

PRE-WRATH CONFUSION

“FOR GOD IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF CONFUSION, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.”

— 1 Corinthians 14:33

The Pre-Wrath Rapture theory is set forth in the book, *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church* by Marvin Rosenthal (Thomas Nelson, 1990). This view may be summarized as follows:

The **Rapture of the Church is not an imminent event** (p. 292). It cannot take place today. It is impossible for the Lord Jesus to come for His Church today. The Rapture cannot take place next week, next month or next year. Indeed the Rapture cannot take place for at least four or five years [**at the very earliest**]. The Rapture will occur **immediately** prior to the Day of the Lord and the Day of the Lord will begin with the opening of the seventh seal (pp. 18,60,176). The Rapture will occur on the very day the Day of the Lord begins (p. 117). It will occur at the very outset of the Day of the Lord (p. 210).

Daniel’s 70th week (a period of seven years) contains **three distinct time periods** (p. 233): **(1)** The first is the “beginning of sorrows” which is the first 3½ years (p. 147). **(2)** The second is the “Great Tribulation” which begins in the middle of the 70th week [at the beginning of the last 3½ years]. The Great Tribulation is also called “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (pp. 74, 206). The Great Tribulation is man’s wrath against man, not God’s wrath (p. 105). The Great Tribulation is “cut short” and made less than 3½ years (pp. 108,109,112). **(3)** The third time period of Daniel’s 70th week is the Day of the Lord which is the time of God’s wrath. The Day of the Lord begins with the opening of the 7th seal (p. 26).

According to this view, **the Day of the Lord must be clearly distinguished from the Great Tribulation**. These two time periods are distinct and separate and do not overlap (p. 147). They both occur during the last 3½ years, beginning with the Great Tribulation and followed immediately by the Day of the Lord. It is uncertain when the Great Tribulation ends and when the Day of the Lord begins because no man knows the day or the hour (Matt. 24:36). The Day of the Lord will commence sometime within the second half of the 70th week (p. 60). How long will the Day of the Lord last? It will end at the end of the 70th week. The uncertainty involves when it will begin. It will begin “long before the end of the 70th week” (p. 153). The Day of the Lord will begin “a considerable period of time before the 70th week ends” (p. 248). The Day of the Lord must be longer than five months because the 5th trumpet judgment alone is said to last five months (Rev. 9:1,5 and see p. 153) and the trumpet judgments take place during the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord will immediately follow the Rapture of the Church, which according to this theory is described in Matthew 24:31.

The Church will be on earth when the Antichrist makes a treaty with Israel which marks the beginning of the 70th week. The Church **must** enter the 70th week (p. 19, 137). The Church must pass through all of the first 3½ years. Indeed, the Church must be on earth during a significant part of the second half of the 70th week (p. 138). **The Church must be on earth during the entire period called the Great Tribulation** (“the time of Jacob’s trouble”) **and will not be Raptured until after the Great Tribulation is over, but immediately prior to the Day of the Lord**. Thus Church saints must be on earth to decide if they will accept the mark of Antichrist (p. 36) and they must be willing to suffer and die for Christ, if necessary, under the persecution of the Antichrist (p. 34). The true Church will be on earth when the Antichrist is personally present, empowered by Satan (Rev. 13:4), demanding that the world bow down and worship him (p. 137). Thus the Church will be present on earth “during a significant part of the 70th week of Daniel” (p. 138).

The great multitude from every nation described in Revelation 7 is the raptured Church (p. 184-185).

The first four seal judgments (Rev. 6) take place during the “beginning of sorrows” and the 5th seal takes place during the Great Tribulation (p. 147, and see Rosenthal’s chart published in *Zion’s Hope*, 1990). During the Day of the Lord the Trumpet judgments take place, but not the bowl judgments (p. 147). The bowl judgments are not poured out until after the 70th week of Daniel during the 30 additional days mentioned in Daniel 12:11. The seal judgments involve the wrath of unregenerate men whereas the trumpet and bowl judgments involve the wrath of God (pp. 34-35, 145). The Day of the Lord is not the time of God’s wrath in its totality because the Day of the Lord includes the trumpet judgments but not the bowl judgments. The bowl judgments take place after the Day of the Lord during the 30 days which follow Daniel’s 70th week. Thus, the seal judgments and the bowl judgments are not part of the Day of the Lord; only the trumpet judgments take place during this time.¹

SUMMARY OF THIS VIEW:

The Pre-Wrath view is **not a pre-tribulational view** because it insists that the Church will be present on earth during most of the seven years of Daniel’s 70th week (all except for the last phase which this view calls the Day of the Lord).

The Pre-Wrath view is **not a mid-tribulational view** because it insists that the Rapture will occur after the midpoint of the final seven years, somewhere around the middle of the last 3½ years.

The Pre-Wrath view is a **post-tribulational view** in the sense that it teaches that the Rapture will occur after the Great Tribulation. However, this view redefines the Great Tribulation period in a way that is unusual. Instead of saying that the Great Tribulation ends at the same time Daniel’s 70th week ends (at the end of this 7-year period), this view says that the Great

Tribulation ends just prior to the Day of the Lord which they say takes place a significant time prior to the end of Daniel’s 70th week. Thus this view is post-tribulational but **not** post-“Daniel’s 70th week.” This view teaches that the Rapture will take place toward the end of Daniel’s 70th week but not at the end.

The Pre-Wrath view is a **pre-wrath, pre-“Day of the Lord” view** because it teaches that the Rapture will take place immediately prior to the Day of the Lord which is the time when God pours out His wrath upon the earth.

In summary, this view **rejects the pre-tribulational view** because it says that the Rapture will not take place prior to Daniel’s 70th week; it **rejects the mid-tribulational view** because it says that the Rapture will take place a significant but unknown period of time after the middle of Daniel’s 70th week; and this view **rejects the post-tribulational view** because it places the Rapture not at the end of Daniel’s 70th week, but at a significant period of time before the end.

PRE-WRATH CONFUSION

(A Critique)

CONFUSION #1: Rejection of the Imminent Return

The Pre-Wrath view **CONFUSES**, yea, **TOTALLY REJECTS** the doctrine of the imminent return of Christ (the doctrine that Jesus Christ *may* come for His Church **at any time**). Instead of looking for the Saviour from heaven (Phil. 3:20), we should be looking for the signing of the treaty (Daniel 9:27). Instead of looking for that blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of our great God (Titus 2:13), we should be looking for the coming of Antichrist. Instead of looking for the Bridegroom (John 14:3), we should be looking for the man of sin. Instead of rejoicing in the fact that “we shall not all sleep” (1 Cor. 15:51) we should be bracing ourselves to face the

persecutions of Antichrist resulting in physical death for believers. Instead of the Lord being at hand (Phil. 4:5), He is **at least** four or five years away. Instead of rejoicing in the fact that His coming is drawing nigh (James 5:8), we should be sobered at the thought that the 70th week of Daniel is drawing nigh. Instead of looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 21), we should be looking for the greatest time of tribulation that this world has ever known (Matt. 24:21). Instead of waiting expectantly for His Son from heaven (1 Thess. 1:10) we should be waiting for the abomination of desolation.

How can the Pre-Wrath Rapture be a COMFORTING HOPE (see 1 Thess. 4:18) if we are told that we will be on earth to face the wrath of Satan (Rev. 12:12), the fury of the Antichrist (Rev. 13) and the greatest time of trouble the world has ever known (Matt. 24:21)? The careful student of Revelation realizes that the tribulation saints are not without hope, and yet the comfort given to them by the Lord is of a different nature than given to Church Age believers now. Today He comforts those who face an imminent Saviour with the words, "We shall not all sleep!" (1 Cor. 15:51). The comforting promise that the Lord gives to tribulation believers is this: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" (Rev. 14:13).

Where in all of the Church epistles are believers told to be looking for the tribulation? Where are we told to be looking for the Antichrist or the Abomination of Desolation? Repeatedly in the epistles believers are told to be looking expectantly for the Saviour who is OUR LIFE: "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:3-4). Indeed, God will keep us from (keep us out of) the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth (Rev. 3:10). "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

To the one holding the Pre-Wrath Rapture view this question can be asked, "DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE LORD JESUS

CHRIST COULD COME FOR YOU TODAY?" He would have to deny this with an emphatic "NO!" To such a person the Lord's coming is not near at hand. It is **at least** four or five years away!

CONFUSION #2: Mixes Church History with Jewish History

The Pre-Wrath view **CONFUSES** the mysterious and parenthetical nature of the Church Age.

It confuses CHURCH HISTORY with ISRAELITE HISTORY. God has a program for the Church and God has a distinct program for His people Israel. The two must not be confused.

The clearest and most complete chronological prophecy that God has given to us is the 70-week prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27. These 70 weeks involve 490 years of **Jewish history**: "Seventy weeks are determined **UPON THY PEOPLE AND UPON THY HOLY CITY.**" These 490 years pertain to the Jews and to Jerusalem, not to the Church. Of the 490 years, the last seven years are yet unfulfilled. After the first 69 weeks the Messiah was cut off and we know that the Church Age began less than two months after the Messiah was cut off. Daniel's 70th week has remained unfulfilled for nearly 2000 years. The prophetic time clock has stopped ticking for all these years. The clock stopped ticking after the 69th week and has not yet resumed ticking. How can we explain this large 2000 year gap between the 69th week and the 70th week? The answer is revealed on the pages of the New Testament. **DURING THIS 2000 YEAR GAP GOD IS INVOLVED IN THE FOLLOWING PROGRAM:**

1. He is building His Church (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:47).
2. He is taking out a people for His Name (Acts 15:14).
3. He is bringing in the fullness of the Gentiles (Rom. 11:25).

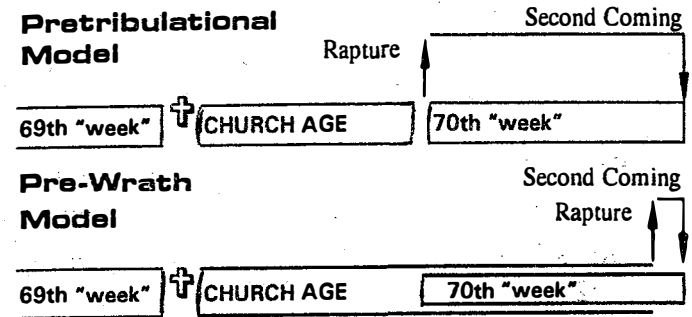
..... *Pre-Wrath Confusion*

4. He is placing believers into a living organism (1 Cor. 12:13).
5. He is saving a "showcase" that will eternally display His matchless grace (Eph. 1:7).
6. He is manifesting Himself through His body which is upon the earth (1 Tim. 3:15-16).²

Just as the Church had an abrupt beginning on the day of Pentecost shortly after the conclusion of the 69th week, so it should be expected that the Church will have an abrupt removal shortly before the beginning of the 70th week. The Pretribulational model harmonizes perfectly with Daniel's 70th week prophecy while at the same time recognizing the parenthetical and mysterious nature of the Church Age. It is "mysterious" in the sense that Church truth was unrevealed on the pages of the Old Testament and the Church Age was not foreseen by the prophets. The Old Testament prophets did not tell us about the gap simply because they did not see the gap. It was unrevealed to them. They saw only the two mountain peaks which represent the first and second comings of Christ but they did not see the large valley in between.

The Pre-Wrath view sees the Church as being on earth during a large part of Daniel's 70th week (the Church will be on earth, according to Rosenthal's charts, for approximately 3/4 of the last seven years, or approximately five years or more). This mixes up and **confuses** God's purpose for Israel and God's purpose for the Church. **THE CHURCH HAS NEVER AND WILL NEVER BE PRESENT ON EARTH DURING ANY OF ISRAEL'S 70 WEEKS.** The Church began after the 69th week ended and the Church will be raptured before the 70th week begins. Compare the two models below:

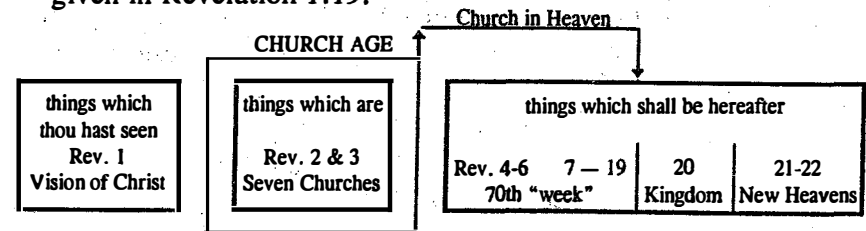
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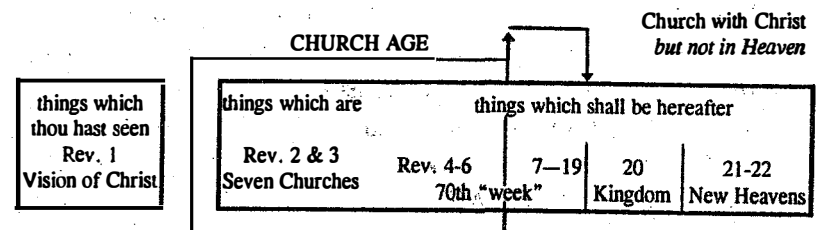
Which model best fits the data? Which model best explains the 2000 year gap? Which model best distinguishes between the Church and Israel? Which model best distinguishes between dispensations? Which view mixes the Church Age with Jewish history?

CONFUSION #3: Misinterprets the Book of Revelation

The Pre-Wrath view is **CONFUSING** in light of the Book of Revelation and the God-given outline of that book. We can draw a similar chart with respect to the sequence of events in the Book of Revelation. First we have the Pretribulational model of the Book of Revelation in light of the divine outline given in Revelation 1:19:



Next we have the **PRE-WRATH** model of the Book of Revelation in light of the divine outline given in Revelation 1:19:



Again we see that the PRE-WRATH view makes the Church pass through a large part of the 70th week of Daniel while the PRE-TRIB. view keeps the Church completely separate from Daniel's 70th week and better harmonizes with the God-inspired outline of the book as found in Rev. 1:19.

CONFUSION #4: Tries to Distinguish Great Tribulation from The Day of the Lord

The PRE-WRATH view makes the **CONFUSING** distinction between the GREAT TRIBULATION as described in Matthew 24:21 and the DAY OF THE LORD (the time of God's wrath) which is said to begin with the 7th seal judgment.

Essentially this view says that the Great Tribulation does not include the events of Revelation 7-19. We are told that the Great Tribulation is a time of great persecution and a time of man's wrath and Satan's wrath, but it is not the time of God's wrath. The Day of the Lord is the time of God's wrath and includes all of the trumpet judgments.

This view is **confusing** in light of Matthew 24:21 which says that the Great Tribulation is a unique time of trouble "such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, NOR EVER SHALL BE." In other words, this will be the most difficult and trying time of trouble that the world has ever known. There has never been a time in the past and there will never be a time in the future that will be worse than this very unique time of trouble. Other passages teach this very same thing: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be **a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time**: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Daniel 12:1); "Alas! for **that day is great, so that none is like it**: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it" (Jer. 30:7). Compare also Joel 2:2 (a "Day of the Lord" passage).

The PRE-WRATH view teaches that the Day of the Lord begins after the Great Tribulation and that the Day of the Lord is the time of God's wrath. Matthew 24:21, Daniel 12:1 and Jeremiah 30:7 all teach that the Great Tribulation is the greatest time of trouble that the world has ever known. Therefore, if the Day of the Lord is distinct from the Great Tribulation, then the Day of the Lord must be **LESS SEVERE** than the Great Tribulation. But how can the great day of God's wrath be less severe and less troublesome than the Great Tribulation? How can God's wrath be less severe than man's wrath? How can the trumpets and bowls be less severe than the fifth seal? How can God's wrath be less severe than Satan's wrath? How can unregenerate men and Satan cause more trouble for this world than the wrathful JUDGE Himself? The PRE-WRATH view, when compared with Matthew 24:21 and these other verses, makes the Day of the Lord an **ANTICLIMAX!**

Rosenthal **CONFUSES** the issue even more because he says that the Day of the Lord will be "the most awesome period of divine judgment the world will ever know" (p. 126). But how can the most awesome period of divine judgment the world will ever know be **A LESS SEVERE TIME OF TROUBLE** than the Great Tribulation?³

The real solution is to simply recognize that the Great Tribulation includes the trumpet and bowl judgments (the outpouring of the wrath of God) and this is one of the reasons why this is a time of unparalleled trouble. It is the time of unparalleled and unprecedented trouble on earth because it is the culmination of God's wrath (the trumpet and bowl judgments), the culmination of Satan's wrath (Rev. 12:12-14) and the culmination of the wrath of man (Rev. 13:5-7).

Matthew 24:21 presents a problem for the Pre-Wrath view. It is unthinkable that the time of God's wrath should be less severe than the Great Tribulation. Daniel's 70th week does not get better, it only intensifies and gets worse. **If the Great Tribulation is the greatest time of trouble the world has ever**

known, then the Great Tribulation **MUST include the time of God's wrath**. But the Pre-Wrath view must deny this. The very foundation of their view depends upon the alleged fact that the Great Tribulation is distinct from the Day of the Lord. This view struggles with the enormous problem of having to explain how the time of unparalleled trouble upon the earth has nothing at all to do with the time of God's wrath or the Day of the Lord.

The GREAT DAY OF THE LORD is clearly described in Zephaniah 1:15, "That day is a day of wrath, **a day of trouble and distress**, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness." How can any unbiased student of God's Word say that this day is totally unrelated to that great and unparalleled day of trouble and distress described in Matthew 24:21? As Bible students we must carefully distinguish things that differ. This is a case where the Pre-Wrath advocates distinguish things that are not different, resulting in **confusion**.

If indeed the Great Tribulation will be the greatest time of trouble this world will ever know (as Matt. 24:21 and Daniel 12:1 teach), then we would expect great and significant things to be taking place during this period of time. The Book of Revelation mentions seven seals, seven trumpets and seven bowls. According to Rosenthal, **the only thing which takes place during the Great Tribulation is the 5th seal**.⁴

According to the Pre-Wrath view, the "beginning of sorrows" (first 3½ years) involves the first four seals. During the Day of the Lord the trumpet judgments are sounded. But during the Great Tribulation (which is said to last probably more than a year and a half and probably less than two years), there is only the 5th seal! **HOW CAN SUCH UNPARALLELED TROUBLE COME FROM JUST ONE SEAL?** Do not the judgments progressively intensify (so that the trumpets are worse than the seals and the bowls worse than the trumpets)?

Rosenthal's Pre-Wrath View fails to account for how the Great Tribulation will be an unprecedented time of trouble. We

wish he would discuss the implications of such passages as Matthew 24:21; Daniel 12:1 and Jeremiah 30:7 ("that day is great, so that **none is like it**"). Rosenthal sees the Great Tribulation as a time of great trouble because of the fierce persecution of Antichrist (the wrath of man). However we must recognize that the fierce persecution of Antichrist will last throughout the last 3½ years according to Revelation 13:5-7. Thus the Day of the Lord, as defined by the Pre-Wrath view, would include the fierce persecution of Antichrist as well as the horrors of the wrath of God (the trumpet judgments). In other words, in the Great Tribulation we have the wrath of man (Antichrist). In the Day of the Lord we have the wrath of man (Antichrist) as well as the wrath of God (trumpet judgments). Would not this make the Day of the Lord a more severe time of trouble than the Great Tribulation? How then does the Pre-Wrath view explain the verses which teach that the Great Tribulation will be an unprecedented time of trouble? How can God's wrath and man's wrath combined be less severe and cause less trouble than man's wrath alone? It is very **CONFUSING!**⁵

CONFUSION #5: Unbiblical Distinction between Seal, Trumpet, & Bowl Judgments

The Pre-Wrath view makes a **CONFUSING** distinction and discontinuity between the seals, the trumpets and the bowls. This view says that the seals involve only the wrath of man, not the wrath of God and will take place during the first 3½ years of Daniel's 70th week and also during the Great Tribulation. The trumpets involve the wrath of God and will take place during the Day of the Lord. The bowls involve the wrath of God also, but they will be poured out after the day of the Lord and after Daniel's 70th week has been completed (during the 30 days following).

Thus, according to this view the seals are totally different in nature and character than the trumpets and bowls. The seals

come from man and from man's wrath. The trumpets and bowls come from God and from God's wrath. However the Bible presents the seals/trumpets/bowls as being UNIFIED. They all come **from the hand of God** (Rev. 5:1). They are all part of ONE UNIFIED SCROLL (Rev. 5:2). It is the Lord Jesus Christ who is found WORTHY to loose its seven seals. Thus, the seven seals are personally let loose by Jesus Christ Himself. Ultimately these judgments come from God. In His judgment God can use men and nations to fulfill His purposes (even as He did with the Babylonians, Assyrians, Romans, etc.), but ultimately we must recognize that the judgment comes from Him.

As Paul Feinberg has said, "To identify the wrath of God simply with His *direct* intervention is to overlook the fact that primary and secondary agency *both* belong to God. Would anyone *deny* that the Northern Kingdom had been judged by God because Assyria conquered her? Did the Southern Kingdom escape the wrath of God for her sin because the instrument of judgment was Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon? Surely the answer is no. Then why should anyone think that because the early seals and trumpets relate to famine and war as well as natural phenomena that they cannot and are not expressions of the wrath of God?"⁶

The Pre-Wrath view is forced to say that the seals contain only the wrath of man. They cannot contain the wrath of God. Why not? Because according to this view the Church is on earth during the seal judgments. According to the Bible Church Age believers are not appointed unto WRATH (1 Thess. 5:9). Thus, the only way to keep Church saints on earth during the seal judgments is to say that these judgments do not involve the wrath of God. This then forces the Pre-Wrath advocates to make the unbiblical distinction between the seals and the trumpets/bowls. Does the Bible really warrant such a distinction? To say that a judgment which reduces the world's population by a fourth has nothing to do with the wrath of God is incredulous (see Revelation 6:7-8, the 4th seal judgment).

CONFUSION #6: Forced Exclusion of Bowl Judgments

The Pre-Wrath theory causes great **CONFUSION** by insisting throughout the book that the Day of the Lord is the great time of God's wrath, but at the same time we are told that the bowl judgments, which are the most intense aspect of God's wrath upon the earth, are not part of the Day of the Lord at all, but take place during the 30 days following the Day of the Lord. If the bowl judgments contain the wrath of God, then why are these judgments not included in the Day of the Lord? The author spends much time arguing that the Day of the Lord is the time of God's great wrath upon the earth, but then he excludes the greatest and most intense time of God's wrath from the Day of the Lord. **Confusing!**

CONFUSION #7: Misrepresentation of Revelation 3:10

Rosenthal's Pre-Wrath handling of Revelation 3:10 ("kept from the hour") is total **CONFUSION** (pages 231-241). Rosenthal is reluctant to explain the meaning of the phrase "kept from the hour" because conservative Greek scholars are not in agreement with what it means (p. 233). This is **confusing**. There are many things that conservative scholars do not agree on, but the humble believer needs to submit to God and be taught by the Lord. We should also recognize that one reason conservative scholars disagree on this passage is because many of them force the text to say what they want it to say (to support their pre-held position) rather than simply letting the inspired text say what it says.

Rosenthal wants this verse to support the Pre-Wrath position. How does he understand it? The time of testing spoken of in this verse refers to the Great Tribulation, according to Rosenthal. The Rapture and the Day of the Lord will follow this time of testing (p. 241, see chart). His understanding is as follows: "Because you (the church of Philadelphia) have kept the word of My patience (during the 'beginning of sorrows' or the first 3½ years), I will keep you from the hour of testing (the

Great Tribulation)” (p. 241). Do you see the **confusion** in this position? ROSENTHAL CLAIMS THAT REVELATION 3:10 PROMISES THAT GOD WILL KEEP THE CHURCH FROM THE GREAT TRIBULATION, AND YET THE PRE-WRATH VIEW INSISTS THAT THE CHURCH WILL BE ON EARTH DURING THE ENTIRE TIME OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION.

Moreover, the Pre-Wrath view teaches that believers will be severely persecuted during the Great Tribulation: “Some will be sent into captivity. Others will be slain” (p. 236). Thus, the PRE-WRATH view presents two confusing, contradictory statements: (1) BELIEVERS WILL BE ON EARTH TO BE PERSECUTED, TO SUFFER AND TO DIE DURING THE ANTICHRIST’S REIGN OF TERROR KNOWN AS THE GREAT TRIBULATION *and* (2) BELIEVERS WILL BE KEPT FROM THE GREAT TRIBULATION (according to the promise of Rev. 3:10). Do these two statements harmonize and make sense or are they very **confusing** and contradictory?

Rosenthal makes the **confusing** statement that Revelation 3:10 “has nothing whatever to do with the rapture.” He teaches that the Rapture will take place after the Great Tribulation. God’s promise to keep His people (Rev. 3:10) will be fulfilled **during** the Great Tribulation and has nothing to do with the Rapture. He teaches that the Rapture will keep the Church from the Day of the Lord, but it will not keep the Church from the time of Great Tribulation. The Church will be on earth during this tribulation time, tested severely by the Antichrist.

Rosenthal’s view on Revelation 3:10 is startling! To paraphrase it: “Because you have kept the word of My patience during the ‘beginning of sorrows’ (the first 3½ years), I am going to send you into a far more severe test, even into the Great Tribulation!” Thus, their reward for passing the test of the first 3½ years is to be exposed to a far greater time of testing and trouble, the greatest time of trouble the world has ever known! If the Church is involved in this time of testing and suffering

under the persecution of Antichrist, then how is the Church kept from it?

In a confusing way, Rosenthal misrepresents the Pretribulation view of Revelation 3:10 by saying that this view teaches “removal from the temptation (testing).” See his chart on page 234. This is not true. The verse does not say “kept from the temptation (testing)” but it says “kept **FROM THE HOUR** of temptation (testing).” Pretribulationists have long taught that our exemption will not just be from the testing but from the TIME of the testing. We will be KEPT OUT OF (Greek: “*ek*”) THAT HOUR. We will not be on earth during that time.

On page 239, Rosenthal re-translates the verse to fit his theory. He translates Revelation 3:10 in this way: “kept through the hour.” The verse does not say this. It says “kept from the hour” or “kept out of the hour.” The preposition “*ek*” literally means “out of” and does not mean “through.”

On page 234, he says that the verse means “protection from the Great Tribulation.” But in what way are believers protected from the Great Tribulation if they must endure this time? Rosenthal’s answer is that certain men will be kept from the hour by physical removal: “perhaps men of faith and patience who are watchful will flee Jerusalem.” But how is fleeing from Jerusalem going to keep a person from the hour of testing which will “**come upon all the world**, to try them that dwell upon the earth” (Rev. 3:10). The only true protection from this worldwide testing is to not be present on earth. Rosenthal’s other suggestion is that some men will be “kept through the hour of temptation by direct, divine protection.” But as mentioned before, Revelation 3:10 says nothing about being kept THROUGH the hour. It speaks of being kept from (out of) the hour of temptation. Again we must ask, how can believers be kept from this time of testing (the Great Tribulation) if believers will be on earth during this time?

Finally Rosenthal makes this **confusing** statement: “It is only the church of Philadelphia which is promised exemption

from the hour of temptation....To apply the promise given to the church of Philadelphia to all of Christendom is to interpret the Scriptures non-literally” (p. 237). If this is so then the promise of Revelation 3:10 has absolutely nothing to do with believers living in the 20th century. There is no church of Philadelphia in Asia Minor today. And yet Rosenthal on page 239 does apply this verse to a future generation of believers, even to those believers who are steadfast under the stress and pressure of the first 3½ years and who will thus be protected from the Great Tribulation. In what sense are these believers part of the church of Philadelphia? **Confusing!**

Rosenthal is careful to leave himself a way out. What happens if the Pretribulational view of Revelation 3:10 turns out to be correct? What if this verse really does speak of the Rapture? What if it really does refer to removal from and exemption from the time of testing? Rosenthal makes it clear that if this should ever prove to be the case, then the PRE-WRATH VIEW would still survive. All you would need to do would be to change the chart somewhat. The idea of “removal” would still fit the Pre-Wrath view. All you need to do is let the “hour of testing” refer to the Day of the Lord (see page 233). Thus, the Church would be removed prior to the Day of the Lord! So when all else fails and his understanding of Revelation 3:10 proves to be wrong, his Pre-Wrath theory will still be vindicated! He can’t lose!

CONFUSION #8: Why the Church is on the Earth

The Pre-Wrath view **CONFUSES** the purpose for why the Church is on earth. Daniel’s 70th week relates specifically to the nation Israel (Daniel 9:24). The Lord will deal in a very special way with His chosen people preparing them for the coming of their Messiah (Jer. 30:4-17). What purpose is served by having the Church present on earth during the greater part of Daniel’s 70th week? According to Scripture, we recognize that the Church *does* need to be on earth *until*:

- a. the fullness of the Gentiles comes in (Rom. 11:25).
- b. the building is complete (Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:5; Matt. 16:18).
- c. God finishes calling out a people for His Name (Acts 15:14).
- d. Christ finishes building His Church (Matt. 16:18).
- e. the last believer is placed into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13).
- f. the Church is received up in glory (Col. 3:4; cf. 1 Tim. 3:15-16).

The fulfillment of all these things will take place prior to Daniel’s 70th week.

CONFUSION #9: Supposes that the Great Tribulation is Shortened

The Pre-Wrath view holds to the **CONFUSING** position that the Great Tribulation was shortened by God from a period of 3½ years to an unknown period of time less than 3½ years. This is based upon Matthew 24:22, “And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.” Rosenthal’s understanding of this verse is essential to the Pre-Wrath position (see his discussion on pages 108-110). All agree that the Great Tribulation begins at the time of the abomination of desolation, at the midway point of Daniel’s 70th week (after the first 3½ years). The key question is not when the Great Tribulation begins but when it ends. Does it last a full 3½ years (Pretribulational position) or does it last less than 3½ years (the Pre-Wrath view)?

Though not specifically stated, Rosenthal seems to imply that the Great Tribulation was originally intended to be 3½ years, but was shortened to an unknown period of time less than 3½ years: “What the Lord Himself teaches is shortened is the Great Tribulation. It is less than three and one-half years in duration. It begins in the middle of the seventieth week, but it does not

run until the end of the seventieth week” (p. 109). On page 112 he refers to “the cutting short of the Great Tribulation (i.e., making it less than three and one-half years.”

Rosenthal makes it clear that Daniel’s 70th week is **not** shortened (p. 109). This 70th week is a period of seven years (made up of two 3½ year segments). But where in Scripture are we told that the Great Tribulation was originally intended to be 3½ years? Could not it have been a longer period of time that was shortened to 3½ years? In other words, Rosenthal seems to teach that the original long period of time was 3½ years and that this was cut down to a shorter period of unknown length (less than 3½ years). But is it not possible that the original long period was an unknown period of time (more than 3½ years) which was cut down to a shorter period of time, that is, shortened to 3½ years?

Let’s think about what the Lord was actually teaching in Matthew 24:22. The verb “shortened” means to “mutilate, curtail, shorten, lop off, cut off, shorten, abridge, amputate.” These days were not PROLONGED, but they were cut short. The expression “those days” (Matt. 24:22) refers back to verse 21 (those days of great tribulation). The Lord had just predicted a time of unparalleled and unprecedented tribulation upon the earth (verse 21). Those days are said to be so difficult that if those days were to be prolonged, then no flesh would be saved (v.22). God, in mercy, shortens those days for the sake of His elect (v.22).

How should we understand the shortening by God of the time of the Great Tribulation? **The world because of its wickedness and rejection of Jesus Christ deserves a much LONGER time of great tribulation** (which we understand to include the wrath of Almighty God). God in His mercy cuts short the time when His greatest fury will be unleashed upon the earth. God in mercy gives man a shorter period of time—only 42 months, only 1260 days. This same period of time is referred to in Revelation 12:12 where the devil himself recognizes it as a short

time: “the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that **he hath but a short time.**” He knows he has just a LITTLE time! Thus the prophetic Scriptures refer to those last 3½ years as a very short period of time (compare also Rev. 17:10 with Rev. 13:5 where we are told that Antichrist’s reign will continue 3½ years—“**a short space.**”). If God had prolonged this time then no flesh would be saved.

Rosenthal’s view has the Great Tribulation immediately followed by the Day of the Lord and the wrath of God. Hence we have this **confusing** series of events: God in mercy shortens the Great Tribulation so that He might unleash upon the world the fury of His wrath!! If mankind will barely survive the Great Tribulation (the time of “man’s wrath” according to Rosenthal), then how will mankind ever survive the time of God’s wrath? Thus Rosenthal’s understanding of how any flesh will survive the Great Tribulation is as follows: The Church will survive by means of a post-tribulation Rapture but the rest of the world, including Israel, will be plunged into the greatest time of divine wrath the world has ever known! Saved by wrath divine! **Confusing!**

Matthew 24:22 says “except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved.” Rosenthal understands this as a reference to the Jewish people (p. 174). If Jews barely survive the Great Tribulation, then how will they ever survive the Day of the Lord? The Day of the Lord will include Satan’s wrath (Rev. 12:12,14), man’s wrath (in the person of Antichrist— Rev. 13:1-10) and God’s wrath. In what way can the Day of the Lord help the Jews to survive?

CONFUSION #10: Tries to Make a Distinction between the “Time of Jacob’s Trouble” and “The Day of the Lord”

The Pre-Wrath view makes the **CONFUSING** distinction between the “time of Jacob’s trouble” and the Day of the Lord. The “time of Jacob’s trouble” is described in Jeremiah

30:7—”Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.” Rosenthal teaches that the time of Jacob’s trouble is identical to the Great Tribulation, but different from the Day of the Lord (which he says follows the time of Jacob’s trouble).

Here’s the problem: Will not the Day of the Lord be a time of great trouble for Israel? What makes the Great Tribulation a time of particular trouble for Israel and not the Day of the Lord? Furthermore, how will Israel be saved out of this time of trouble? The Rapture follows the Great Tribulation (according to the Pre-Wrath view), but this does not involve Israel [apart from a very small remnant of believing Jews who are members of the body of Christ]. The Rapture involves only the Church. Israel would remain on earth to face the awesome Day of the Lord, the time of God’s wrath. Revelation chapter 12 teaches that Israel is under fierce Satanic attack **throughout the last 3½ years**, not just during the first part of these last 3½ years. Also Israel is under attack from the Antichrist **throughout the last 3½ years**, not just during the first part of these last 3½ years. Why then should we only call the first part of these 3½ years the time of Jacob’s trouble?

It makes much more Biblical sense to understand the entire 3½ years as being the time of Jacob’s trouble. Israel will be saved out of that time by the glorious coming of the Messiah at the end of Daniel’s 70th week. Rosenthal saves Israel by plunging this nation into the awesome fury of the Day of the Lord! **Confusing!**

CONFUSION #11: Cry for “Peace and Safety” During Troubled Times

The Pre-Wrath view holds to the **CONFUSING** position that men will be saying “Peace and safety” immediately following the greatest time of trouble and persecution the world has ever known! Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 5, indicates that prior to the Day of the Lord men will be saying “Peace and safety”: “For

yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape” (1 Thess. 5:2-3). This indicates that prior to the Day of the Lord there will be conditions on earth of peace and safety (absence of war, security, people holding and having a false sense of security and well being).

This passage is a problem for Pre-Wrath advocates because they teach that prior to the Day of the Lord the world will experience the Great Tribulation which will involve intense persecution, the fury of Antichrist, the wrath of Satan, Israelites fleeing for their lives from Jerusalem, thousands of people dying for their faith, etc. **Conditions during the Great Tribulation are the very opposite of “Peace and safety.”** Rosenthal describes this time as follows: “At the middle of the seventieth week [beginning of the Great Tribulation] the Antichrist will make his capital the city of Jerusalem. He will seek to become a world ruler, ruthlessly destroying men and nations as he moves to consolidate his power. His greatest fury will be unleashed against the Jewish nation. For that reason, this period of time is called ‘the time of Jacob’s trouble.’ It will be a time of such severity that except those days were shortened, no flesh would live” (p. 174). Does this description sound like a time when men will be saying “Peace and safety”?

How then does the Pre-Wrath view explain the cry of “Peace and safety”? Here is Rosenthal’s ingenious explanation: “At that moment cosmic disturbance will signal the approach of the Day of the Lord. Jews being persecuted by the Antichrist will view this as divine intervention on their behalf in the nick of time. They will proclaim ‘peace and safety,’ but their cry will be premature—an expression of short-lived duration” (p. 174). In other words, according to this view these people who will be bruised and battered from the Great Tribulation will not be experiencing any peace and safety, but when God begins to intervene with cosmic disturbances, then they suddenly get

encouraged to hope that conditions will change, only to have their hopes dashes to pieces by the fury of God’s wrath being unleashed upon them! **Confusing!**

Is Rosenthal letting the facts of the Bible speak for themselves or is he taking these facts and forcing them to fit his theory? By the way, why does Rosenthal identify those who say, “Peace and safety” as being Jews (p. 174)? In the context of 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, we should understand the “they” of verse 3 as referring to unsaved people, whether Jews or Gentiles [throughout verses 1-9 there is a contrast between “they,” the unsaved, and “ye/us,” the believers].

CONFUSION #12: Misunderstanding of “Birth Pangs”

The Pre-Wrath view is very **CONFUSING** in its understanding of Daniel’s 70th week and the “birth pangs” (birth pains) associated with it.

The Bible definitely teaches that there are birth pangs associated with Daniel’s 70th week (the seven years prior to the Lord’s return to the earth). Keep in mind that a woman about to give birth experiences two kinds of birth pangs. There are the **BEGINNING BIRTH PANGS** which come suddenly and unexpectedly when the woman first goes into labor. These are the less severe birth pangs. Then there are the severe birth pangs of hard labor which are very intense. These very difficult pains, however, do not come unexpectedly. The woman knows that the severe birth pangs follow the beginning birth pangs, and though the severe birth pangs are very intense and difficult, they do not catch the woman by surprise.

In Matthew 24:8 we read, “All these are the beginning of sorrows [beginning of birth pangs].” This refers to the coming of false Christs, wars, famine, pestilences, earthquakes, etc. (verses 4-7). Rosenthal and most Pretribulationists equate these things with the four seal judgments of Revelation chapter 6, saying that these things will take place during the first 3½ years of Daniel’s 70th week. This will be followed by a much more

intense and difficult time: “For then shall be **great tribulation**, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt. 24:21). This corresponds to a woman’s hard labor which she must endure just prior to giving birth. The Great Tribulation is also called “the time of Jacob’s trouble” and this time is said to involve terrible birth pangs: “Ask ye now, and **see whether a man doth travail with child?** wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, **as a woman in travail**, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! **For that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble;** but he shall be saved out of it” (Jer. 30:6-7). This again must refer to the severe phase of childbirth, that of hard, intense labor.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3, we are told that the Day of the Lord will come at a time when the unsaved world is not expecting it (like a thief in the night): “For yourselves know perfectly that **the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.** For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, **as travail upon a woman with child;** and they shall not escape.” A thief comes without any forewarning. The Day of the Lord will come the same way. Its destruction will come very suddenly, when least expected (when people are saying “Peace and safety”). This sudden destruction of the Day of the Lord is likened to those unexpected birth pangs of a woman with child. The only kind of birth pangs which are unexpected are the **BEGINNING BIRTH PANGS**. These are the pains (initial labor) that catch a woman by surprise. The more severe birth pangs which come later do not come by surprise. The woman who has already begun labor is fully expecting the more severe phase to come.

Rosenthal rightly understands the “beginning of sorrows” to refer to the less severe birth pangs during the first 3½ years (p. 173). He then says that the “hard labor” phase refers to a time immediately prior to the Day of the Lord (the Great Tribulation). He bases this on 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3. However, 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 includes the birth pangs (the “sudden

destruction”) as part of the Day of the Lord, not as a time preceding the Day of the Lord. He also assumes, wrongly so, that 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 refers to “hard labor.” This passage refers to labor which comes suddenly and without warning, and this can only apply to beginning labor pains.

Rosenthal’s view is **confusing**. If the first 3½ years are the beginning birth pangs and if the period prior to the Day of the Lord (p. 174) is the time of hard labor (the Great Tribulation), then what kind of pains are there during the day of the Lord? If the time of man’s wrath is likened to beginning labor and hard labor, what shall the time of God’s wrath be likened to?

Rosenthal’s view **confuses** the childbirth analogy. In childbirth, the beginning labor and the severe labor are followed by the birth! The difficult time is followed by a wonderful and joyous time! Daniel’s 70th week (with its beginning and hard labor) is followed by a glorious time (the Lord’s return to earth and millennial bliss). However, in Rosenthal’s view we do not have this. In the Pre-Wrath view the beginning labor and the severe labor are followed by the Day of the Lord, the most intense time of God’s wrath the world has ever known! Thus, this mother who thought she would be relieved by giving birth, discovers to her horror that SHE HAS GIVEN BIRTH TO A MONSTER! **How confusing!!** Imagine telling a woman who has just completed hard labor: “Your worst time is still ahead!”

Rosenthal’s view does not make sense. The Great Tribulation is the greatest time of trouble the world will ever know (Matt. 24:21), but Rosenthal says that the Day of the Lord follows it! The Great Tribulation is a time of hard and severe birth pangs, but Rosenthal teaches that the Day of the Lord follows it! When we should be expecting birth and a time of rejoicing, Rosenthal plunges us into the horrors of the Day of the Lord. **Confusing!**

CONFUSION #13: Failure to Distinguish Cosmic Disturbances

The Pre-Wrath theory **CONFUSES** the cosmic disturbances of Matthew 24:29 with the cosmic disturbances of the 6th seal in Revelation 6:12-14. May God grant us discernment to carefully distinguish things that differ.

Let us first consider the passage in Revelation chapter 6. The sixth seal involves cosmic disturbances. There is no question about this. A “blackout” of the light from the heavenly bodies takes place. **WHEN** does this take place? It takes place prior to all of the trumpet judgments (Rev. 8-9) and prior to all the bowl judgments (Rev.16). The second coming of Christ in power and great glory does not take place until Revelation 19:11-20. Our point is this: Between the sixth seal “blackout” and the second coming of Christ a great number of events take place over a considerable period of time. The sixth trumpet in and of itself lasts for a period of five months (Rev. 9:10). We should also be very careful to notice that the fourth trumpet judgment also involves a cosmic disturbance (a “blackout” or at least a reduction of light from the heavenly bodies)—see Revelation 8:12. We must assume, therefore, that the darkening of the 6th seal was temporary, because during the fourth trumpet the heavenly bodies are darkened again. Could it be possible that the heavenly bodies are darkened once again immediately prior to the Lord’s second coming in power and great glory?

Let us now consider the passage in Matthew chapter 24 (verses 29-30). This “blackout” takes place “**immediately after the tribulation of those days.**” What happens when this takes place? Do we have a lengthy unfolding of the trumpet and bowl judgments? No! **Immediately after the Great Tribulation** we are told that 3 things will happen “**THEN**” [at that time] (v.30): (1) the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven [probably a reference to the Shekinah glory, and since there is no light from the other heavenly bodies this will be a glorious sight]; (2) all the tribes of the earth will mourn [see Revelation 1:7—

“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen”]; (3) they will see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

If we are to read Matthew 24:29-30 literally and understand it in a normal and natural way, we can only conclude that immediately after the Great Tribulation the Son of Man will come in power and great glory. This is normally and naturally understood to be a reference to our Lord’s glorious coming to the earth to judge His enemies and establish His kingdom. According to the Pre-wrath view, before the Lord returns to the earth, there must first occur all of the trumpet judgments associated with the Day of the Lord (lasting for months) and only after this will Christ return to the earth. This is not what the passage says.

If Matthew 24:30 is describing our Lord’s glorious coming to the earth as King of Kings (compare Rev. 19:11-16), then there must be a great gap between verse 29 (describing events immediately after the tribulation) and verse 30 (describing an event which the Pre-Wrath theory says will not take place until a significant time after the Great Tribulation). If Matthew 24:30 is understood to refer to the Lord’s second coming to the earth, then the Pre-Wrath view must create a huge gap (lasting many months, perhaps years) between Matthew 24:29 and Matthew 24:30. During this gap the Day of the Lord takes place including all of the trumpet judgments. How **confusing!** How much better to understand this passage in its normal sense, letting it say just what it says. The passage simply says that immediately after the tribulation of those days (the Great Tribulation mentioned in verse 21) the Lord Jesus will return to the earth in power and great glory.

Of course, the Pre-Wrath theory, in order to avoid the problem of this gap, understands Matthew 24:30-31 as referring to the Rapture of the Church, which according to their theory

does take place immediately after the Great Tribulation. There are problems with this understanding. Matthew 24:30 says that those on the earth will see the Son of man coming with power and great glory. The second coming of the Lord to the earth will be very visible indeed, but not the Rapture. The Rapture will take place “in a moment [in a split second of time], in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor. 15:52). If something takes place that quickly how can it be seen? It reminds us of Enoch who “walked with God, and he was not; for God took him” (Gen. 5:24). The people did not see God take him because it took place too quickly. All they could see was that “he was not” (he had disappeared). So it will be with the translation of the Church at the Rapture.

Another problem with the Pre-Wrath view is this: If Matthew 24:30-31 refers to the Rapture, then where in Matthew chapters 24-25 do we have a description of the Lord’s glorious coming to the earth? Where in these chapters does it speak of the trumpet judgments? Where does it speak of the Day of the Lord? [The Pretribulation view understands the Day of the Lord with its trumpet judgments to be included as part of the Great Tribulation mentioned in verse 21]. Matthew 25:31 speaks of the Son of man, the millennial King, sitting on the throne of His glory [on earth]. How did He get there? It was not the Rapture that brought Him to that throne, because the Rapture takes place “in the air” (1 Thess. 4:13-17). He came to that throne by way of His glorious second coming to earth which takes place at the end of the Great Tribulation and which is described in Matthew 24:30 and Matthew 25:31.

The Pre-Wrath view **confuses** the Rapture with the second coming in glory to the earth. It also **confuses** the blackout which occurs during the 6th seal with the blackout which occurs immediately prior to the Lord’s return to the earth. May God help us to distinguish those things which differ, rightly dividing His Word of truth.

CONFUSION #14: Does Not Allow for Church to be Received into Heaven

The Pre-Wrath view of the second coming is **CONFUSING** in that it teaches that “there is only **one** Second Coming” which “includes the Rapture of the Church, the outpouring of God’s wrath during the Day of the Lord, and Christ’s physical return in glory (pp. 221-222).” “It means a coming and continuing presence” (p. 222). From this view one gets the impression that Christ meets the Church in the air at the Rapture and then Christ and the Church continue to gradually descend to the earth during the Day of the Lord. However the Bible teaches that when Christ comes to rapture the believers He will receive His believers unto Himself “that where I am, **there** ye may be also” (John 14:3). The context is referring to the Father’s house in heaven (John 14:1-3). According to our Lord, the Rapture involves Christ receiving His Bride (the Church) and taking her with Him to heaven. The Pre-Wrath view does not allow for this because it insists upon the Lord’s “continued presence” with respect to the earth (once He comes He must remain present and not return to heaven). Thus it is very significant that in a 300-page book dealing with the Rapture, Rosenthal does not once even mention John 14:3 which is one of the key passages on the Rapture.⁷ The reason is clear: John 14:3 does not fit in with the Pre-Wrath theory and thus it is best to ignore contradictory data.

CONFUSION #15: Applies Matthew 24:31 to the Church

The Pre-Wrath view **CONFUSES** the post-tribulational re-gathering of the nation Israel with the Pretribulational Rapture of the Church. This view teaches that Matthew 24:31 (which in light of Matthew 24:29 is clearly a post-tribulational event) is a description of the Rapture of the Church: “And he shall send his angels with a **great sound of a trumpet**, and they shall gather together his elect **from the four winds**, from one end of heaven to the other.”

It is far better to understand Matthew 24:31 as the final re-gathering of the nation Israel, an event repeatedly mentioned in the Old Testament Scriptures. “And it shall come to pass in that day, that **the great trumpet shall be blown**, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem” (Isaiah 27:13). “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time **to recover the remnant of his people**, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah **from the four corners of the earth**” (Isaiah 11:11-12). See also Jeremiah 16:4-16.

CONFUSION #16: Judgment of Nations Applied to the Church

The Pre-Wrath view **CONFUSES** the way in which the Lord will deal with people at His coming at the end of the age. Rosenthal argues, based on Matthew 28:20, that the Rapture will take place at the end of the age. This is because the Lord promised to be with His Church Age believers until the end of the age (Matt. 28:20). What happens at the Rapture? All would agree that at the Rapture God separates the righteous from among the wicked. He does this by removing believers by the Rapture. Unbelievers (unrighteous ones) remain on earth. However, the Lord Jesus taught that at the end of the age the very opposite of this takes place: “So shall it be at the end of the age: the angels shall come forth, and sever [separate] the wicked from among the just [righteous]” (Matt. 13:49). This indicates that the unrighteous will be removed by judgment and the righteous will remain on earth. It was this way in the days of Noah when the unrighteous were taken away in judgment

(Luke 17:34-37) and the righteous remained on the earth (Noah and his family).

Rosenthal teaches that the Church is on earth until the end of the age (Matt. 28:20), at which time the Rapture will take place. Matthew 13:49 teaches that at the end of the age God will separate the wicked from among the righteous. But all would agree that the Rapture involves a separation of the righteous from among the wicked. How then does Rosenthal explain this seemingly **confusing** contradiction?

CONFUSION #17: Michael the Archangel Called the “Restrainer”

The Pre-Wrath position makes the **CONFUSING** claim that the angel Michael is the Restrainer referred to in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 (p. 260, 271). This view cannot identify the Restrainer with God the Holy Spirit because the presence of the Restrainer will prevent the man of sin from being revealed (2 Thess. 2:6-8). According to the Pre-Wrath view the CHURCH (INDWELT BY GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT) WILL STILL BE ON EARTH AT THE TIME WHEN THE MAN OF SIN IS REVEALED. Indeed, the Church will be on earth to suffer the severe persecutions of Antichrist during the Great Tribulation! Hence, Rosenthal must find someone else to play the role of the Restrainer.⁸

CONFUSION #18: Why Should Satan Attack Israel?

The Pre-Wrath view causes **CONFUSION** with respect to Satan and who his enemy is during the tribulation. In Revelation 12:13 we read, “And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman [Israel] which brought forth the man child.” In the middle of the tribulation Satan is cast out of heaven and he comes down unto the inhabitants of the earth, having GREAT WRATH (Rev. 12:7-12). The object of Satan’s attack at this time is clearly the

nation Israel. According to the Pre-Wrath view, the Church of Jesus Christ is still on earth at this time (the halfway point of Daniel’s 70th week). If at this time God’s saved people on earth comprise the Church of Jesus Christ, then why is the devil’s wrath poured out upon Israel? Why is not the Church under attack? Why would the devil ignore the Church and attack unregenerate Israel? The Pretribulation answer is simple. The devil does not attack the Church because the Church is not on earth!

CONFUSION #19: The Identity of Those Saved During the 70th Week

The Pre-Wrath Rapture view is **CONFUSING** in its identification of those who are saved during the 70th week of Daniel. Keep in mind that according to the Pre-Wrath view, Daniel’s 70th week belongs primarily to CHURCH HISTORY. Approximately 3/4 of these last seven years (5+ years) will belong to the Church Age. Only the very last phase of Daniel’s 70th week (approximately the last one or two years) will be a time when the Church will be absent from earth (during the Day of the Lord). Thus everyone who is saved during the first 5+ years will be a member of the Church of Jesus Christ and will be a part of the Rapture, according to this view.

This carries with it several implications. What about the 144,000 Jewish witnesses described in Revelation 7 and 14? If these are saved during the first 5+ years, then they would be members of the Church and they would be taken up in the Rapture (unless we are to teach a partial Rapture). Since their identity is clearly Jewish, this implies that their salvation must have taken place toward the end of Daniel’s 70th week during the Day of the Lord. [Rosenthal seems to suggest the possibility that the 144,000 could have been sealed and saved prior to the Day of the Lord and hence prior to the Rapture (p. 182). If so, then why are these saved persons not included in the Rapture?]

What about the great multitude from every nation described

in Revelation 7:9? They are identified as those who have come out of great tribulation (Rev. 7:14). Thus Rosenthal is forced to say that this multitude is the raptured Church (p. 184-185). However, the great host of Church Age saints never came out of great tribulation because they lived on earth prior to Daniel’s 70th week. Hence, if the raptured Church consists only of those who have come out of great tribulation (p. 185), then we must have a partial Rapture.

The Pre-Wrath view says that during **most** of Daniel’s 70th week God is placing believers into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13) and dealing with the Church. Those saved during this time are members of the Church. Those Gentiles who will be saved and enter the kingdom in their natural bodies must be saved toward the end of Daniel’s 70th week during the Day of the Lord’s wrath. When it comes to salvation and who the people of God are, it is the Church that is prominent during the greater part of these final seven years. This is very **confusing** in light of the fact that the 70 weeks of Daniel’s prophecy pertain to the Jews and Jerusalem (see Daniel 9:24); not to God’s called out assembly, the Church. When clear-cut dispensational distinctions are ignored much **confusion** results.

CONFUSION #20: Misinterpretation of 2 Peter 3:10-12

The Pre-Wrath view **CONFUSES** the purging of the heavens and the earth by fire (2 Peter 3:10-12) with judgments which take place near the end of Daniel’s 70th week. This view says that the dissolving of the universe will be pre-millennial rather than post-millennial and this view also teaches that the new heavens and the new earth will be realized during the Millennium (see pages 127-134).

The passing away of the heavens and the melting of the elements are included as part of the Day of the Lord in 2 Peter 3:10: “But **the day of the Lord** will come as a thief in the night; **in the which** the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth

also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” Since Rosenthal limits the Day of the Lord to a very short period of time (less than 3½ years) and since he teaches that the end of the Day of the Lord coincides with the end of Daniel’s 70th week, then a post-millennial event cannot be included in the Day of the Lord. Indeed, Rosenthal cannot include any of the Millennium as being part of the Day of the Lord either because the Day of the Lord “is exclusively a time of devastating judgment” and “no blessing is associated with it” (p. 127).

An objective reading of 2 Peter 3:10-12 reveals that Peter is describing the total dissolving and melting of the present universe by means of fire: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which **the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth** also and the works that are therein **shall be burned up**. Seeing then that **all these things shall be dissolved**, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, **wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?**” If we interpret these verses LITERALLY, then how could this possibly be a description of what shall take place during Daniel’s 70th week? If such were to take place during Daniel’s 70th week, how could there be any survivors? When the world was judged by water there were only eight survivors! If God were to judge the earth by fire during Daniel’s 70th week in such a way that the very elements dissolve, how could anyone survive? Rosenthal fails to interpret 2 Peter chapter 3 literally.

The key to prophetic chronology is the Book of Revelation. Rosenthal places the new heavens and the new earth during the time of the Millennium. The Book of Revelation places the new heavens and the new earth **after** the Millennium. The Millennium is described in chapter 20 and the new heavens and the new earth is introduced after the Millennium in chapter 21 (see verse 1).

The Lord Jesus predicted that there would come a time when heaven and earth would pass away (Matt. 24:35). When would this event take place? In 2 Peter 3 we are given a very important chronological clue as to exactly when the heavens and the earth will be judged by fire: “But **the heavens and the earth**, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, **reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men**” (2 Peter 3:7). God is reserving the present universe for a great final judgment (a fire judgment). When will this take place? At the “day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2 Pet. 3:7). On what day will ungodly men be judged and sent into perdition [into the lake of fire]? This will take place at the time of the GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT (Rev. 20:11-15). This is confirmed in Revelation 20:11, “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, **from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away** [compare 2 Pet. 3:7,10-12]; and there was found no place for them.” Notice carefully that the Great White Throne judgment is post-millennial (after the Millennium) and therefore the dissolving of the universe by fire, spoken of in 2 Peter 3, must take place after the Millennium. This also perfectly harmonizes with Revelation 21:1, “**And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away**; and there was no more sea.”

In 2 Peter 3:13 we learn that righteousness will find its home in this new heaven and new earth: “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, **wherein dwelleth righteousness**.” This is because “there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev. 21:27). During the Millennium the Lord Jesus will exercise a righteous rule and will swiftly punish unrighteousness, but sin will still be present in the hearts of men and righteousness will not find its true home on earth at that time.

Moving the elemental destruction of the heavens and the

earth to a time before the Millennium creates more problems than it solves, and does not respect the chronology given to us in 2 Peter 3:7 and the Book of Revelation. Placing this fire judgment after the Millennium does not harmonize with the Pre-Wrath view, but it does fit well into the prophetic time framework of the Book of Revelation.

* * * * *

Does the Pre-Wrath view accurately present the facts of Scripture in a sane, safe and solid way? “Prove [*test all things by the Word of God*] all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21). May God be pleased to reveal His truth to His humble servants (Rev. 1:1), with the result being that we may live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age, looking (expectantly and eagerly) for that blessed hope (that happy expectancy), even the glorious appearing of the GREAT GOD, even our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ (Titus 2:12-13). As our godly teachers have encouraged and exhorted us in the past, so we say again, “IT MAY BE TODAY!” “MARANATHA!” “EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS!”

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—George W. Zeller (revised 4/91; Miles Stanford helped with laying out the charts). This paper was originally written in response to a phone conversation with Stan Rosenthal in June of 1988, but has since been revised and updated in light of Marv Rosenthal’s book.

Recommended Reading:

The Pre-Wrath Rapture View--An Examination and Critique by **Renald E. Showers (Kregel, 2001)**. Dr. Showers worked with Marv Rosenthal when they were both at Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry.

Endnotes:

1. Letter on file from Marvin J. Rosenthal (April 11, 1991) confirming that I have presented his position accurately.
2. 1 Timothy 3:15-16 refers to the incarnation of Christ as it is applied to the present life and ministry and witness of the assembly—see our paper entitled “The Mystery of Godliness”.
3. By the way, Rosenthal admits that the Day of the Lord will not only be a day of wrath, but will also be a day of trouble and a day of distress (p. 124). The words “trouble” and “distress” are synonyms for the term “tribulation.” Indeed, in the LXX the Greek term for “tribulation” is used in Day of the Lord passages such as Zephaniah 1:15. Thus the Old Testament as well as Rosenthal both teach that the Day of the Lord will be a time of tribulation and trouble. Matthew 24:21 and Daniel 12:1 teach that the Great Tribulation will be the greatest time of trouble the world has ever known or will ever know. Therefore, this would indicate that the Day of the Lord is a less severe time of trouble than the Great Tribulation.
4. See his chart published in *Zion’s Hope*, 1990.
5. I came across an article published by the Worldwide Church of God, the cult founded by H. Armstrong. I was amazed to find that these people hold to the identical view of Rosenthal when it comes to the Great Tribulation as being totally distinct from the Day of the Lord. Here is how they explain it: “**Is the ‘Great Tribulation’ the same event as the ‘Day of the Lord’?** No. They are totally different....The Great Tribulation is not the time of God’s wrath, but rather the time of the wrath of Satan the devil....The Day of the Lord is clearly shown here [in Matt. 24] to come after the heavenly signs [of Matt. 24:29]. The time order is: first, the Tribulation—Satan’s wrath; second, the heavenly signs; third, the Day of the Lord—God’s intervention. The same time sequence is revealed in Revelation 6, speaking of the seven seals. The fifth seal represents the Great Tribulation, followed by the heavenly signs, then the Day of the Lord or God’s wrath (verses 9-17)” —*The Good News of the World Tomorrow*, March 1986, p. 13. Hence, some of Rosenthal’s ideas are not new. The Worldwide Church of God cult has been teaching these things since 1986 and probably long before that.
6. *The Rapture* by Archer, Feinberg, Moo and Reiter, see pp. 61-63.

7. Gundry spiritualized this verse on page 154 of his post-trib. book. Rosenthal does not even mention it!
8. His **confusing** and unwarranted identification of the Restrainer with the archangel Michael is ably refuted by Paul Karleen in *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church—Is It Biblical?* See chapter 10.