righteousness promised in Dan. 9 is brought in by the second coming to the earth.

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| <p>5. It terminates "the fulness of the Gentiles," Rom. 11:1-25.</p> <p>6. It ushers in the judgment seat of Christ--the service of the saints judged in heaven, 1 Cor. 3:11ff.</p> <p>7. The N.T. views the rapture as an imminent event, Jn. 14:1-3; Rom. 13:11-12; 1 Cor. 1:4-7; 15:51-53; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Thes. 4:16-17.</p> <p>8. The rapture is viewed as a meeting of the Bridegroom (Christ) with the Bride (Church), Eph. 5:25.</p> <p>9. Christ is viewed as the Morning Star in reference to His coming for the Church, Rev. 2:28; 22:16.</p> <p>10. The rapture is presented as a message of comfort to the Church--a promise to escape the tribulation, 1 Thes. 4:18; 5:9-11; Rev. 3:10.</p> <p>11. No personal judgment of unbelievers by Christ at this time.</p> <p>12. Christ comes alone, "Himself," 1 Thes. 4:16.</p> <p>13. Creation unchanged.</p> | <p>5. It terminates "the times of the Gentiles," Lk. 21:24.</p> <p>6. It results in the judgment of Israel and the Gentiles at the end of the tribulation, Ezk. 20:33-44; Mt. 24:29-31; 25:31-46.</p> <p>7. Both the O.T. and N.T. view the second coming to the earth as being after the predicted events of the tribulation, Mt. 24:29-31; Lk. 21:25-31.</p> <p>8. The return to the earth is viewed as the coming of the Deliverer and the Judge (for Israel and the Gentiles), Isa. 2:2-5; 59:20-21.</p> <p>9. Christ is viewed as the Sun of Righteousness in reference to His second coming to the earth, Mal. 4:2.</p> <p>10. The return to the earth is pictured as a coming in judgment after the tribulation to execute His wrath upon an unbelieving world, Zech. 12:1-10; 14:1-9; Mt. 25:31-46; Rev. 10:11ff.</p> <p>11. A personal judgment of all (believers and unbelievers) who are alive at the time of His coming to the earth.</p> <p>12. Christ comes with "armies" of heaven following Him, Rev. 19:11ff.</p> <p>13. Creation affected--the curse lifted from physical creation and from the beast, Rom. 8:19-23; Isa. 65:25.</p> |
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#### POSTTRIBULATIONISM

Posttribulation Theory (e.g. Reese, Ladd, Scruby, Rose, Kromminga, Fraser, Gundry, etc.)

1. Definition: This theory maintains that the Church will pass through the tribulation, will be caught up to meet the Lord in His earthward descent at the end of the tribulation, and will return immediately to the earth with the Lord at His second advent.

2. Argumentation: A statement of the key arguments urged in favor of posttribulationism, together with a refutation of those arguments.

a. The historical argument. It is claimed that posttribulationism has been the historic view of the Church through the centuries and that pretribulationism is a doctrinal innovation introduced in the nineteenth century by the Plymouth Brethren (Ladd, The Blessed Hope, pp. 19-60).

Refutation: Pretribulationists answer this by pointing out that the Church's relationship to the tribulation (along with other details of eschatology) was not a doctrinal issue in the early Church. Other more basic theological issues occupied the Church in the early centuries (cp. James Orr, The Progress of Dogma, pp. 21-31). This, together with the fact that the rise of the spiritualizing method of interpretation resulted in the Church's departure from premillennialism precluded any valid basis for a discussion of the Church's relation to the tribulation. The recovery of the literal approach to the Scriptures during the Reformation eventually led to a recovery of premillennialism in the centuries following

the Reformation. It was the process of refining the premillennial system on the basis of literal interpretation that yielded the concepts that the Church is a distinct group from Israel, and that it will be raptured prior to the tribulation (Israel's 70th Week).

Also, it should be noted that the historical argument is never conclusive, for it is vitiated by the fact that it may cite early error as well as early truth. The early fathers were not immune to error in other doctrinal areas, so there is no reason to expect them to be infallible in their concept either of the Church or the tribulation, especially since in many respects Christian theology in that period was characterized by immaturity. The point is that the doctrinal issue is not settled by citing and counting the fathers, but rather through the exegesis of Scripture (cp. Walvoord, The Rapture Question, pp. 135-139).

Nevertheless, the pretribulation position has by far the better of the historical argument for whatever worth it is. This is seen in the early Church's expectation of the imminent return of Christ. The hope of an imminent return demands a pretribulation rapture.

b. The resurrection argument. Since resurrection will be one of the major features of the rapture, and since both the Old and the New Testaments (Dan. 12 and Rev. 20) place the first resurrection at the end of the tribulation, it is claimed to be conclusive proof the rapture occurs at the end of the tribulation.

Refutation: It is conceded that there will be a resurrection at the end of the tribulation, but an examination of the passages which reveal this indicate that this aspect of the first resurrection is limited to saints of the Old Testament and of the tribulation period. Also, it is significant that those passages make no mention of the translation of living saints, which is the unique feature of the rapture. Posttribulationists beg the question (assume what they must to prove) when they claim the saints in question are Church saints. Church saints are not in the contexts of Daniel 12 or Revelation 20. The pretribulation view is based upon the distinction between Israel and the Church in the program of God.

The difficulty that some envision when it is asserted that the first resurrection has several aspects or phases is alleviated by two considerations. First, according to 1 Cor. 15, Christ's resurrection is considered as part of the first resurrection, yet it is separated from the event recorded in Revelation 20 by many centuries. Second, an analagous situation exists in reference to the second death, the beast and the false prophet experience the second death 1000 years before the judgment which issues in the second death takes place (cp. Rev. 19:20; 20:1-15). According to posttribulationist reasoning the event in Revelation 20:14 should have been called the third death.

The decisive blow is applied to the resurrection argument and the whole posttribulation position by the observation that a rapture at the close of the tribulation would result in the glorification of all living and dead saints, leaving no mortal flesh to populate the millennium.

c. The argument based upon the necessity for tribulation. Some of the posttribulationists chide the pretribulationists for their failure to recognize that tribulation was predicted to be the Church's portion while it was upon the earth (cp. Jn. 16:33; Phil. 1:29).

Refutation: This is easily answered by noting the distinction between the age-long tribulation which finds its source in the satanic world system, and the great tribulation which is limited to Israel's 70th Week and which finds its source in God. The former was indeed to be the portion of the Church, but the latter is identified as the wrath of God from which the Church is exempt (cp. Dan. 12:1; Mt. 24:21; Rev. 6:17; 16:1; Rom. 5:9; 8:1; 1 Thes. 5:9; Rev. 3:20).

d. The argument based upon the terminology for the return of Christ. It is asserted by posttribulationists that the principal words used of the Lord's return (parousia, usually rendered "coming"; apokalupsis, "revelation"; and epiphaneia, "appearing") are all used relative to the Lord's return after the tribulation.

Refutation: Posttribulationists are guilty of making these terms technical expressions which refer only to Christ's second advent to the earth at the end of the tribulation. While it is true that some pretribulationists have tried to limit parousia to the rapture, and

apokalupsis to the second advent, the facts are that all these terms are used both of the rapture and the second coming to the earth; therefore, the context must determine which event is in view.

Documentation of Argument on Use of the Words  
Parousia, Epiphanea, Apokalupsis

Parousia (and related words) used often, meaning "presence"; usually translated "coming," e.g., 1 Cor. 16:17; Phil. 1:26; 2 Thes. 2:9.

1. In relation to the rapture: 1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thes. 2:19; 4:15; 5:23; 1 Thes. 3:13 (lit., "in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints"); 2 Thes. 2:1; 1 Jn. 2:28
2. In relation to Christ's return to earth: Mt. 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 2 Thes. 2:8; 2 Pet. 1:16.
3. In relation to the eternal state: 2 Pet. 3:12

Epiphanea (and related words) used 12 times, meaning "appearing," "to show"; emphasis on natural sight, e.g., Acts 27:20.

1. In relation to the first coming of Christ: Lk. 1:79; 2 Tim. 1:10; Tit. 2:11.
2. In relation to the rapture: 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8; Tit. 2:13.
3. In relation to Christ's return to earth: Acts 2:20; 2 Thes. 2:8.

Apokalupsis (and related words) used 44 times, meaning "unveiling," usually translated "revelation."

1. In relation to the rapture: 1 Cor. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:7, 13; 4:13.
2. In relation to the Man of Sin: 2 Thes. 2:3, 6, 8.
3. In relation to Christ's return to earth: Lk. 17:30; Rom. 8:19; 2 Thes. 1:7.

e. The argument based upon the use of the terms "saints" and "elect". It is arbitrarily claimed that since reference is made to the saints and the elect in the tribulation period, it is proof that the Church is seen in the tribulation.

Refutation: Again they are guilty of begging the question. In order for this argument to stand they must prove that every reference to the saints and the elect, whether in the Old or New Testament, is to be equated with the Church. They present no such evidence but merely assume this to be so. The context in each case must determine whether Church saints, Israelites, or Gentiles are in view. The reference to saved Israelites, by tribal designation in the Revelation (Rev. 7) indicates the Church has been raptured and God is again dealing with Israel. It is noteworthy that none of the passages which deal with the tribulation period refer to the Church as being upon the earth. Matthew 24-25 and Revelation 4-19 are concerned with God's program for Israel and the Gentiles, and the Church is not in view. Since the Church is not mentioned, the burden of proof rests upon the posttribulationists to demonstrate that the Church is in view. Also, note that while Matthew 13 includes the Church age, the Church age is not coextensive with the interadvent period which is the period under consideration in Matthew 13. Again the Scriptural distinction between Israel and the Church is determinative.

f. The argument against imminency. Posttribulationists assert there is Scriptural evidence that predicted events must transpire before the return of Christ. These events include such things as the prediction of Peter's death, the destruction of Jerusalem, the fulfilment of the great commission, the apostasy, and the signs preceding the second advent.

Refutation: By the time that the truth of imminent return became known among Christians generally, most of these difficulties were resolved. The prediction about Peter's death was not recorded by John until about twenty years after Peter's death.

The possible reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in the Olivet Discourse certainly was not clear to Christians before the event occurred in A.D. 70; and in contrast to this fact is the certainty that they were told to wait for God's Son from heaven (1 Thes. 1:10).

The great commission (Mt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8) throws no light on the subject of the expectation of the Lord's return; it does not support posttribulationism any more than pretribulationism. The passages involved merely point to the destination of the gospel. The gospel was preached in Paul's day throughout the known world (Col. 1:6, 23) before all his epistles which testify to the imminent return became generally known. God's purpose in this dispensation is not to convert the world, but rather to call out a people for His name from among Jew and Gentile.

Incidentally, Mt. 24:14 refers to the tribulation period and does not concern the Church.

In reference to the signs which precede the Lord's return (Lk. 21:25ff), it is sufficient to say that they relate to the tribulation period before which time the Church will be raptured.

In contrast to these rather nebulous arguments against the any-moment rapture, there is the positive fact that Scripture abounds with exhortations for the believer to be looking for the return of the Lord. The clarity of these exhortations is evident from the effect it had upon the Church, especially in the first three centuries. This fact indicates the weakness of the argument of posttribulationism regarding predicted events; apparently they did not dim the hope of His imminent return.

#### PRETRIBULATIONISM

1. Definition: This theory insists that the Lord Jesus will come back from heaven and catch up His bride, the Church, to meet Him in the air, prior to that period known as Daniel's 70th Week (generally called "the Tribulation"). This position is based on two main principles:

a. A literal interpretation of Scripture, which distinguishes the coming to the air from the coming to the earth.

b. A dispensational interpretation of Scripture, which clearly distinguishes Israel and the Church as two distinct and separate bodies, each with its "last days," its conclusion of the age, and its resurrection appropriate to that conclusion. The O.T. and the gospels plainly prophesy a coming of Christ to the earth, after a period of great distress. This is related to Israel and the nations. On the contrary, the Church is prophesied to be translated to meet her Lord in the air in fulfillment of Scripture which clearly declares she will be delivered from that period of awesome trouble.

2. Reasons for believing in the Pretribulation Rapture of the Church:

a. The Nature of the Church Demands a Pretribulation Rapture

1. The Church is designated in Scripture as the mystery (Eph. 3:1-6; Col 1:26). God's program for the Church, begun at Pentecost, is not related to God's program for Israel. The Church had no relation to the 69 weeks which are past, and can logically have no relation to the 70th Week which is future. The fact that the Church is "a mystery," revealed as a new thing after Christ's rejection by Israel, argues for the completion of that new thing before God resumes His dealings with Israel.

2. The Church age closes with the translation of the saints, which event is called a mystery (1 Cor. 15:51ff.). Not until this event takes place does God begin the 70th Week and resume Israel's program. No O.T. passage can be produced which promises blessing for Israel before the tribulation; the consistent testimony of Scripture is that Israel's blessing follows the tribulation. Conversely, no passage relates the Church to the tribulation nor to the groups received by the Lord at the end of the tribulation.

3. While the Church is on the earth prior to the rapture, God cannot have two independent groups of witnesses (i.e., both Israel and the Church), for Gal. 3:28 indicates that in the Church saved Jews and Gentiles are one in Christ and lose their national identity.

b. The Necessity for an Interval Between the Rapture and Christ's Return to the Earth to Set Up His Kingdom

1. Between the rapture of the Church and their return to the earth with Christ at least two events must take place: The judgment seat of Christ and The marriage of the Lamb.

2. Old Testament and New Testament prophecies concerning the kingdom demand an interval between the rapture and the second coming to the earth, because:

a. At the rapture, the saints are to be resurrected and glorified.

b. If this occurs at end of tribulation, only glorified saints will enter the millennium. Glorified saints will have new bodies and will not bear children (Mt. 22:29-30).

c. But this is impossible in the light of Rev. 20:7-9, for there must be indi-

viduals still in the flesh who will follow Satan at the end of the millennium.

d. Only the pretribulation rapture of the Church answers this dilemma. During the tribulation individuals from among Israel and Gentiles are saved and enter the millennium in the flesh to populate the millennial earth. Children are born to them during the millennium and from this group (born during the millennium) some will follow Satan when he is loosed for a little season at the close of the millennium.

c. The Nature of the 70th Week as a Period of Judgment and Wrath

1. It is the period of God's wrath upon a Christ-rejecting world (cp. Dan. 12:1; Zeph. 1:14-18; Mt. 24:21; Rev. 3:10; contrast John 16:33). It is characterized in Scripture as:

- a. Wrath - Rev. 6:17; 11:18; 14:10,18; 15:1,7; 16:1,19.
- b. Judgment - Rev. 14:7; 15:4; 16:7; 19:2.
- c. Indignation - Isa. 24:1, 3-4, 19-20; 26:20-21; 34:1-3.
- d. Hour of trial - Rev. 3:10.

2. We do not object to the Church experiencing persecution and trouble; these are prophesied. But we do object to the idea of the Church passing through a period of wrath, for Scripture does not relate the Church to the tribulation. The passages which deal with the 70th Week relate this period to Israel and the Gentiles. The promises of the Word speak of the Church's deliverance from judgment and wrath (Rom. 8:1; John 5:24; 1 Thes. 5:9-10; 1 John 4:17). Note that preservation in the tribulation is only promised to a select group of Israelites, Rev. 7:1-8 (particularly vv. 2-3).

3. God's witnesses on earth in the 70th Week are identified as Israelites and Gentiles in contradistinction to the Church. This fact in the light of Gal. 3:28 indicates the Church could not be on earth in the 70th Week.

4. The divine purpose of the tribulation is to bring repentance to a remnant of Israel and purge them through suffering. This is unnecessary for the Church, since only those who have repented are in the Church, and it will be purged at the judgment seat of Christ, not on earth.

d. Specific Promises are Given that the Church will be Spared from this Period of Judgment

1. Rev. 3:10. Note that the promise is not merely that they would be kept from the trial, but from the very period itself! "Out of" (ek), not "in the midst of" (en).

2. 1 Thes. 1:10. "Jesus...delivered us from the wrath to come" (i.e., the period of wrath).

3. 1 Thes. 5:1-10. Note the following:

- a. The day of the Lord is a day of destruction and wrath, 1 Thes. 5:3,9.
- b. The Church being identified as the "children of light and the children of the day" are not related to that period, 1 Thes. 5:4-5.

c. The Church is promised deliverance before that period of wrath comes and the means indicated is by rapture, 1 Thes. 5:9-10.

1. The promise - not appointed to wrath, but to obtain deliverance.
2. The means - "whether we wake or sleep" a definite reference to rapture as per 1 Thes. 4:13-17 ("alive," "sleep in Jesus").

3. The basis - the death and resurrection of Christ (1 Thes. 4:14; 5:9-10).

e. The Unity of the 70th Week (slanted at midtribulationism)

The 70th Week is a unit. Though the period is divided, the two parts of the 70th Week are not disassociated. Both halves of the 70th Week have the same characteristics (wrath, judgment, indignation, hour of trial), but those characteristics are intensified in the latter half of the week. The reason for this is that in the latter half of the week man's opposition to God reaches a climax and God's reaction is an intensification of His wrath.

f. The New Testament Doctrine of Imminency Demands a Pretribulation Rapture

The teaching is not that Christ will return soon, but rather that we may expect Him at any moment. There is no predicted event which must occur before the promised rapture. Both



the mid- or posttribulation theories would require the fulfilment of certain predicted events before Christ could come.

g. "Peace and Safety" do not Characterize the End of the 70th Week (slanted at post-tribulationism)

It has been argued by posttribulationists that Christ's only coming is His coming to the earth at the end of the tribulation (Rev. 7:14). But, 1 Thes. 5:3 declares that the day of the Lord will come at a time when people are saying "peace and safety." Paul in this passage is certainly not speaking of the end of the tribulation for at that time war will have reached its climax (Rev. 19:11-21). Paul warns unbelievers (notice the them, 1 Thes. 5:5) that sudden destruction will overcome them, but that the day of the Lord will not overtake the believer (v. 4). Hence, this must refer to the rapture at the beginning of the day of the Lord.

h. "Blessed are the Dead...From Henceforth" (Rev. 14:13, contrast 1 Thes. 4:13-18)

Why would the Thessalonians be concerned (as they obviously were in 1 Thes. 4) that those who died would be at a disadvantage? For if the Church were to go through the 70th Week it would be better to die than to go through the tribulation. The dead would definitely be advantaged (Rev. 14:13).

i. The Departure of the Holy Spirit Before the Manifestation of the Man of Sin at the Beginning of the 70th Week of Israel

Dan. 9:27; 2 Thes. 2:3ff. This will be a reversal of Pentecost. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit came to form the Church and take up residence in it. At the rapture before the 70th Week He leaves with the Church. He is always omnipresent, but He will leave in the sense in which He came at Pentecost.

j. The Chronology of the Book of the Revelation Supports the Pretribulation Rapture

Chapters 1-3 refer to the present age. Note the repeated references to the churches. Chapters 4-19 refer to Israel's 70th Week, and the saints on earth during this period are specifically identified as Israelites and Gentiles (Rev. 7:4,9). In contrast to chapters 1-3, Rev. 4-19 makes no reference to the Church on earth. The only logical explanation is that the Church is in glory during the period depicted in chapters 4-19 (e.g., Rev. 4:4; 5:10; 19:7-9).

k. The Twenty-Four Elders

Rev. 4:4,10; 5:5-6,8,11,14; 7:11,13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4. Regarding the identity of the elders, two suggestions are offered:

1. Angels. The elders are associated with the living creatures and the angels. But, angels are not promised crowns (stephanos, the victor's garland), neither are they promised the privilege to sit on thrones in God's presence for they are ministering spirits. Besides, angels are not to be judged until after the saints have been glorified, 1 Cor. 6:3.

2. Representatives of the Church--the redeemed of this age. They are clothed in white (righteousness of the saints), crowned (rewarded), and sitting upon thrones. Their number (24) reminds us of the 24 courses of the Levitical priesthood, and since the earthly tabernacle (later the temple) is typical of the heavenly, the twenty-four elders must represent a royal and heavenly priesthood--the Church (cp. Rev. 5:8). In Ezekiel's vision of heaven the living creatures and angels are seen, but no elders, for they are not there yet.

Thus, we have the twenty-four elders representing the Church in heaven, judged, rewarded, and enthroned at the beginning of the 70th Week. If the Church is not raised until Rev. 20:4, what is she doing in heaven in Rev. 19:7-11; and 4:4; 5:8-10?

1. The 144,000 of Revelation 7

The appearance of this sealed remnant from Israel in the 70th Week shows that God is dealing with Israel again and that the Church is not on the earthly scene (cp. Gal. 3:28).

m. The Church is Instructed to Pray for those in Authority (1 Tim. 2:1-4)

1. That we may live in peace.
2. That they may be saved.

The Church's message is one of grace. But, in the tribulation the wrath of God is called down on authorities. The imprecatory psalms are prayed by Israel, not the Church. The Scripture gives no intimation of the salvation of wicked rulers in that terrible period. They cooperate with Satan's man, Ps. 2:1.

n. Support from Biblical Typology

1. Enoch - bega Methuselah, "After he is gone it shall be sent."
2. Lot, Gen. 19:22; 2 Pet. 2:6-9 - the destroying angel could do nothing until he was taken out.

In contrast to these men who were delivered before judgment, Noah and his family, typical of Israel in the tribulation, were protected during the period of the flood (cp. Rev. 12:13-17).