

# When is the Resurrection of the Just?

Hermann J. Eckelmann

Revised by

Perry G. Phillips

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## Foreword

The late pastor Hermann J. Eckelmann of Faith Bible Church, Ithaca NY, wrote *When is the Resurrection of the Just?* in 1967 to explain his view on what is called the “post-tribulation rapture.” Pastor Eck, as we called him, after careful study of the Scriptures, concluded that Christians who are alive at Jesus’s second coming will go through a period of trial called the Great Tribulation before they are taken to the sky to meet Jesus. Pastor Eck believed that it was important for Christians to understand this scenario so they would not feel abandoned by the Lord if they found themselves living in the period of the Great Tribulation.

It is clear from Scripture that God controls all history, even times when Christians are reviled, persecuted, or killed for their testimony of Jesus Christ. We read in Scripture that in spite of the extent of the Great Tribulation—which will usher in unprecedented catastrophes and persecution—God is still in control. As He is in control over such extreme circumstances, so He is also in control over the daily lives of Christians in lesser trials. This should encourage all of us as we read the revision of Pastor Eck’s *When is the Resurrection of the Just?*

This revision keeps the original thoughts of Pastor Eck. I have modified some of the diagrams and reworded sections of the original where I felt it would clarify Pastor Eck’s thesis.

Finally, my thanks to Dale Pleticha for careful reading and comments on this article.

Perry G. Phillips  
All Saints Day, 2006

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## Preface

Will Christians go through the period known as the *Great Tribulation*? If so, predictions to that effect in the Scriptures will serve to warn us to be prepared and will provide that we may be strengthened by the knowledge that this is part of the detailed plan of our Lord. If Christians will not go through the Great Tribulation, it will be comforting to know it. Surely, the Lord has permitted His people to suffer at times in the past and we have no right to suppose ourselves any better than they. We can only know what is in store for the Lord's people, therefore, by specific revelation on this subject. It is our prayer that the Lord will bless this effort to understand the Scriptures pertinent to this question.

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1. *Is the Great Tribulation identical with the period known as the “wrath of God?”*

Revelation 6.12-17—Then I saw Him open the sixth seal. A violent earthquake occurred; the sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair; the entire moon became like blood; the stars of heaven fell to the earth as a fig tree drops its unripe figs when shaken by a high wind; the sky separated like a scroll being rolled up; and every mountain and island was moved from its place. Then the kings of the earth, the nobles, the military commanders, the rich, the powerful, and every slave and free person hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. And they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, because the great day of Their wrath has come! And who is able to stand?”<sup>1</sup>

Notice:

- a. At the time indicated, Christ is no longer the Jesus of Nazareth who has been invisible ever since His ascension and whose existence is in question to most people. Now all know who He is, and they acknowledge His position as reigning from a throne and executing wrath supernaturally.
- b. An earthquake and certain astronomic events precede the unveiling of the throne-occupying Christ. The heavens’ departing like a scroll could be taken as indicative of the powers of the heavens being shaken (Matthew 24:29).
- c. The astronomic signs are: sun darkened, moon turned red, a meteor shower, and the powers of the heavens being shaken.
- d. These events heralding the period known as the wrath of the Lamb (6.16-17) are just those in Matthew 24.29-31 said to *follow immediately after the Great Tribulation*. [We expand upon this point below.]
- e. The Great Tribulation, therefore, is not synonymous with the period known as the *wrath of God*, but precedes it closely.

From the above material, we infer the following time sequence:

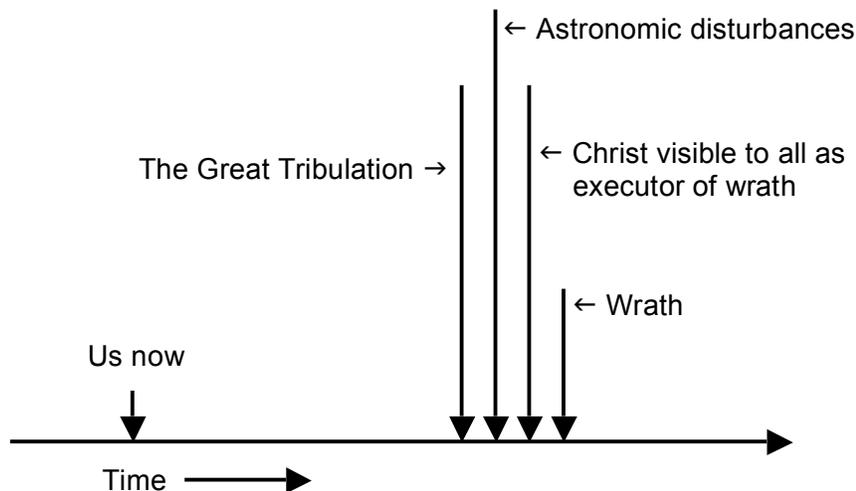


Figure 1

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Holman Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission.

Moreover:

- f. Since the period of God's wrath is not coincident with the Great Tribulation, the statement in 1 Thessalonians 5:9, "... God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ..." should not be understood to exclude the possibility of Christians' going through tribulation, even the Great Tribulation, much as we would prefer otherwise. The Apostle Paul understood that Christians may suffer in this life: "It is necessary to pass through many troubles [or tribulations] on our way into the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22b)
- g. We should not permit our desires for ease to determine our theology (in this case, eschatology). "And He died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the One who died for them and was raised" (2 Corinthians 5:15) reminds us that He suffered for us more than we will ever suffer, having escaped the judgment we deserve and which He took in our place. "A servant is not greater than his master..." (John 13.16 ESV), so we may rightfully expect to bear some inconvenience here on earth.

But when will the Great Tribulation be? The following passages bear upon this question.

Matthew 24.15, 21, 29-31, 33, 36 — So when you see the abomination that causes desolation, spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place" (let the reader understand) ... at that time there will be great tribulation, the kind that hasn't taken place from the beginning of the world until now and never will again! Immediately after the tribulation of those days: The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not shed its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the celestial powers will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the peoples of the earth will mourn; and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. Now concerning that day and hour no one knows—neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son —except the Father only.

Notice:

- a. The "great tribulation" here spoken of is greater than any before our Lord's first coming and greater than any other after His first coming. It should, therefore, be regarded as the Great Tribulation.
- b. The Great Tribulation will be immediately preceded by the abomination of desolation's standing in the holy place.
- c. The Great Tribulation will be followed by astronomic disturbances.
- d. "The celestial powers will be shaken" indicates the movement of the heavens relative to the earth in an unusual manner. This relative motion can be described equally as well by saying that the earth's position relative to other heavenly bodies is to be unusually changed. This expression, therefore, is equivalent to Isaiah 13.13: "Therefore I will make

the heavens tremble, and the earth will shake from its foundations at the wrath of the LORD of Hosts, on the day of His burning anger.”

- e. According to Isaiah, these signs introduce the period known as the wrath of the LORD. The same conclusions flow from a comparison with Revelation 6.12-17.
- f. Since the Lord Jesus separates the period known as the wrath of God from the tribulation by a space of time, we should recognize that these two events are not synonymous.
- g. All the peoples of the earth will see Him.
- h. The Christians on earth who go through the Great Tribulation are gathered out of the earth at Christ's coming, before the wrath of God.
- i. Only the Father knows the day and the hour of the coming of Christ and of the wrath of God.
- j. We do know that this coming of our Lord will immediately follow the Great Tribulation, even though we cannot pin it down to the day and the hour. (“Now concerning that day and hour no one knows—neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son —except the Father only.”)
- k. The expression “concerning that day and hour” does *not* mean that we know nothing about what will occur before His second coming.

We can now add more details to figure 1:

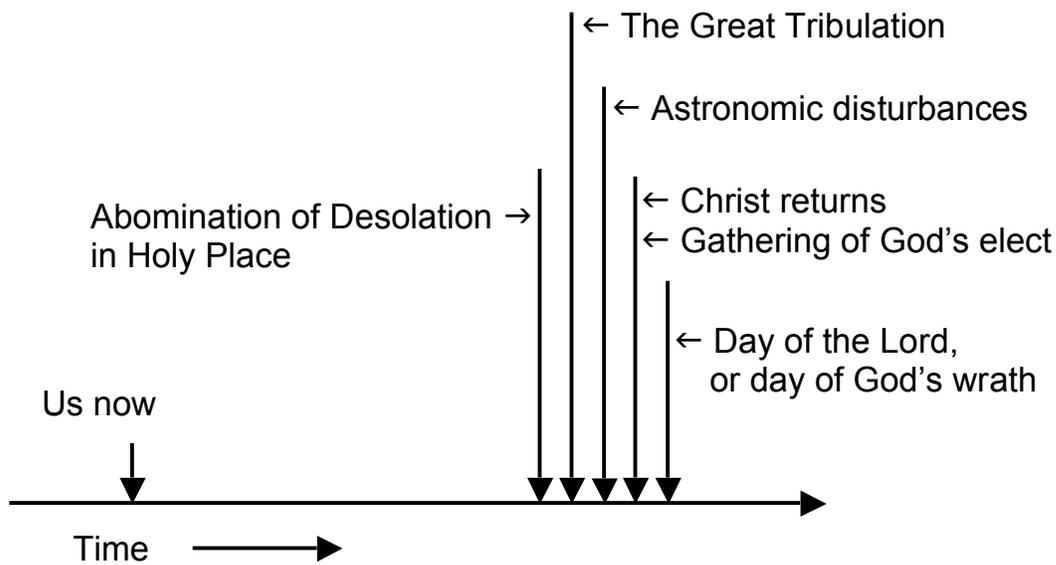


Figure 2

Note: If the gathering of the elect *precedes* Christ's return, why is it not listed as one of the signs in Matthew 24.29-31?

## 2. When is the rapture? 2

<sup>2</sup> The “rapture” refers to Jesus’s collecting His saints—dead and alive—at His Second Coming.

1 Thessalonians 4.14-18 — Since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, in the same way God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. For we say this to you by a revelation from the Lord: We who are still alive at the Lord's coming will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the archangel's voice, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are still alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Notice:

- a. Christians who have died before Christ's coming will come with Him in His return to the earth.
- b. When the Lord comes with these saints, they will then re-enter their bodies and meet Him in bodily form. In this way Jesus comes *with* His saints and *for* His saints.
- c. The rising of the saints that come with Jesus will slightly precede the translation<sup>3</sup> of still living Christians who will also rise into the air to meet the Lord.
- d. Until the rapture, those who are “asleep” with regard to their bodies are absent from the body but consciously present with the Lord in heaven. (2 Corinthians 5.6-8)
- e. *We equate the rapture with the resurrection of the just* (Luke 14:14). The “just” are those who have been made righteous by the blood of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 5.21; 1 Peter 3:18) [We expand upon this in point 5 below.]
- f. The rapture is preceded by the blast of the trumpet of God.
- g. The prospect of this experience should be a comfort to us who trust in our Lord's atonement rather than our sinful works.

1 Corinthians 15:51-54— Listen! I am telling you a mystery: We will not all fall asleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. Because this corruptible must be clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal must be clothed with immortality. Now when this corruptible is clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal is clothed with immortality, then the saying that is written will take place: Death has been swallowed up in victory.

Notice:

- a. At the sound of the last trumpet the dead in Christ shall rise in incorruptible bodies.
- b. We who are alive shall be changed from corruptible to incorruptible, from mortal to immortal.
- c. The change of our bodies, as with the resurrection of the dead bodies of Christians presently with the Lord, will be instantaneous.
- d. The Holy Spirit's use of the expression “last trumpet” would seem to indicate that He elsewhere has given us an account of a series of trumpets.

Point 2 has taught this:

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<sup>3</sup> Those who are translated receive a renewed body without passing through death and rise to meet the Lord.

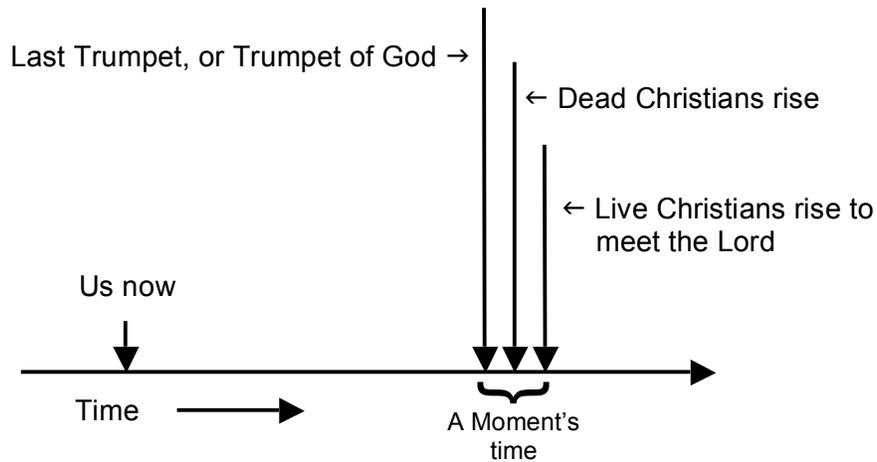


Figure 3

3. *With the preceding important facts as a setting, let us examine a rarely noticed passage that sheds great light.*

Revelation 20.1-7—Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven with the key to the abyss and a great chain in his hand. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for 1,000 years. He threw him into the abyss, closed it, and put a seal on it so that he would no longer deceive the nations until the 1,000 years were completed. After that, he must be released for a short time. Then I saw thrones, and people seated on them who were given authority to judge. [I] also [saw] the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of God's word, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and who had not accepted the mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with the Messiah<sup>4</sup> for 1,000 years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the 1,000 years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! The second death has no power over these, but they will be priests of God and the Messiah, and they will reign with Him for 1,000 years. When the 1,000 years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison.

Notice:

- John, the human author of Revelation, is carried forward in time to see as present things that are future to us.
- He sees the capture and the internment of Satan at the beginning of a one thousand year period.
- We read, "They came to life and reigned with the Messiah" ... but "the rest of the dead did not come to life until the 1,000 years were completed." We understand these phrases as referring to two resurrections.

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<sup>4</sup> Messiah is the same as Christ.

- d. The first resurrection is the coming to life of people to reign with Christ. This begins at the time of the binding of Satan for the thousand years.
- e. This is a resurrection of just people.
- f. Since this is the first resurrection, it cannot be held that a general rapture—or resurrection—of the just precedes this by seven years or any other amount of time. There is no resurrection future to John that precedes the time of the binding of Satan. Therefore the rapture does not precede the binding of Satan.
- g. The point is that all Christians, not just the martyrs, will be raised at the time of Satan's binding. The martyrs are specially mentioned because their faithfulness was particularly tried by the beast and they still did not deny the Lord. That all Christians will reign with Jesus seems to be the point of 2 Timothy 2.12 and of Acts 14.22. (cf. Acts 1.6)
- h. Therefore, all Christians will be raised at the time of the binding of Satan to reign in immortal bodies with Christ for the millennium.

We put together points 2 and 3 to get this general, compressed view of events at the Lord's coming:

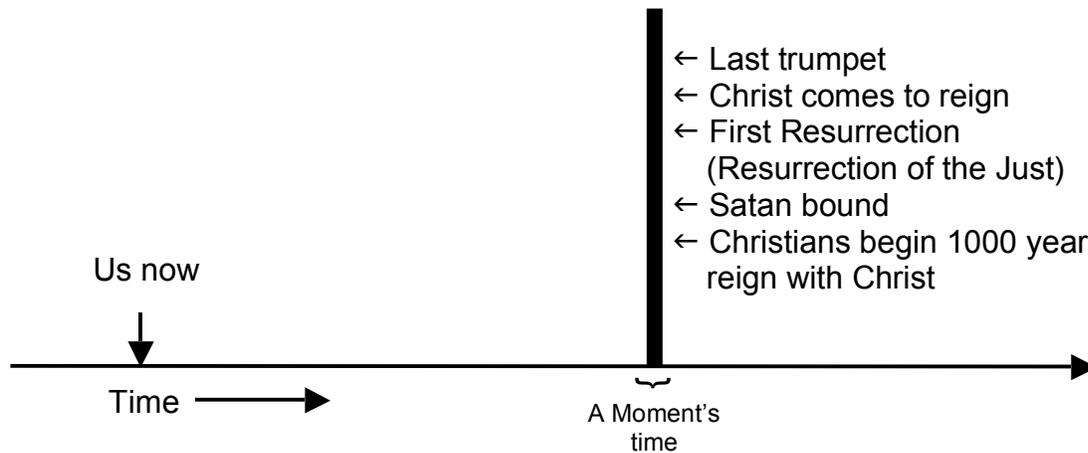


Figure 4

4. *There are additional confirming evidences:*

Revelation 11.15-18—The seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying: The kingdom of the world has become the [kingdom] of our Lord and of His Messiah, and He will reign forever and ever! The 24 elders, who were seated before God on their thrones, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: We thank You, Lord God, the Almighty, who is and who was, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry, but Your wrath has come. The time has come for the dead to be judged, and to give the reward to Your servants the prophets, to the saints, and to those who fear Your name, both small and great, and the time has come to destroy those who destroy the earth.

Notice:

- a. This is the time of the sounding of the “last trumpet” listed for the future. It was mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15 (point 2 above) as the time of the rapture.
- b. This seventh and last trumpet is the time when Christ begins His reign over the earth.
- c. This time is the time of the wrath of the Lord God Almighty. This time was also described above under point 1 (Isaiah 13 and Matthew 24) as being marked by astronomic disturbances and immediately following the Great Tribulation.
- d. This time coincides with the time of the gathering of the elect from the four corners of the earth stated in Matthew 24:31.
- e. This time is the time of the rewarding of all Christians small and great.

Compare this with Luke 14:14:

Luke 14:14—And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.” (ESV)

Now notice:

- a. This is addressed to a chief Pharisee who had invited Jesus to dinner, but it applies to any who obey the Lord out of a regenerated heart.
- b. The Lord says that an obedient Christian will be rewarded at the “resurrection of the just.”
- c. We see that the time of rewarding all Christians is at the seventh and last trumpet.
- d. Since the time of the rewarding of Christians is said by Christ to be the resurrection of the just, it must be at the time of the rapture. The interlocking of the three passages Revelation 11.15-18, Luke 14.14, and 1 Corinthians 15:51-54 (point 2) gives very strong confirmation of the equation between the “rapture” and the “resurrection of the just.”
- e. Thus the rapture—or the resurrection of the just—is the time of rewarding Christians, the time of the wrath of God, the time of the last trumpet, the time of Christ's coming to reign, the time of the binding of Satan, etc.

Matthew 13.27-30; 36-43—He presented another parable to them: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while people were sleeping, his enemy came, sowed weeds<sup>5</sup> among the wheat, and left. When the plants sprouted and produced grain, then the weeds also appeared. The landowner’s slaves came to him and said, ‘Master, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Then where did the weeds come from?’ ‘An enemy did this!’ he told them. ‘So, do you want us to go and gather them up?’ the slaves asked him. ‘No,’ he said. ‘When you gather up the weeds, you might also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At harvest time I’ll tell the reapers: Gather the weeds first and tie them in bundles to burn them, but store the wheat in my barn.’”

Then He dismissed the crowds and went into the house. His disciples approached Him and said, “Explain the parable of the weeds in the field to us.”

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<sup>5</sup> Also translated *tares*, Or *darnel*, a weed similar in appearance to wheat in the early stages

He replied: “The One who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world; and the good seed—these are the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the Devil. The harvest is the *end of the age*, and the harvesters are angels. Therefore just as the weeds are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the *end of the age*. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather from His kingdom everything that causes sin and those guilty of lawlessness. They will throw them into the blazing furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father’s kingdom. Anyone who has ears should listen! [Our emphasis.]

Notice:

- a. In the above parable the wheat and the weeds represent two classes of individuals who are alive at the Lord’s return. The Lord says the field is the world and saved people (the wheat) and unsaved people (the weeds) are to be left together until the “end of the age” when the wheat will be gathered into the barn and the weeds gathered and burned.
- b. Besides the two times used in the above passage, the expression “end of the age” (suntelivag tou` aiw`nog) is used three other times in Matthew: 13.49; 24.3; and 28.20.
- c. The time of gathering of the wheat and the weeds is at the “end of the age,” which is the expression used by Jesus in Matthew 24.3. There the Lord says that His listeners (or their spiritual children) will be present through the greatest tribulation ever to be seen on earth. The “end of the age” mentioned in the Matthew 24 passage is said to be the gathering together of the elect from all over the earth to Christ (Matthew 24.3, 30, 31) after the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24.29).
- d. We see, therefore, a double confirmation—in Matthew 13 and in Matthew 24—that Christians will live through the Great Tribulation.
- e. That this parable is not indicative of only one, general resurrection is taught by passages mentioning the “first resurrection” (Revelation 20.5) followed chronologically by the “second resurrection” (Revelation 20.13).

Jesus’s words of the “Great Commission” also confirm the point that Christians will live through the Great Tribulation.

Matthew 28.18-20—Then Jesus came near and said to them, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the *end of the age*. [Our emphasis.]

Notice:

- a. The Great Commission is correctly understood to apply to all Christians since the Lord knew the apostles would pass on before the “end of the age.”
- b. Since Jesus in the great commission commands His followers to make disciples of all nations until the “end of the age,” which is the same expression used in Matthew 13 and 24 for His second coming, it follows that He is teaching that Christians will be in the world until *after* the Great Tribulation.

To sum up all we have thus far covered:

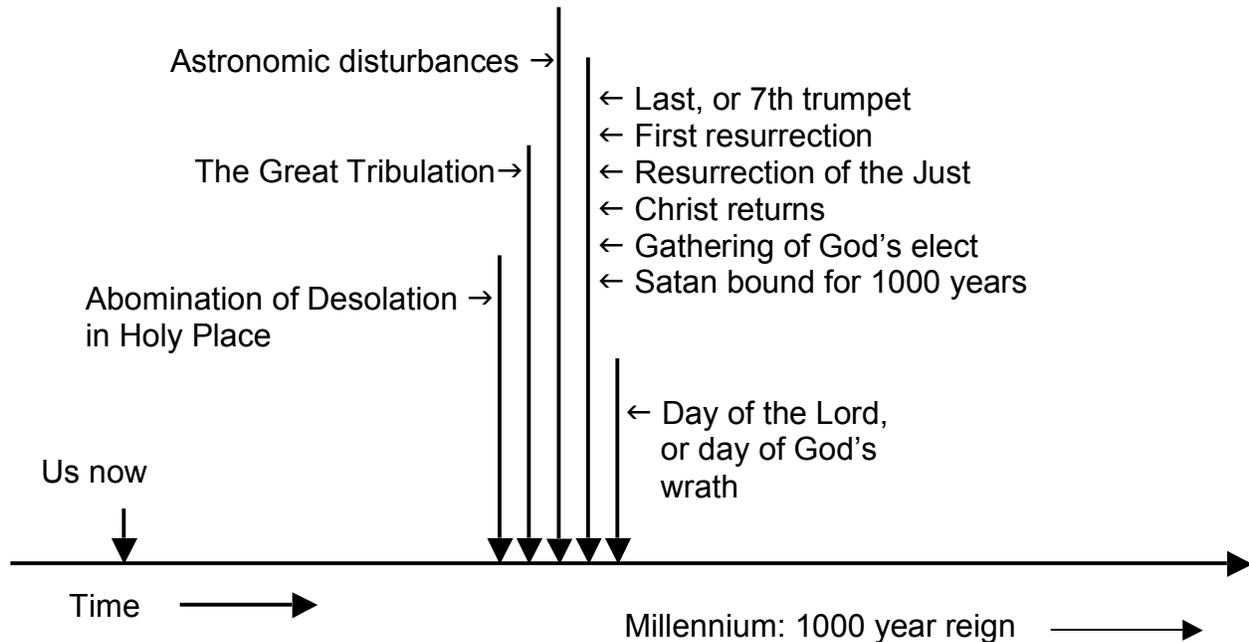


Figure 6

5. *When, within Daniel's seventieth week and after the Great Tribulation, is the rapture?*

Daniel 9.24-27— Seventy weeks<sup>6</sup> are decreed about your people and your holy city—to bring the rebellion to an end, to put a stop to sin, to wipe away injustice, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place.<sup>7</sup> Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince will be seven weeks and 62 weeks. It will be rebuilt with a plaza and a moat, but in difficult times. After those 62 weeks the Messiah will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the coming prince will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come with a flood, and until the end there will be war; desolations are decreed. He will make a firm covenant with many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and offering. And the abomination of desolation will be on a wing of the temple until the decreed destruction is poured out on the desolator.

<sup>6</sup> All Bible scholars accept that “week” is a seven-year period.

<sup>7</sup> Or, “to anoint the most holy one.” A problem exists as to whether the “most holy” refers to the temple or to a person. If the latter, then the person is Jesus Christ. (Revelation 11.15)

Notice:

- a. The time between the issuing of the decree to restore Jerusalem until the cutting off of the Messiah entails 69 weeks of the 70-week period under consideration.
- b. After 69 weeks the Messiah is “cut off,” which we take to mean the death of Jesus Christ.
- c. The “firm covenant,” therefore, deals with Daniel’s 70th week, which is subsequent to Jesus’s death.
- d. At the conclusion of the 70 weeks rebellion and sin are ended, injustice is wiped away, and everlasting righteousness is initiated. These actions will take place during the millennium; thus, the 70th week must be delayed until just before the millennium. *We equate this delay period to the “times of the Gentiles” in Luke 21:24.*
- e. Then the 70th week of Daniel 9:27 is the seven-year period preceding the millennium, and the man of sin is someone with great power who makes a seven-year treaty with Israel. At the beginning of the 70th week, the man of sin will break his treaty and cause the temple sacrifices and offerings to cease in the “middle of the week.”
- f. The “he” who shall confirm the covenant is the “man of sin,” described by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2.3, 4. He is the one who sets up the “abomination of desolation” spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 24.15.
- g. While it is possible that the desolation caused by the “abomination of desolation” is coincident with the cessation of sacrifices and offerings, this possibility is not necessitated by this passage.
- h. Therefore, the seventieth week begins with Israel's temple worship system in operation and a treaty with the “man of sin.” In the middle of the week (three and one-half years after confirming the treaty), the man of sin causes the worship to cease. Sometime after this (about three and one-half years), before the Lord puts down all authority and power, and the kingdoms of this earth become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, the temple is desolated, or desecrated.

From point 5 we see thus far:

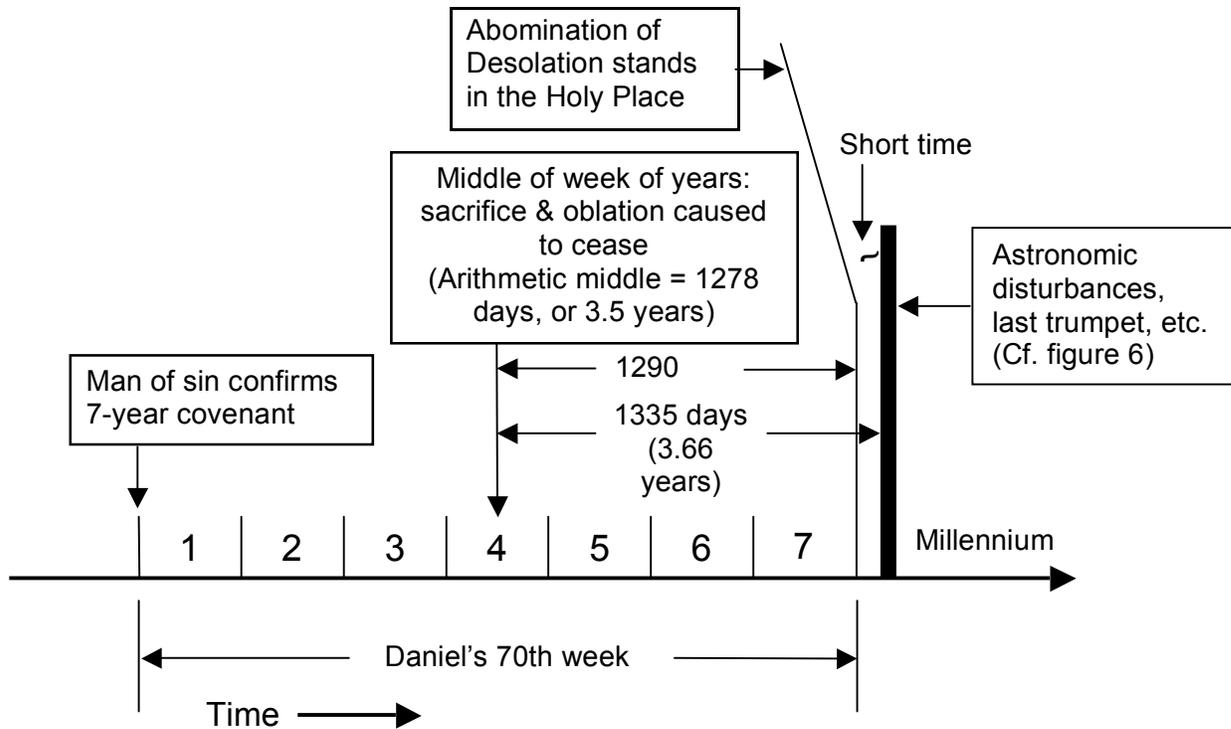


Figure 7

Notice:

- a. On our time map so far developed we see that the abomination of desolation will stand in the holy place at practically the end of the week.
- b. The Lord Jesus said that when we see the abomination of desolation stand in the holy place there would scarcely be time for Judeans to escape the Great Tribulation by running to the hills.
- c. We see, therefore, that the Great Tribulation is a short time at the end of the seventieth week. It would seem then quite erroneous to call the whole seven years, or even the second half of the seven years, the Great Tribulation.

#### 6. How long will the Great Tribulation last?

Daniel 12:11—And from the time the daily sacrifice is abolished and to the abomination of desolation, 1290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches 1,335 days. (Our translation)

Notice:

- a. This sentence is incomplete in the Hebrew; something needs to be supplied, and the most natural reading is: “And from the time the daily sacrifice is abolished and to the *setting up* of the abomination of desolation *shall be* 1290 days.”

- b. Revelation 20.1-16 puts the rapture—or first resurrection—coincident with the binding of Satan for the millennium. In other words, the resurrection of the just is immediately before the millennium.
- c. According to the Lord (Matthew 24.15, 21), the Great Tribulation is the time between the setting up of the abomination of desolation and the return of Jesus. This makes the Great Tribulation necessarily quite short, since it begins practically at the end of the 70th week. The next verse in Daniel (12.12), “Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches 1335 days,” suggests that the difference between 1290 and 1335 is the length of the Great Tribulation (45 days). We add this additional fact to figure 7 to come up with figure 8.

A summary of this section appears in the diagram below:

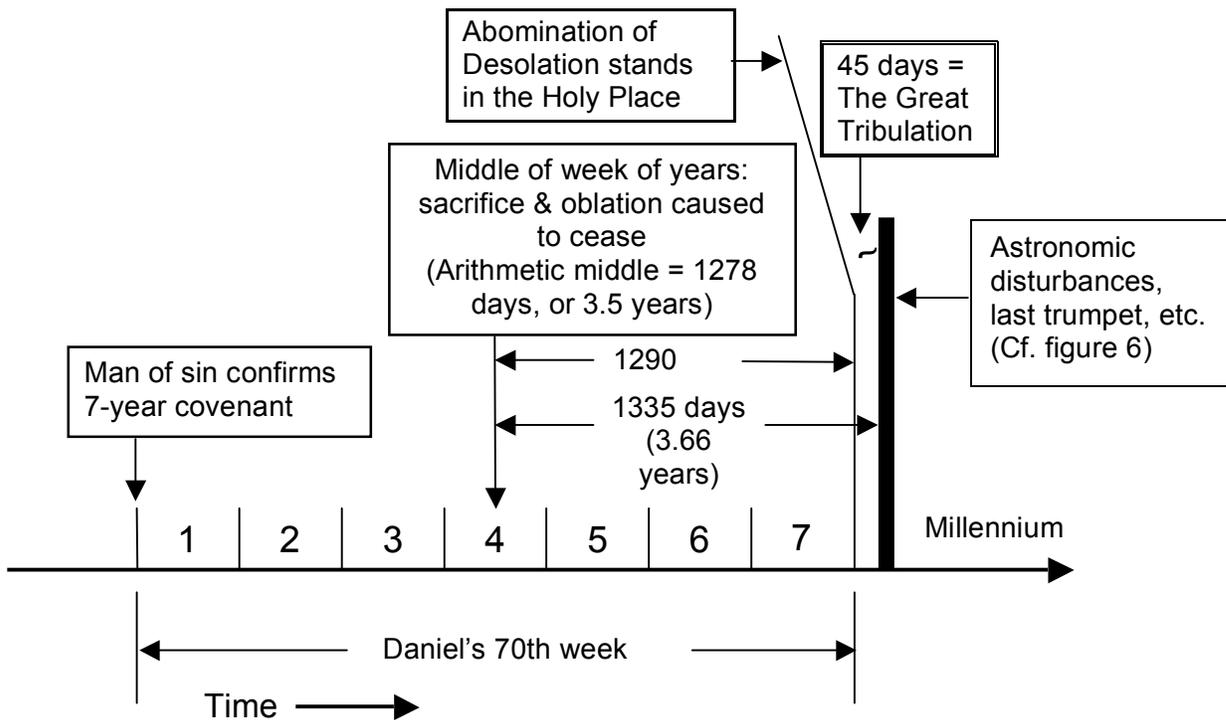


Figure 8

### 7. The immanency of Jesus's return.

2 Peter 3:3-12—First, be aware of this: scoffers will come in the last days to scoff, following their own lusts, saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they have been since the beginning of creation.” They willfully ignore this: long ago the heavens and the earth existed out of water and through water by the word of God. Through these the world of that time perished when it was flooded by water. But by the same word the present heavens and earth are held in store for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

Dear friends, don't let this one thing escape you: with the Lord one day is like 1,000 years, and 1,000 years like one day. The Lord does not delay His promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.

But the Day of the Lord will come like a thief; on that [day] the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, the elements will burn and be dissolved, and the earth and the works on it will be disclosed. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, [it is clear] what sort of people you should be in holy conduct and godliness as you wait for and earnestly desire the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be on fire and be dissolved, and the elements will melt with the heat.

But based on His promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness will dwell.

Notice:

- a. Peter compresses into one event the Lord's coming and the establishment of new heavens and a new earth described by the Apostle John in Revelation 21.1. Peter's point is to wait patiently for the Lord and to live right while waiting because the Lord's return will usher in the destruction of the present order of things. Peter's not mentioning the millennium is not a good reason for believing that there is no millennium. After all, the latter is discussed prominently by John in Revelation 20.
- b. The first part of this passage suggests that a considerable time is expected to intervene between the apostles and the aspects of His coming described here. Hence, it appears mistaken to hold that the apostles expected Jesus to return in their day. A long interim is indicated. That the Apostles felt that Jesus would come in their own time, therefore, should not be taught.

8. *Objections to the view expressed in these pages:*

- a. *"Are we not setting dates?"* No, we are not setting a date of such and such a year AD that our Lord will come. Christ said, "Now concerning that day and hour no one knows" (Matthew 24:36). He was speaking of His return to gather His elect from all the earth, and He stated that His return immediately follows the Great Tribulation. The Great Tribulation, in turn, is said to follow immediately the appearance of the abomination in the holy place spoken of by Daniel the prophet. Hence, we have Jesus Himself predicting two events—the Great Tribulation and the abomination of desolation—will take place preceding His return. When these predicted events begin to appear, we still will not know the "day" or the "hour," but we will know that His return is close.
- b. *"But if He comes as a 'thief in the night,' He must be unexpected. He does not come as a thief in the night if you say there are predicted events between us and His coming."* That is true; He comes as a thief in the night to the world, but not to us. Note the totality of the teaching of 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4: "For you yourselves know very well that the Day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night ... But you, brothers, are not in the dark, so that this day would overtake you like a thief."
- c. *"In Luke 17.34 we read, '...on that night two will be in one bed: one will be taken and the other will be left.' This teaches a secret rapture that you deny."* This passage says nothing of secrecy; it simply teaches that not all will be raptured.

- d. *“If you expect to see the covenant confirmed before the Lord's return, you are looking for the beginning of the seventieth week and not for the Lord.”* This is not so. Peter tells us (2 Peter 3.12, 13) to look forward eagerly to the time of the dissolution of the heavens and elements and to the new heavens and new earth (verse 13), which we know will be preceded by our Lord's coming. We can look forward to several events spaced out chronologically.
- d. *“This makes for a ‘jumping-jack’ rapture. Christ raises people and brings them right back to the earth, with little intervening rest, to start the millennium.”* Yes, Jesus meets us in bodily form in the air, having brought us down beforehand in spirit form to reenter our renewed bodies. We infer that we await the short time it takes for the wrath of God and for the wrath of the Lamb (Revelation 6.16, 17) to run their course.
- e. *“But the Scriptures say to people alive in the apostolic age, ‘Watch and be ready.’ Therefore, it was any moment to them.”* It is a simple fact that even George Washington could predict that foreign alliances could entangle us, and so said in the present tense, “Beware.” But this does not mean he expected it to happen in his day.

After informing His disciples of His impending Passion, the Lord said, “I have told you now before it happens so that when it does happen you may believe.” (John 14:29) He was pointing out that His future suffering was by design, not by chance. (Acts 2.23)

In the same vein, these passages show that the Great Tribulation is also by design so that we who are accounted worthy to suffer for His name may be strengthened in our trust in Him as these things come to pass. We are no better than the early Christian martyrs; the church has gone through tribulation before for His glory. We must arm ourselves for this, which could be in the very near future.

We pray that this short discussion will strengthen Christians to endure in all tribulation, small or great, present or future.