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A1110 – March 6, 2011 – 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11
The Pre-Day Of The Lord Rapture

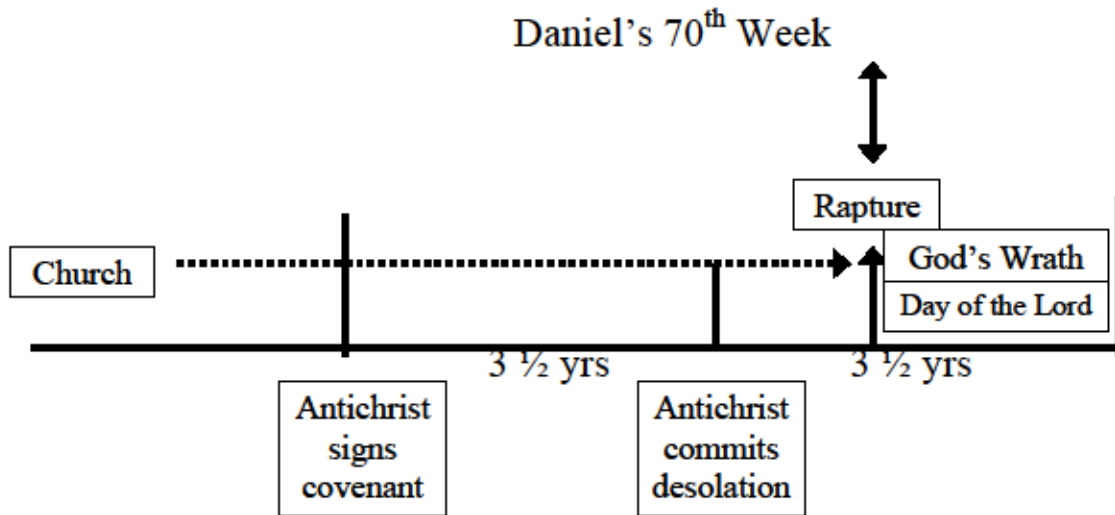
All right, if you'd open your Bible to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 we have the issue addressed as to what about those believers who died before Christ returned to rapture the Church? Will they be resurrected? The Thessalonians were under serious persecution and a number of their congregation had been killed. And they want to know if they'll be resurrected or not because Paul didn't address that issue when he was with them. It's not that Paul hadn't intended to address it in the curriculum; it's just that Paul got kicked out of Thessalonica before he finished the curriculum. But with believers dying left and right they need an answer to the question. And the answer Paul gives is a wonderful answer. He answers by teaching about the rapture. Namely that believers who die before the Lord returns are asleep bodily in the earth but their souls are with Him presently in heaven, and when the Lord descends from heaven with a military command, and the voice of Michael the archangel utters and the trumpet of God sounds, then their bodies are going to be raised. Then, we who are alive and remain on earth will be caught up together with them in the clouds for a meeting in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. That's the comforting answer Paul gives.

As far as the rapture being imminent we made one grammatical point out of these verses that hints that the rapture is imminent and I want to review that point. Remember, imminent means it could occur at-any-moment. So to say the rapture is imminent means it could come in any generation. If that's the case then every generation should live each day as if it is coming. And we're simply pointing out that Paul thought it could have come in his generation. And if he thought it could have come in his then we should live as if it could come in ours. Notice how Paul includes himself as one who could be living when the Lord comes. Verse 15, "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will

not precede *those* who have fallen asleep." Notice the shift from "we who are alive" to "those who have fallen asleep." Paul includes himself in "the we" who are alive and remain group and intends to show us that he expected that the Lord could come in his lifetime. And again in verse 17, "Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air," again notice the shift from we who are alive and remain to them in the clouds. So obviously, again Paul constantly expected the Lord Jesus Christ to return at any moment to rapture the church. This is critical to grasp because what imminency implies is that no prophesied events must precede the rapture. The moment you start saying that certain events must precede the rapture then the rapture cannot happen at any moment and Paul could not make these statements. Paul tells us in 1:10, go ahead and turn there because this is a critical verse. What were the Thessalonians doing? Well, they were doing exactly what Paul told them to do when he was with them and that is verse 10, "and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come." We are to wait for his Son, that is Jesus, to come for us. That word wait, *anameno*, doesn't just mean wait, it means to wait with expectancy, to expect someone, namely Jesus, who does what? "Who rescues us from the wrath to come." Literally rescue us away from the wrath to come. We're going to be totally kept out of the wrath that is coming upon the world. So there are three things here. One is that we will not enter the wrath to come. The second is that we should be waiting expectantly for Christ to come. And third, He can come for us at any moment, it's imminent. Let's make these criteria and let's review the three diagrams and see which diagram best fits the criteria.

First, we showed this diagram, this is the pre-wrath view, Van Kampen and Rosenthal.

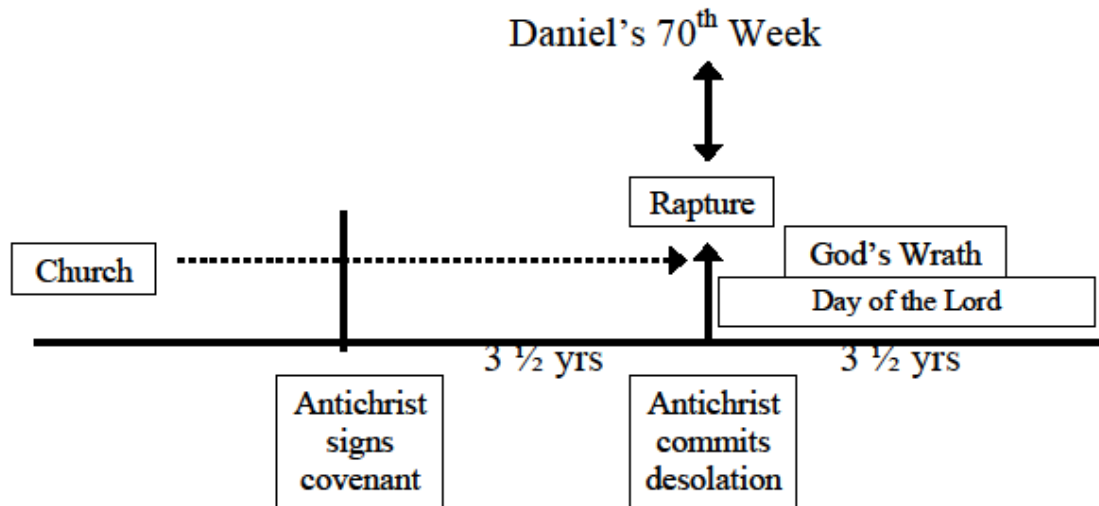
Pre-Wrath Rapture



They hold that the wrath of the day of the Lord begins about $\frac{3}{4}$'s of the way through the tribulation and we are removed before that. So do they meet criteria 1? Yes, they agree, we will not enter the wrath to come, as long as you define that as God's wrath. Second, they believe that we will live under Antichrist's rule; for $\frac{3}{4}$ of the tribulation we will live under Antichrist. So do they meet criteria 2? If we're living right now, which we are, and this view is true, then are we waiting expectantly for Christ to come? No, we would know He can't come until about 5 or 6 years after Antichrist comes. So we would not be watching for Him unless Antichrist came to rule, then we might start watching. So the pre-wrath view fails to do justice to criteria 2. Third, they believe that Christ can only come after $\frac{3}{4}$ of the tribulation has taken place. So do they meet criteria 3? The church will have to go through about $\frac{3}{4}$'s of the tribulation. Can the rapture happen at any moment in this view? No, so it doesn't meet criteria 3.

Now let's look at the Mid-Trib view.

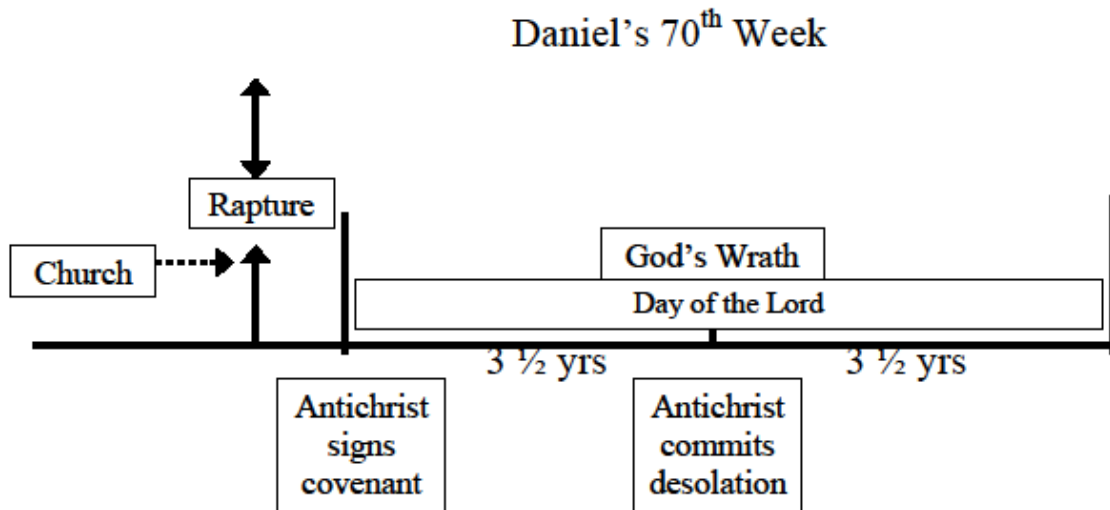
Mid-Tribulation Rapture



This view states that the wrath of the day of the Lord begins at the middle of the tribulation and the church will be removed before that. So does it meet criteria 1? Yes, they agree, we will not enter the wrath to come. Second, they believe that we will live under Antichrist's rule, for $\frac{3}{4}$ of the tribulation we will live under Antichrist. So do they meet criteria 2? No, I'm watching for Antichrist first, then, if he comes, I'll start watching for Christ. But I'm not going to watch for Christ if Antichrist is coming first. I'm going to watch for Antichrist. So the mid-trib view fails on criteria 2. Third, what about the third criteria? Imminence? Can Christ come at-any-moment in this view? No, he has to wait until Antichrist comes on the scene and does his thing for $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, then Christ can come. So do they meet criteria 3? No. So really the pre-wrath view is just a modification of the mid-trib view. They fail on exactly the same points.

Now let's look at the Pre-Trib view.

Pre-Tribulation Rapture



This view says the wrath of the day of the Lord begins with the tribulation and lasts the whole seven years and the church is removed before that. So does it meet criteria 1? Yes, all three of these views meet criteria 1, the church is gone before the wrath of God comes. Second, they believe that the Antichrist will come on the scene after the church has been raptured. So the church will not live under any of Antichrist's rule. Does this meet with criteria 2? That we should be watching expectantly for the Lord Jesus Christ? Yes. So far so good. What about criteria 3? The pre-trib view says that Christ comes before Antichrist. So can Christ come at-any-moment? Yes. So it meets all three criteria. We should note that some pre-trib proponents hold that a prophesied event *may* come before the rapture but not that it must occur before the rapture. The other two views are saying events related to the Antichrist must occur before the rapture. So there's a big difference there.

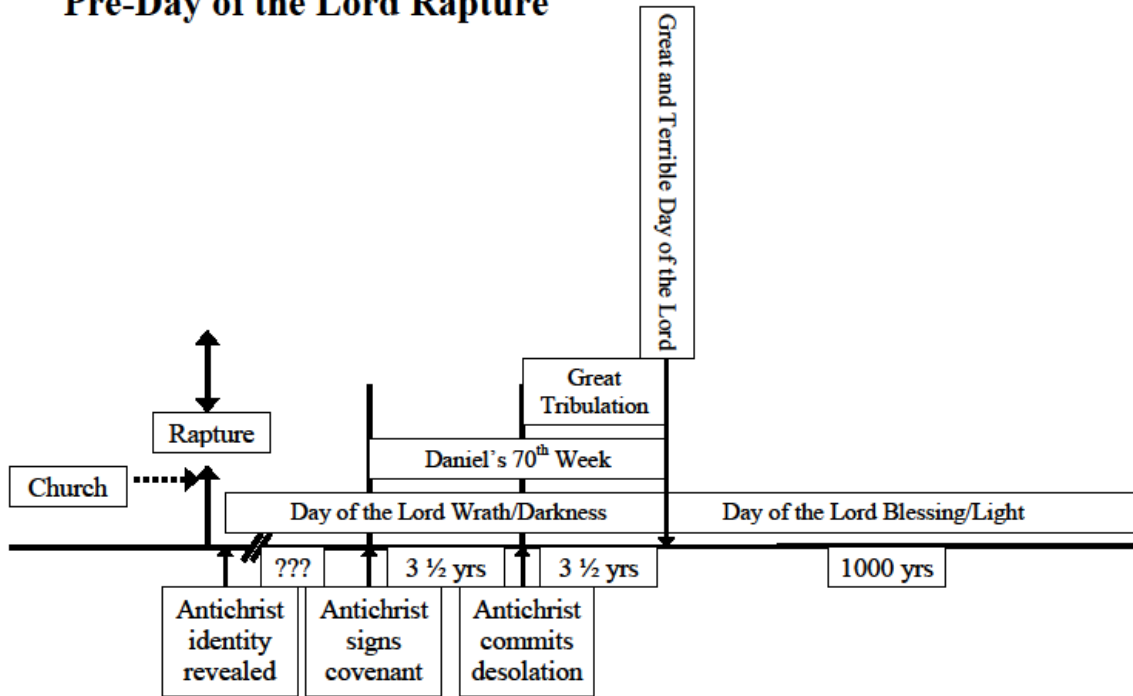
Now, I personally don't hold to any of these views exactly. I'm closest to the pre-trib but I quibble with pre-trib over a few things and I wouldn't make much of it except we're going through the Thessalonian epistles and the epistles themselves don't fit the pre-trib schema and we'll be working through what schema they do teach. One quibble you're already aware of is that Paul teaches in chapter 3 that the church will face tribulation, not that we would

be exempt from it. And he got that from Jesus who taught that we will face tribulation, but to take courage in the face of it. The thing is that tribulation is never used to define this time period so I quibble with that.

What these epistles teach is a pre-day of the Lord rapture. The day of the Lord is a major, major doctrine in the Scriptures. It's mentioned something like 75 times in the OT. It's mentioned a number of times in the NT. So I'm going to let you in on a little secret here that you're going to love me for. And the reason you're going to love me is because it's going to make reading the OT prophets from Obadiah, the first usage, in the 9th century BC down through the rest of the OT and into the NT, much easier to read and understand. When you're reading these sections of Scripture and you read of "the day of the Lord," yeah, that's clear what it's talking about, the day of the Lord, but also pay attention to expressions like, "in that day" because when you see "in that day," it's a shorthand way of referring to "the day of the Lord." And if you don't know that you just read "in that day" and don't think twice about it, it's a very specific expression referring to "the day of the Lord," a major doctrine of Scripture. Yet most Christians never heard of it, which shows you the level of teaching going on, not so much. To get an idea of how major it is, Paul was with the new believers at Thessalonica one, maybe two months, and they already knew this doctrine with extreme precision. So he taught this to baby believers, it was one of the first things he taught new believers.

So, as a general primer on the day of the Lord let me give you four points about this diagram.

Pre-Day of the Lord Rapture



First, it covers more than 1007 years. Notice, I didn't say 1007 years, I said more than 1007 years. It begins before the 70th week of Daniel and it lasts through the entire 1000 year kingdom. It's a big, big period of world history and that's why it's referred to so often in the Scriptures. There's a lot to say about that long period of God's dealings. Second, from its beginning and through the 70th week of Daniel until Christ's Second Coming is a time of darkness or God's wrath. And just because I say wrath don't infer that I mean great catastrophes are occurring all the time. People can be under the wrath of God and no catastrophes are falling. In one sense every unbeliever is under the wrath of God all the time, and that's not necessarily associated with earthquakes or violent upheavals of nature due to supernatural intervention. So the world may be experiencing a time of global peace and yet the world may be under the wrath of God at the same time. So the second point is that for a period of more than seven years the world will be under God's wrath, it will be a time of darkness. Third, from the Second Coming of Christ and through the 1000 year kingdom will be a time of light or God's blessing. So this long, long period known as the millennium will be a time of

God's blessing or light. That is part of the day of the Lord. Fourth, the great and terrible day of the Lord refers to the day of the Second Coming, So when you see those two adjectives "great" and "terrible" modify the day of the Lord, it's talking about the day of the Second Coming of Christ. So that's a general primer on the day of the Lord. Paul's going to be talking about it in 1 Thess 5.

So let's pick up as we begin introduce it with 1:10 again. And the reason we want to do this, the reason we're going back in order to go forward is because in 5:1, Paul begins with *peri de* and what this means is Paul is shifting to another subject. He has just dealt with the subject of the rapture in 4:13-18. Now he wants to shift to another subject, the day of the Lord and that day is a day of wrath according to 5:9 and so it sends us all the way back to 1:10 where he first spoke about wrath. Paul is now working himself back to this topic of the wrath. He said in 1:10 Jesus is going "to rescue us from the wrath to come." And now he is returning to that truth and he's saying in 5:9, "God did not destine us for wrath," so he's returning to the subject of wrath. And this is a major point. I want you to think through with me the sequence of the book, this sequence is not by chance, this is all very, very strategic. He tells us very early that we are to expectantly wait for His Son from heaven, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come. Then in chapter 2 he concludes in v 19 with a reference to Jesus' coming for us. "For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?" Notice how Paul is again looking forward to the any-moment coming of the Lord Jesus for us. We're supposed to be constantly expecting that. Then the end of chapter 3, again, same theme, start in verse 12, "and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you;" why? so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father," when? "at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His holy ones." In other words, live every moment for the Lord because He could come back at-any-moment. Live as if you're constantly expecting Him to come and rescue us.

Then he explains the rescue in detail in 4:13-18 and we've been through that. Paul thought it could occur in his lifetime. Then we come to 5:1, and Paul says *peri de*, in other words, now I shift topics, I'm no longer talking about the Church and the any-moment coming of Christ, I'm taking you to something different. I've been talking rapture, rapture, rapture, now I'm talking about what happens next after the rapture, the day of the Lord. So the very sequence of the letter is teaching that the rapture is before the day of the Lord, chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 come before chapter 5. This is why I call it the pre-day of the Lord Rapture.

I want to do this week basically what I did last week and that is simply try to draw out of the text what it's teaching rather than maybe read in your theology at this point which some may be very tempted to do. I always draw out of the text what's there, but what I mean is that these are special sections of Scripture that relate to doctrinal questions over which there is great disagreement. And that's why I say I want to be very careful to draw out from the text, from the original text what it's teaching and be as strict as possible.

He starts in verse 1, **Now as**, and that's the *peri de*. **Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. 2For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.** Let's ask some questions? Did they know full well about the rapture and the dead in Christ being raised? No. Paul said in 4:13 that they were completely uninformed on this topic. But on the topic of the day of the Lord he says in verse 1, **you have no need of anything to be written to you.** And verse 2 explains why, **For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.** The Greek text says "For you yourselves already know," perfect tense, they had come to know this in the past with the effect that they knew it. Paul taught them about the day of the Lord when he was with them, and not only did they know about it, but the Greek text says they know it with precision. So, let's think through the implications. If they were well informed about the details of the day of the Lord but they were totally uninformed about the rapture what must we conclude? Logically what must we conclude? We must conclude that if the rapture was part of the day of the

Lord then they would have known about it. Since they did not it could not possibly be a part of the day of the Lord. And since the day of the Lord begins before the 70th week of Daniel and stretches all the way to the end of the 1000 years, then it must occur where? Before the day of the Lord. It can't be a part of it at all or else they would have known full well about it.

Well when exactly does the day of the Lord begin? You keep saying it's before the 70th week of Daniel begins, when does it begin? That's the major question. So let's look at it. I taught you earlier in this class that there were three events that all start at different times. The day of the Lord, the 70th Week of Daniel and the Great Tribulation. Many writers want to make all these the same period of time. But how could they be the same if the Bible teaches that they all start at different times? That doesn't make any sense. So many of these writers are not very precise, they're just lumping things together because it makes things easier. But let's actually show that these three things start at different times. The Bible is very specific

First, let's take the 70th week of Daniel. When does it start? Dan 9:27. And we'll keep our eyes on this chart we've been using. In arguably the greatest prophecy in the entire Old Testament the angel Gabriel reveals that the nation Israel will enter a calendar of 490 years. Actually seventy sevens or seventy periods of seven. How long is a seven? Well Daniel was thinking in terms of years in 9:2, so it's seventy sevens of years or 490 years. Don't try to fool around with that. You'll be off the left-field somewhere so far from the truth. Now the first sixty nine sevens or 483 were completed during crucifixion week. We're not dealing with that period of Israel's calendar today. We're only dealing with the final seven, the 70th week of Daniel, the final seven years. Verse 27 tells us about this final seven "And he will make a firm covenant with many for one week [or seven, *shabuim* means seven], but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate," etc... The point is that the final seven years of Israel's calendar begins with someone making a firm covenant with the leadership of Israel. The someone is who we call Antichrist, if we went back into the prior context we'd discover that "he" is the prince who is to come out of the Roman Empire, which had two branches by the way, East and West, and the Antichrist could very well be Assyrian in descent, which would mean he would be Iranian, but I wouldn't be dogmatic about that. Anyway, the Antichrist will make a firm

covenant," a *berith*, a treaty "with the many," the many being the leadership of Israel "for one seven," that's seven years. So it's very clear when the 70th week of Daniel begins. It begins when the Antichrist makes a firm covenant with the leadership of Israel promising them peace. This is the only passage in the Bible that tells us when the 70th week of Daniel begins. I can't stress that enough. No other passage tells you when the 70th week of Daniel begins. Only Dan 9:27.

Second, let's take the term Great Tribulation. And stay right here in Daniel 9:27 and we'll just keep reading. "But in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations" All right do we have another time marker? Yes we do. The middle of the seven. What's the middle of seven? Three and one half. So three and one half years into the 70th week of Daniel the Antichrist will break the peace treaty. That marks the beginning of the Great Tribulation. Turn to Matt 24:15. A lot of popular Bible prophecy teachers say the Great Tribulation is the whole 70th week of Daniel. It's not, it's given a distinct beginning right here. It begins in the middle of the 70th week of Daniel, it's only half of the 70th week of Daniel, not the whole week. But these teachers are trying to manipulate some other things earlier in Matt 24, trying to get earthquakes and wars to be a sign that the end times are near, that's total baloney, those things occur inside the 70th week of Daniel, not before it; we're not going into that just yet but we will next week. Dan 9:27 is so clear that this act by Antichrist in the middle of the week to stop sacrifice and grain offering is so major that Jesus picks it up in Matt 24:15. Jesus is talking to His disciples and He's talking about Israel. He's not talking about the Church, he's talking Israel and He's going to cite Dan 9:27. Israel's calendar. The Church isn't on a calendar. So obviously He's talking about Israel. "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16 then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. 17 Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. 18 Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. 19 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20 But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on the Sabbath." Notice all the Jewishness. Jesus quoting Daniel the Jewish prophet, talking about Judea, the Jewish Sabbath and Jewish weather conditions! And then what does Jesus say in verse 21? "For then there will be a great tribulation" when? When does great tribulation

begin? Verse 15, when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet. So is this a major event? You better believe it is. When the Jews see this what are they supposed to do? Flee, run, don't turn around, just run. And when on Israel's calendar will this occur? We read it in Dan 9:27. When did Daniel the prophet say that the abomination of desolation would occur? In the middle of the 70th week. So it's very clear, perfectly clear that great tribulation spoken of in verse 21 begins with the abomination of desolation at the middle of the 70th week of Daniel. This period is described by the rest of verse 21, "a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since beginning of the world until now, nor ever will." It's unparalleled trouble. It lasts 3 1/2 years and not a single second longer lest nobody would be left alive on the face of the whole earth. So, on the chart this is easy enough. The 70th week of Daniel begins when Antichrist signs a covenant with the leadership of Israel for seven years. The Great Tribulation begins when Antichrist commits abomination at the mid point of the seven years.

Now we come to the third term, one that is a major doctrine of the Old Testament, the day of the Lord. And we have one passage that gives a specific starting point and one passage that gives a general starting point. For the specific starting point turn to 2 Thess 2. Starting in verse 1. "Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to him," our gathering to him. Not his coming to us on earth, our gathering to Him. This is definitely the rapture. This is the church being caught up to Christ in the air, the event we learned last week. Verse 2, now we request "that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come." What did Paul just tell them? You are not in the day of the Lord. You are Christians. You cannot enter into the day of the Lord. The pre-day of the Lord rapture. There were false teachers right on Paul's tail and they were deceiving the Thessalonians into thinking that the day of the Lord had come and they were in it. Paul says don't be quickly shaken from your composure. That is not what we taught you. Then he defines the beginning of the day of the Lord. And he's very specific. "Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called God or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the Temple of God, and he goes on to describe the

program of the Antichrist. But the point we want to single out, which is so critical, that Paul is trying to get across to the Thessalonians is don't be deceived, the day of the Lord begins with two events, the apostasy and the man of lawlessness being revealed, the man of lawlessness is the Antichrist. What being revealed means is that his identity is being restrained so people can't identify him. As verse 6 shows. Look at verse 5, Paul had taught them all these things, "do you not remember that while I was still with you I was telling you these things? Verse 6 "and you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed." So he is being restrained, his identity is being restrained. So when does the day of the Lord begin? When the identity of the Antichrist is no longer restrained. Was the identity of the Antichrist revealed in Paul's day? No. So were they in the day of the Lord? No. That's Paul's whole point, don't be quickly shaken. I'm going to show you that if you knew who the Antichrist was then it would be too late, you would already be under the wrath of God and once you enter the wrath there is absolutely no way to escape sudden destruction. And no believer can possibly be in the day of the Lord. If you think you can you are just like the Thessalonians, deceived.


Now turn to 1 Thess 5 for the general starting point. The day of the Lord has a specific and a general starting point. In 1 Thess 5:2-3 gives the general starting point. "For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. ³While they" who's they? The world. "While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape." So when the world is saying we have achieved global peace and security, it's the Greek word for security, when they think they have achieved this dream then they are already under the wrath of God and sudden destruction will come upon them, it will be impossible to escape. They have entered the day of the Lord. So this gives the general conditions, the global environment at the time will be one of global peace and security, from a human perspective, but actually they will already be under the wrath of God.

Now having reviewed these three major terms and their starting point look at what we have said. The first thing I want to point out is that all three of these events relate to the Antichrist. They all relate to the Antichrist doing certain things in history. That is an amazingly clear teaching of Scripture once you see it. The second thing I want to point out is that all three of these

periods start at different times. The day of the Lord begins when the Antichrist's identity is revealed. The 70th week of Daniel begins when the Antichrist signs a covenant with the leadership of Israel. And the Great Tribulation begins when the Antichrist commits the abomination of desolation. Since those three events are not the same event they must occur at three separate times. And therefore the day of the Lord, the 70th week of Daniel and the Great Tribulation must refer to three different periods.

And if you ask, well, yeah, okay, but how do you know that the day of the Lord begins before both the 70th week of Daniel and the Great Tribulation. Very easily, logic alone tells you this. And if you catch it you understand something that 99.9% of people even in our camp do not understand. Why? Why must the day of the Lord begin before both the 70th week of Daniel and the great tribulation? Because it will be obvious who Antichrist is when the 70th week of Daniel begins. Everyone will be able to identify him then. But to identify him before would take two things. One, his identity being unveiled by God the Holy Spirit and two, the man of wisdom to calculate his name before he is a major geopolitical ruler. That means the day of the Lord must begin before the 70th week of Daniel.

So let's put this all together in a scenario. Number one, the rapture of the church must occur before the day of the Lord can begin. We are to wait expectantly for his Son from heaven, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come. After we are raptured then, probably in short succession, the world will enter into a period of apparent peace and security but since the restrainer will have been removed and Antichrist's identity revealed they will be under God's wrath. The man who in that time has wisdom will be able to calculate the number of his name before he rises to major geopolitical leadership. Antichrist will begin to rise very quickly to prominence on the geopolitical stage. When he reaches sufficient power and military prestige to convince the leadership of Israel that he can protect them then he will make a firm covenant with them for seven years promising peace and initiating the 70th week of Daniel. He will continue to rise in world power until at the midpoint of the 70th week of Daniel he will enter the Jewish Temple and commit the abomination of desolation, breaking his covenant and thus initiating the Great Tribulation. This is the signal for the Jews to flee to the mountains because Antichrist will begin his campaign of exterminating the Jewish race.



The important point Paul wants to get across through all of this is that the church is not destined to undergo any of this. We are to be looking expectantly for Christ, not Antichrist. And we are to be living each day as if it is our last day on earth. Christ can come at any moment and when we are taken, either by death or rapture, that is the last testimony you can make in this world. That is why the rapture is such a stimulant for producing things for God's glory. It is not a truth that puts off production, it is a truth that when rightly apprehended stimulates production. We don't have much time so we should spend all of our time growing and producing and living for God's glory in whatever areas He has talented and gifted us. Don't delay, He could come today!

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