

The Timing of the Rapture

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Presentation Outline

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3. Key Elements of the Day of the Lord
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5. Timing and Duration of Day of the Lord
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Importance of the Study

What Difference does it Make?

- If pre-trib view is true...
 - People who believe otherwise will be needlessly concerned
- If mid-trib, post-trib, or pre-wrath view is true...
 - People who believe otherwise will be caught by surprise
- We desire to properly understand God's Word
 - *Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near. (Revelation 1:3)*

Key Elements of the Rapture

Key Elements – Rapture

¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope...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. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 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, and so we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

(1 Thessalonians 4:13 - 18)

- Comfort and hope for believers (vv.13, 18)
- Associated with the “coming of the Lord” (v.15)
- Trumpet sounds (v.16)
- Resurrection of dead believers (v.16)
- Those who are left alive will be raptured (v.17)
- Jesus will be “in the clouds” (v.17)

Key Elements – Rapture

²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming... ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality... ⁵⁷ but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

(1 Corinthians 15:22-23, 51-53, 57-58)

- Comfort and hope for believers (v.58)
- Associated with the “coming of the Lord” (v.23)
- Trumpet sounds (v.52)
- Resurrection of dead believers (v.22, 52)
- Those who are left alive will be raptured (v.51)

Key Elements – Rapture

Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him

(2 Thessalonians 2:1)

- Associated with the “coming of the Lord”
- Pertains to believers being “gathered together with Him”

Key Elements – Rapture

1. Comfort and hope for believers
2. Associated with the “coming of the Lord”
3. Trumpet sounds
4. Resurrection of dead believers
5. Those who are left alive will be raptured
6. Jesus will be “in the clouds”
7. Pertains to believers being “gathered together with Him”

Key Elements of the Day of the Lord

Key Elements – Day of the Lord

2:1 Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the LORD is coming; Surely it is near, ² A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness...There has never been anything like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations...¹¹ The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome, And who can endure it?...³¹ "The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes...¹⁵ The sun and moon grow dark And the stars lose their brightness. (Joel 2:1-2, 11, 31, 3:15)

- Darkness and gloom (2:2)
- No one can endure it (2:11, cf. Malachi 3:2)
- Associated with clouds (2:2)
- Cosmic signs (2:31, 3:15)

Key Elements – Day of the Lord

¹ Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. ² For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. ³ 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. ⁴ But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; ⁵ for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness... ⁹ For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ

(1 Thessalonians 5:1-9)

- Comes like a thief (vv.2, 4)
- Destruction (v.3)
- Believers are exempt from God's wrath (vv.4, 9; cf. 1:10)

Key Elements – Day of the Lord

¹⁰ *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.* ¹¹ *Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,* ¹² *looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!* ¹³ *But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.* ¹⁴ *Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless (2 Peter 3:10-14)*

- Comes like a thief (v.10)
- Destruction (vv.10-12)
- Will usher in new heavens and new earth (v.13)
- Believers are to look for it (v.14)

Key Elements – Day of the Lord

¹² *The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates...¹⁴ for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. ¹⁵ ("Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.") ¹⁶ And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon. (Revelation 16:12-16)*

- Comes like a thief (v.15)
- Destruction (v.12)
- Believers are to look for it (v.15)
- Associated with the “coming of the Lord” (v.15, cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:8; Matthew 26:64; Psalm 96:13)

Key Elements – Day of the Lord

1. Darkness and gloom
2. No one can endure it
3. Associated with the “coming of the Lord”
4. Associated with clouds
5. Cosmic signs
6. Comes like a thief
7. Destruction
8. Believers are exempt from God’s wrath
9. Will usher in new heavens and new earth
10. Believers are to look for it

Relationship between the Rapture and the Day of the Lord

Rapture / Day of Lord – Similarities

1. Associated with the “coming of the Lord” (i.e. *parousia*)
2. Associated with clouds (i.e. Christ “coming with the clouds”)
 - See also Daniel 7:13-14 and Revelation 1:7

Rapture / Day of Lord – Differences

The rapture must either precede or initiate the Day of the Lord

Rapture	Day of the Lord
Trumpet sounds	Cosmic signs
Comfort and hope for believers	Darkness and gloom and destruction
Resurrection of dead believers and those who are left alive will be raptured	Comes like a thief, earth destroyed, ushers in new heavens/earth
Pertains to believers being “gathered together with Him”	No one can endure it, believers exempt from God’s wrath

Timing and Duration of Day of the Lord

Day of Lord – Timing & Duration

- Most, if not all pre-millennialists agree that the Day of the Lord is not a literal 24-hour day
- If it is longer than a literal 24-hour day, then how long is it and when does it begin?

Day of Lord – Timing & Duration

- Some pre-tribulationists believe that the whole seven-year tribulation constitutes the Day of the Lord.
- *“The arrival of the first seal judgment is also the arrival of the day of the Lord.”* Robert Thomas, *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, (Zondervan, 1998: Grand Rapids, MI), 196.

Day of Lord – Timing & Duration

- Other pre-tribulationists and pre-millennialists argue that the Day of the Lord begins at the sixth seal.
 - *“The sixth seal will commence what the prophets call ‘the Day of the Lord.’”* MacArthur, J. J. (1997, c1997). *The MacArthur Study Bible* (electronic ed.) (Re 6:17). Nashville: Word Pub.

Day of Lord – Timing & Duration

This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

(Matthew 24:14)

- The Day of the Lord will not come until the gospel is preached in the whole world.

Day of Lord – Timing & Duration

³ *Let no one in any way deceive you, for [the Day of the Lord] 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, displaying himself as being God. ⁵ Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?...⁸ Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;*
(2 Thessalonians 2:3-8)

- The Day of the Lord will not come until after the midpoint of the tribulation (Daniel 9:27)

Day of Lord – Timing & Duration

The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

(Joel 2:31)

- The cosmic signs will come before the Day of the Lord comes
- This implies that the sixth seal (**Revelation 6:12-17**) marks the commencement of the Day of the Lord
 - ¹⁵ *Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; ¹⁶ and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; ¹⁷ for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (**Revelation 6:15-17**)*

Day of Lord – Timing & Duration

³ *As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"...²⁷ "For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be...²⁹ "But immediately after the tribulation of those days **THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL** from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the **SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY** with power and great glory. (Matthew 24:3, 27-30)*

- This passage is parallel to the sixth seal and is thus another description of the commencement of the Day of the Lord

Day of Lord – Timing & Duration

1. Day of the Lord is not a literal 24-hour day.
2. The Day of the Lord will not come until the gospel is preached in the whole world.
3. The Day of the Lord will not come until after the midpoint of the tribulation.
4. The cosmic signs will come before the Day of the Lord comes.
5. The sixth seal (**Revelation 6:12-17**) marks the commencement of the Day of the Lord.

End Time Events Per Jesus

1. **Beginning of Birth Pangs**

- *But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. (Matthew 24:8)*

2. **Tribulation**

- *Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. (Matthew 24:9)*

3. **Great Tribulation**

- *For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. (Matthew 24:21)*

4. **Day of the Lord**

- *"But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. (Matthew 24:29)*

Timing of the Rapture

What About Matthew 24:31?

³⁰ *"And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. ³¹*

"And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. (Matthew 24:30-31)

- Can this passage be referring to the rapture?
- Let's examine it in light of the key elements of the rapture that we enumerated earlier.

Rapture Elements & Matthew 24:31?

1. Comfort and hope for believers **Yes**
2. Associated with the “coming of the Lord” **Yes**
3. Trumpet sounds **Yes**
4. Resurrection of dead believers **Implied**
5. Those who are left alive will be raptured **Yes**
6. Jesus will be “in the clouds” **Yes**
7. Pertains to believers being “gathered together with Him” **Yes**

Further Proof – Matthew 24 Rapture

27 "Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory. 28 "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." (Luke 21:27-28)

- Parallel passage to Matthew 24
- The Lord's "year of redemption" in **Isaiah 63:4** is clearly linked to the Day of the Lord.
- The "day of redemption" in Ephesians 1:14 and 4:30 is clearly linked to glorification, which happens at the rapture per 1 Corinthians 15.

Further Proof – Matthew 24 Rapture

¹ *After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth...⁹ After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands...¹⁴ I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Revelation 7:1, 9, 14)*

- Angels gathered the elect from the four winds in Matthew 24
- This is the church – raptured right after the great tribulation

Further Proof – Matthew 24 Rapture

1. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 refers to one event
 - 4:13-18 speaks about the rapture
 - 5:1-3 speaks about the Day of the Lord
 - 5:4-11 again speaks about the rapture
2. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8 refers to one event
 - 2:1 speaks about the rapture
 - 2:2-8 speaks about the Day of the Lord
3. 1 Corinthians 15:23-24 refers to one event
 - *²³ But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, ²⁴ then comes the end*

Objections – Matthew 24:31?

1. **Objection:** Matthew 24:31 only mentions six of the seven key rapture elements.

Answer: 1 Thessalonians 4 also only mentions six of the seven, while 1 Corinthians 15 mentions only five and 2 Thessalonians 2:1 mentions only two.

Objections – Matthew 24:31?

2. **Objection:** 1 Thessalonians 4 speaks of believers meeting Jesus in the air, while Matthew 24:31 speaks of angels gathering the elect.

Answer: Jesus sends the angels to bring the elect to Him. He is obviously there in the clouds (v.30), just as he had promised to return for the church (Acts 1:9-11).

Objections – Matthew 24:31?

3. **Objection:** Matthew 24:31 refers to the beginning of the millennium.

Answer: This is not the same as the sheep and goats judgment. The sheep and goats judgment describes both believers and unbelievers being gathered before Christ. Additionally, pre-trib folks frequently use Matthew 24:36 as a proof-text for an imminent rapture.

Objections – Matthew 24:31?

4. **Objection:** The analogy to Noah's day speaks of carrying people away to judgment.

Answer: Verse 31 makes it clear that the elect are the ones who will be snatched up and gathered together by the angels. Of course, if the rapture happens in conjunction with the Day of the Lord, unbelievers will also be carried away in judgment as part of the same event. Grammatically, the verb for "taking" in vv.40-41 is also used in John 14:3 to refer to the rapture. The verb "took" in v.39 is a different word.

Objections – Matthew 24:31?

5. **Objection:** Matthew 24 applies to Israel, not the church.

Answer: This is not exegetically feasible.

- Mark 13:11 – “*not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit*” – He is talking to the church, not unsaved Israel.
- In Matthew 24, “*you*” is the same “*you*” as in Mark 13 and Luke 21, which are Gentile gospels.
- The Great commission and the upper room discourse were given to the same group of people as the Olivet discourse.
- Why would the disciples understand Israel to be the “elect” when Jesus just said the kingdom would be taken from them (Matthew 21:43)?
- See also 1 Thessalonians 2:19, 3:11-13, 5:23; Hebrews 10:36-37; James 5:7-9; 1 John 2:28; Malachi 4:1-5

Objections – Matthew 24:31?

6. **Objection:** This passage speaks of *a* rapture, but not *the* rapture. This is a different rapture than that described in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15.

Answer: There is no scriptural evidence to support such a position. We have no scriptural warrant for assuming that there is any more than one rapture.

Timing of the Rapture

1. The “coming of the Lord on clouds” (i.e. *parousia*) is one series of events called “the Day of the Lord,” containing both the rapture and the final judgment.
2. The coming of the Day of the Lord will be signaled by cosmic signs.
3. Therefore, the rapture initiates the Day of the Lord.

Conclusion

Conclusion

1. **Pre-tribulational position**

- Either: (1) Correctly accepts that the rapture initiates the Day of the Lord but wrongly assigns the Day of the Lord before the midpoint of the tribulation (Robert Thomas) or, (2) Wrongly divides the rapture and Day of the Lord (MacArthur).

2. **Mid-tribulational position**

- Wrongly assigns the rapture before the cosmic signs

3. **Pre-wrath position**

- Scripturally plausible if seals, trumpets, and bowls are sequential

4. **Post-tribulational position**

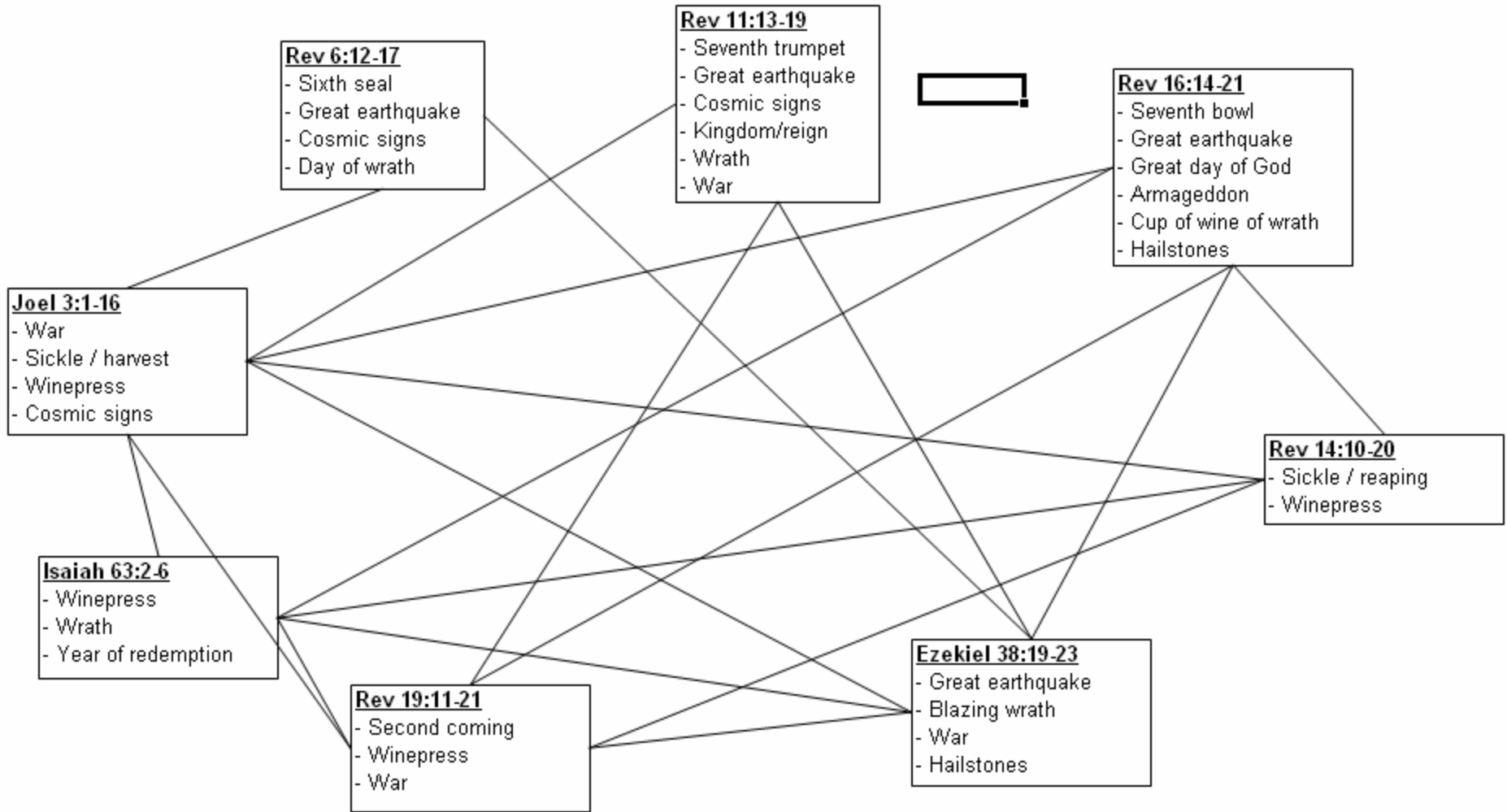
- Scripturally plausible if seals, trumpets, and bowls are parallel

So which one is correct?

Evidence for Post-Trib Rapture

1. 6th seal, 7th trumpet and 7th bowl are the same event
 - All three have a great earthquake (Revelation 6:12, 11:13-19, 16:18 all depict the fulfillment of Ezekiel 38:19-23)
 - The 6th seal immediately precedes Armageddon per Joel 3:9-16, which is parallel to Revelation 14:10-20
 - 7th trumpet announces the kingdom and reign of Christ
 - Accomplishes God's mystery (Revelation 10:7), which is announced in a major rapture passage (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)
 - 7th bowl announces "*the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath*"
 - Parallel to Isaiah 63:2-6, which speaks of the "*year of redemption*" referred to in Luke's rapture passage (21:28)
 - Parallel to Revelation 14:19-20, 16:19, 19:11-21 (Armageddon)

Evidence for Post-Trib Rapture



Evidence for Post-Trib Rapture

2. Revelation 20:4-6 states that the first resurrection occurs shortly before the millennial kingdom
3. The rapture most likely is in view when the two witnesses ascend to heaven (Revelation 11:12)
4. The rapture is most likely depicted by the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:1, 6-9)
5. Daniel 12:1-2 clearly indicates a post-tribulational rapture
6. Five times in John's gospel, Jesus says He will raise believers on the "*last day*" (6:39, 40, 44, 55; 11:54)

Evidence for Post-Trib Rapture

7. The ascension of the two witnesses to heaven in a cloud most likely is a reference to a post-tribulational rapture (Revelation 11:11-19), since it happens at the time of the 7th trumpet.
8. The sun and moon are darkened during the 6th seal, and there is specific mention in Revelation 21:23 that *“the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb”*.

Evidence for Post-Trib Rapture

9. ³ *We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting...for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure...* ⁶ *For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,* ⁷ *and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,* ⁸ *dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, ¹⁰ when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed-- for our testimony to you was believed. (2 Thessalonians 1:3-10)*

Questions?