

***Posttribulationism and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12***  
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***Introductions***

From the perspective of those of us who hold to a pretribulational rapture, posttribulationism wrecks havoc on the Word of God, and especially the eschatological framework of events that are yet future. Advocates of posttribulationism have to work hard at re-writing what is obvious in prophecy, redefine, and reconfigure the meaning of biblical texts.

This study will attempt to answer the posttribulational arguments concerning the Day of the Lord, its relation to the rapture, and its teaching about the Man of Sin in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.

This paper will cover the following:

**.Defining Posttribulationism**

**.Posttribulational arguments**

**Douglas J. Moo**

**Bob Gundry**

**.An exegesis of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3**

**.An analysis of additional passages of Scripture**

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**Defining Posttribulationism**

Ryrie writes that Posttrib

teaches that the Rapture and the Second Coming are facets of a single event that will occur at the end of the Tribulation when Christ returns. The church will be on earth during the Tribulation to experience the events of that period.(Ryrie, 582)

Walvoord describes some of the workings of posttribulationism:

Generally speaking, posttribulationists are content to attack other points of view rather than setting forth their own arguments. Actually the church is never found in any portion of Scripture dealing with the time of the tribulation, and the translation of the church is never mentioned in any passage picturing the return of Christ to set up His kingdom. Posttribulationism is built principally upon the identification of the church with tribulation saints, a conclusion which is without substantiation in Scripture. Posttribulationists cannot cite a single passage where this confusion is justified, and their arguments as a whole have been often refuted. for this reason most thorough-going premillenarians have abandoned the posttribulation position as not being the hope for the rapture of

the church taught in the Scriptures. (*The Millennial Kingdom*, 249-50)

Posttrib teaches that the church, comprised of Jews or Gentiles, will go *through* this terrible period but will be spared and will escape death. The rapture will take place sometime within the tribulation, or at the end. These church saints will go up in the clouds and almost instantly return with Christ to enjoy His kingdom reign. Some who hold the Posttrib view believe that the parents of the millennial population come from the 144,000 witnessing Jews of Revelation 7.

McAvoy says, that from Bob Gundry's writings,

It is difficult to state precisely [his] view concerning the relationship between the church, the outpouring of God's wrath, and the tribulation period. He himself makes no precise summary statement, and in fact seems unable to make up his mind as he vacillates between positions in which are mutually exclusive. For example, does the wrath of God fall anywhere within the tribulation period? On the one hand, Gundry's answer is, no. ... On the other hand, he places the outpouring of God's wrath *after* the tribulation, and on the other hand, places it *during* the tribulation. (Dissertation, 251)

And,

Gundry's arguments vary, depending upon which position he is defending. Some of his arguments are given in defense of the view that divine wrath will be poured out during the latter part of the tribulation and that the church will remain on earth during that time but will receive "shelter" or protection. Other of his arguments defend the view that divine wrath is not poured out until *after* the tribulation, and that the church will be raptured prior to that outpouring. (Ibid., 252)

## **Posttribulational Arguments**

### ***Posttribulationist Douglas J. Moo***

Stanley Gundry edited a book entitled *Three Views of the Rapture* in which Douglas J. Moo, an advocate of the Posttrib position, lists the main components of this view. Moo writes:

- (1) "It is important to recognize that God's people *can remain* on earth while escaping the wrath." (italics mine) (174)
- (2) The Day of the Lord includes the Parousia (the second coming) of Christ, along with the Rapture and the resurrection of the righteous dead. (184)
- (3) The nation of Israel and the church are mixed together in the tribulation. Moo writes with double-talk:

What is important ... is to distinguish ... between prophecies directed to Israel *as a nation* (and which must be fulfilled in a national Israel) and prophecies directed to Israel *as the people of God* (which can be fulfilled in the people of God—a *people that includes the church!*). It should be noted that such an approach is not allegorical or nonliteral; it simply calls upon the interpreter to recognize the intended scope of any specific prophecy. It is our contention, then, that the Great Tribulation predicted for Israel by, e.g., Daniel, is directed to Israel as the people of God. It can therefore be fulfilled in the people of God, which includes the church as well as Israel. (Gundry, 207)

- (4) In the Posttrib view, *imminence* no longer is the Blessed Hope of the any-hour return of Christ for His church. Though the doctrine of imminence should not be jettisoned, Moo writes, it simply “expresses the supremely important conviction that the glorious return of Christ *could* take place within any limited period of time—the next few years.” (Gundry, 208)
- (5) In the Posttrib position, the contexts of the rapture passages, such as 1 Thessalonians 4, are mixed and mingled with Christ’s statements to a future Jewish generation to be watching and waiting for Christ’s coming as king, as in Matthew 24-25. This “waiting and watching” for the second coming, the Parousia, is then transferred over to the idea of looking for the coming of the antichrist.
- (6) In 2 Thessalonians 2, the Day of the Lord is seen as the Parousia, and also the Rapture of the church. (Gundry, 188)
- (7) In 2 Thessalonians 2 “Paul points to ... an indisputably tribulational event, the revelation of the Antichrist, as evidence that the ‘Day’ has not come, surely implies that believers *will* see it (and the antichrist) when it does occur. (Gundry, 189)

In 1 Thessalonians 5:5-9, Moo writes that the church believers who are in the tribulation can avoid “wrath” judgment by godly living. He says, “Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to live godly lives in order that they might avoid the judgment aspect of the Day [of the Lord]—not that they might avoid the [very] Day itself.” (Gundry, 186)

If Moo’s teaching on Posttrib is typical of the modern thinking on this doctrine, it is overwhelmingly clear that the greatest error is the confounding and co-mingling of biblical contexts. Context violation can be said to be the hallmark of the view.

*Summing up what Moo teaches:*

- .The Day of the Lord is the rapture and the Parousia of Christ.
- .Matthew 24-25 is tied to 1 Thessalonians 4 and 2 Thessalonians 2.
- .The “watching” passages in Matthew 24 are transferred to 2 Thessalonians 2 automatically.
- .The church is certain to be in the tribulation and is seen together with Israel.
- .The church will be in the tribulation wrath but will avoid the judgmental aspects by godly living.
- .Church believers are to be looking for the antichrist before looking for Christ’s

return.

***Posttribulationist Bob Gundry [Brother of Stanley Gundry]***

In Bob Gundry's book *First the Antichrist* (Baker, 1997), he writes,

So first the Antichrist. Only then the Christ. First the tribulation. Only then the Day of the Lord. Christians aren't in the dark. They won't be surprised by the Day of the Lord, the coming of Christ. They'll know ahead of time that the Antichrist's rebellion and revelation signal its nearness. (22)

While Bob Gundry commits what I consider a multitude of errors in his Posttrib views, I have isolated three that I consider violate good hermeneutical principles. These violations have to do with two passages of Scripture, and a specific conclusion he rides without letup in his book.

*1 Thessalonians 5:2-6.* Paul reminds this church,

*For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.*

Bob Gundry agrees with the Pretrib view that the "they" who claim peace and safety are the unbelievers. But he then reasons that the church will go into this day of wrath but believers will be more informed. This terrible day will overtake the church, but not overtake believers *as a thief!* (v. 4).

Why will it not overtake the church as a thief? Gundry answers: because Paul told the Thessalonian church when he was with them that the Day of the Lord "won't arrive unless that evil figure 'is revealed.'" (20)

Gundry just pulled a switch on the reader of his book! He suddenly is arguing that the Day of the Lord comes at the end of the tribulation, therefore, the church will go through the tribulation and also see the antichrist.

Bob Gundry says Christians "are not in darkness" simply because they know the times and seasons. "They already know whose coming (the antichrist's) has to precede the Lord's coming," Gundry writes. (20)

In answering Bob Gundry, it is important to understand how Paul begins 1 Thessalonians 5. The Thessalonians did not have to be taught the doctrine of the Day of the Lord. Paul says they know this truth, probably from all of the Old Testament teaching on the subject, and what Paul probably taught them (v. 1). Paul goes on and writes that the Thessalonians are not of darkness (v. 5). He is not referring to their knowledge about

the subject of the Day of the Lord, but the fact that they are of the category of those who are born again, of those who will be delivered by the rapture from the seven-year tribulation period. Paul adds that believers belong to the category of “sons of light and sons of day,” not of the category of those who are of the night and live in darkness (v. 5). Believers are urged to live soberly (vs. 6-8) as a moral injunction, but Paul makes no mention that this will keep them from the horrors of tribulation judgment. Paul does not connect this sober living with the idea of being sober in looking for the antichrist, as most Posttribbers would argue! **This idea is an assumption and a great leap of logic by Gundry and other Posttrib advocates!**

*Matthew 24.* Gundry and all of those who hold to the Posttrib view tie Christ’s words to some future generation of Jewish believers, who are indeed in the tribulation, *and* to the church and “those in Christ.” They have somehow plopped the church into the teachings of Christ to the Jews and to His Jewish disciples. In the Olivet Discourse that reveals the tribulation and the second coming of Christ, “Of that day and hour [of the Parousia] no one knows” (Matt. 24:36), the Posttribbers apply to the church and to Christians. “The elect” (v. 22) are called church saints with no thought for the contextual setting that is definitely Jewish, and with Jesus answering Jewish questions and issues!

Gundry will argue: when the Messiah, the Son of Man, comes to earth, and is mourned by all the tribes of the earth, the “gathering together His elect” (vs. 30-31) is the rapture of church saints.

The allusion to the antichrist (Daniel’s Abomination of Desolation) in verse 15, Gundry says will be witnessed by church believers passing through the seven-year tribulation. Gundry without hesitation transports Olivet Discourse verses directly to 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 and argues that the church will see the antichrist doing his evil deeds.

The problem again is context, context, context! Most Posttribbers cross over without hesitation from one context to another, ignoring sound observation of what is really going on in the passages of Scripture. They usually fail to ask *what, why, who, where, and when.*

*Paul tells Christians to be watching for the antichrist.* So says Bob Gundry! This becomes his compelling point: “Christians are *instructed* to watch for the coming of the Day of the Lord and the prior revelation of the antichrist.” Gundry writes:

The Apostle Paul tells Christians in the church at Thessalonica, Greece, that they should be watchful for the coming of “the Day of the Lord” (1 Thess. 5:1-11, especially verse 6: “Therefore, then, let us not sleep, as the rest do, but let us watch and stay sober”). ... Paul has just described “the coming of the Lord,” which includes a catching up, or rapture, of Christians “to meet the Lord in the air” as he descends (1 Thess. 4:16-17). So the Day of the Lord can’t arrive till after the rebellion that Antichrist will lead during the tribulation. ... Yet Christians are supposed to watch for that posttribulation day. (Gundry, 19, 21)

Gundry purposely misses the point here in 1 Thessalonians 5. He argues that “watch and stay sober” (v. 6) must have an object, and that object is the coming of the antichrist. But Paul has in mind a moral and spiritual “awake-ness.” He reminds believers that they are of the category of the saved, of those who are “sons of light and sons of day” (v. 5). Paul is referring to a spiritual mandate and a spiritual and moral walk. The apostle continues and describes the unsaved who sleep in the night and “who get drunk at night” (v. 7). He further argues that to be sober is to put on the “breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation” (v. 8). Paul never says this is a call to be looking for the antichrist. This “salvation” (“*sotarias*”) here in context should be translated *deliverance, rescue*. In my opinion, spiritual salvation is not in view, but instead Paul has in mind the deliverance through the pretribulational rapture of the church:

“For God has not destined us for wrath but for obtaining salvation (deliverance) through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 1:9). The Lord has not destined us “into (“*eis*”) wrath” (v. 9), but “out from (“*ek*”) the wrath on its way” (1:10). 1:10 can best be translated: “to be waiting for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who will be delivering us (“*ruomai*,” *dragging away as from danger*) out from the wrath that is on its way.”

Coming back to 5:6, what could the believers be alert and watching for? The answer seems to be found in 1:10. They are to be waiting for God’s Son from heaven!

But from all of these verses, Gundry tries desperately to build his scenario that Paul is urging believers to be watching for the coming of the antichrist. He writes:

- .The Day of the Lord [is] an object of Christians’ watching. (29)
- .The new topic is Christians to be watchful for the Day of the Lord. (30)
- .Christians watchfulness doesn’t begin till after the tribulation. (39)
- .Paul is telling Christians to watch for the coming of the Day of the Lord. (46)

Most respected commentators do not agree with Gundry. They see the expression *to be sober* in a spiritual-moral sense, not in the sense of being *soberly awaiting* when the Day of the Lord comes, and the antichrist shows up. For example, note what some Greek scholars say about the words *let us not sleep, be alert and sober* in 1 Thessalonians 5:6:

- .Christians are summoned to live up their privileges and positions toward the Lord. (Nicoll)
- .Ethical restraint is in view. (Wanamaker)
- .Sleeping shows indifference to spiritual realities in view. (Ritchie)
- .Being awake means “to be calm, sober-minded.” (Robertson)
- .”Don’t go into a spiritual slumber, stay awake as to what is happening around you, and don’t lose your spiritual senses in a world of darkness, because you really belong to the day and not to the night.” (Couch)
- .Believers escape God’s wrath whether they are watchful or not (1:10). This is a powerful argument for a pretribulational Rapture. (Constable, BKC)
- .Self-control, control themselves. (Millagan)

.Freedom from intoxicants, alertness, stability. (Vine)  
.Paul is eager to share with his disciples the responsibilities entailed [in]  
Christian privileges. (Lightfoot)

Bob Gundry is consumed with the idea that Paul is telling believers to be “watchful” for the antichrist and the Day of the Lord. He argues “watchfulness and sobriety in view of what? The coming of the Day of the Lord.” (30) This argument is not supportable from the full context of what Paul is trying to say.

Gundry has to jump back to Matthew 24, the Olivet Discourse, and argue that the generation Jesus was speaking was both a future Jewish generation, but also a final generation of those in the church age, who would see “the Abomination of Desolation,” i.e., the desecration of the antichrist in the temple (v. 15). It is true this context indicates the passage is referring to a future generation of Jews in the tribulation who will see these events take place in a rebuilt temple. But again, the passage is silent about the dispensation of the church age. Since the actual, historic figure of the antichrist did not come to the temple in 70 AD, the words of Jesus, and of Paul, point to some far future event. None of the verses in the Olivet Discourse or the Thessalonian letters say the church believers will see this prophecy coming to pass.

Bob Gundry cites many other arguments that I consider extremely weak, and even some that are intellectually dishonest.

He says that since the words “saints,” “witnesses,” and “servants” are used in Acts and Paul’s epistles, when these words are used in the body of the book of Revelation, from chapters seven and on, they must be referring to the church.(85) Again, the hermeneutical principle of context is tossed out the window. These words are used frequently in the Old Testament. Should we apply these expressions to the church, in the Old Testament?

In those Old Testament verses it is said to the Jewish people, “Fear the Lord, you His saints” (Ps. 34:9), and “You are My witnesses” (Isa. 43:10), and then, “Israel, My servant” (41:8). Are these words truly describing the church in the Old Testament? While these words represent great spiritual principles that we can appreciate in their Old Testament setting, are they technical terms applied here to indicate church believers?

What would Gundry say about these words used in the Mosaic Law dispensation? These are good and valid words. However, because they are used in the Old Testament, this does indicate that “the church” is there! But this is the kind of reasoning Gundry uses to say the church is in the book of Revelation, and in the Olivet Discourse in the Gospels.

Gundry also uses a cold and dried up argument against the pretibulation rapture. Some older dispensationalists used Revelation 4:1 to say John’s going up to heaven is symbolic of the rapture of the church. (84) Gundry sets this argument up as a straw man, and then sets out to knock it down. (I personally never heard of this argument until I read his book. I would not lean on this verse to support a pretribulation rapture.)

### **An Examination of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12**

It is not the purpose of this paper to deal with 2 Thessalonians 1:3-12. I believe this section of verses is about the second coming of the Lord Jesus. A paper needs to be presented on this because I believe there are some issues that should be addressed from our premillennial and dispensational viewpoint. So I will confine my attention to 2:1-12

only. (Some of the material below comes from my Thessalonian commentary *The Hope of Christ's Return* [AMG Publishers]. However, many new comments on these verses have been added.)

*The Outline.*

**Paul's Doctrinal Concern About the Day of the Lord (2:1-17)**

- A. "The Misunderstanding" (2:1-3)**
- B. The Man of Lawlessness Described (2:4)**
- C. The "Reminder" (2:5)**
- D. The Restraining of the Antichrist (2:6-9)**
- E. The Judgment of the Wicked (2:10-12)**

**A. "The Misunderstanding" (2:1-3)**

The Thessalonians had received the clear teaching about the Lord's coming in the rapture. They were blessed by this teaching, as the apostle had reminded them in 1 Thessalonians 1:10. Their hearts and minds had been greatly encouraged by this blessed hope. Paul had taught them this truth when he was with them. In addition, they were told they would not undergo the day of the Lord, the wrath: "Jesus, the Deliverer (the One who snatches) us away from the wrath that is on its way" (1:10), and "For God has not destined us for wrath" (5:9).

The apostle Paul calms the emotions of the new converts (1) by explaining that they are not in the day of the Lord, (2) by showing that the man of sin must also first be revealed, and (3) by using the certainty of the rapture (as described in 1 Thessalonians) as the basis for removing their doubts. Paul's purpose will be to show that grace will operate before judgment; the rapture will take place before that "dreaded day." He states the truth with warmth, affection, and the assurance of the first verse, "our gathering together to Him."

**2:1 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him,**

**Now.** With *now (de)* the apostle radically changes the subject from chapter 1. "He now turns aside (*de*) to correct any mistakes which his mention of this day may have occasioned, to calm any feverish desires which it may have excited." (Lightfoot) *De* is "used to connect one clause with another when it is felt that there is some contrast between them" (BAG)

The apostle now moves from discussing the second coming of Christ for judgment, and the glory He will bring in regard to His saints, to the issue of the rapture *again*. The *now (de)* has him moving back to the rapture issue he dealt so completely with in 1 Thessalonians, but from that epistle, he wants to bring something back up he had previously discussed. A. T. Robertson would probably point to the *emphatic, intensive* meaning of *de*. The word causes the readers to re-focus: *Touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* (A. T. Robertson) With *de* "the apostle thus passes to [his] main theme of the epistle." (Vine) The opening of the verse could read **Now I really want to bring something else up I've discussed before!**

**We request.** Paul is using one of the most common words for *ask, request (erotao,* present active indicative) in a more forceful way than is usual. *Erotao* is more appropriate with exhortation and its urgency is heightened (Milligan), though it is also given in a kindly spirit. (Lenski) “Paul begs his readers not to be thrown into consternation or kept in a flutter of excitement over that matter of the Parousia, or ‘coming.’” (PCH) **Now we really want to be urging you on another matter.**

**Brethren.** The apostle repeatedly uses *adelphos* in the Thessalonians epistles, because he felt such comradeship with those suffering believers in that city.

**With regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.** *With regard (huper)* to the “coming” (*parousia*) introduces the subject at hand. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:10, Paul had written about the distinction between the rapture of the church and the day of the Lord, however, false prophets began confusing the Christians by teaching they had missed the “catching up” (4:17) and were already in the hour of terror. On *huper* Barnes translates the phrase *by the coming, respecting the coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Almost all commentators, non-dispensational and otherwise, tie this phrase and what follows, with 1 Thessalonians 4:17 and the rapture. “Paul is, of course, referring to the event of 1 Thess. 4:16, the Rapture.” (Ritchie)

**And our gathering together to Him.** Is this synonymous with the first clause? *Our gathering together to Him* fits with the rapture and not the second coming. This is the opinion of most of the Greek commentators. Both Alford and Robertson see “the coming” and “the gathering together to Him” as the same thing. The grammar probably well supports this by the use of the one preposition *huper* (concerning, regarding), which controls the two nouns “the coming” and “the gathering-together.” Thus it would read, “With regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ *even* our gathering together to Him.” “In reference to our being gathered unto Him.” (Barnes) Vine strongly concurs and writes

the article appears before *parousia* and is not repeated before *episunagoge*, indicating that these are complimentary elements in one event.

Ellicott says the gathering together refers to the meeting together of the dead and the alive as found in 1 Thessalonians 4:14-15, 17. A. T. Robertson adds, “Paul is referring to the Rapture, mentioned in 1 Thess. 4:15-17 and the being forever with the Lord thereafter.”

*Gathering together* is actually three words (*epi-syn-ogoge*) combined to make one—*epi* (*upon*), *syn* (*together*), and *ago* (*to lead*), or, “to lead upon together.” The final prepositional phrase *to Him*, Alford says better reads, “up to Him.”

Despite being momentarily confused about these events, the Thessalonians had been well taught. They knew that their suffering would be rewarded at Christ’s coming for His church. Their eyes would behold Him in the air as they are caught away from this sinful world. If they died before the rapture, they still had hope of experiencing this event and receiving a new, eternal body. Paul

beseeches them by this event, for if their hearts could but grip the

fact that their “gathering together unto him,” their being taken to heaven, and thus being “forever with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17), meant they would be delivered from the coming wrath on earth, then all fear must vanish. (Ritchie)

**2:2 that you may 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 had come.**

**That you may not be quickly shaken from your composure.** The key to this entire passage may be found in *that (eis to)*. The *eis to* introduces an object clause just as it does in 1 Thess. 2:12; 3:10. The *eis to* states the contents of the request. (Lenski) A. T. Robertson says *eis to* with the infinitive is Paul’s favorite idiom for purpose, as in 1:11 (*eis ho*). Milligan translates the passage: “To the end that you be not readily driven away from your sober sense, as a ship from its safe anchorage.” Alford writes, “in order that you might not be shaken.” In a sense the Thessalonian believers were helpless to stop the anxiety because they were told by false teachers that they were in the day of the Lord.

“Quickly” could be translated “not be hastily, readily” shaken. Many of the believers seem to have been overwhelmed, thrown into shock. *Tacheos* (“quickly”) could also be translated “after so short a time” (Lightfoot), that is, so quickly after Paul had taught them on these matters. Some false teachers must have tossed the assembly literally into a spin.

**From your composure** actually means “from your mind” (*apo tou noos*). *Noos* refers to the “mind, reason, sober sense, composure” or “wit.” They were losing their minds, their reasoning ability was shaken in regard to their thinking they were in the Day of the Lord. “This came as a shock to the mind and then left them in the greatest mental agitation. Note that Christians are to keep their heads against error and fanatic notions.” (Lenski)

**Or be disturbed.** This is the most emotional word Paul uses in this discussion. *Disturbed (throeo, present passive infinitive)* is a strong and powerful word in Greek that is used only here and in two other places in the New Testament (Matt. 24:6; Mark 13:7). It means “to cry aloud” as in pain or tumult. With the present tense and passive voice it can be translated “to be put in[to] a state of shock” as if the Day of the Lord is going on now (Robertson). They were continually disturbed, shaken, but they were not to be alarmed so easily. (NTC) It is interesting that the word *throeo* is used in Matthew 24:6 and Mark 13:7 in the same context about the tribulation, or the Day of the Lord, with the same warning by Christ that Paul uses. “It seems fair to conclude that Paul is practically quoting Jesus [here in Thessalonians].” (Lenski)

**To the end that the Day of the Lord has come.** Vine puts it this way:

**to the end that**—these words are to be connected with “we beseech you.” In the previous letter he had reassured them concerning the future of their departed [loved ones and the rapture], here he reassures them concerning their own present experiences; the afflictions they were enduring were not evidence that the day of the Lord had set in.

Despite their troubles (1:4) these new believers were not in the Day of the Lord as they thought and as they were told. It is important to properly understand the expression “being gathered together to Him.” This indicates that they could not be so entangled with that awful period, that they were being left behind in it. “In fact, their ‘being gathered to him’ will be the event that signals the [beginning of the Day of the Lord].” (EBC)

**The day of the Lord has come.** *Has come* is the perfect active indicative of *enistemi* (“put in place”). It is interesting that Paul here uses the perfect tense. The question that I would raise is: how far can the force of the perfect tense be taken here? Could it be part of the key in understanding the problem we are addressing with the posttribulationists?

Dana and Mantey remind us that “It is best to assume that there is a reason for the perfect [tense] wherever it occurs.” (200) They add,

The perfect is the tense of complete action. Its basal significance is the progress of an act or state to a point of culmination and the existence of its finished results. ... That is, it views action as a finished product. ... It implies a process, but views that process as having reached its consummation and existing in a finished state. ... In the indicative the perfect signifies action as complete from the point of view of present time. (200)

The perfect tense here with the verb *enistemi* should be noted carefully. We may read the verse, along with the thoughts that follow: **Do not think that the day of the Lord has been progressively coming into place, and has finally arrived, with tribulation events falling upon you.** Paul’s statement clearly demands a negative answer. **It has not!**

**2:3 ... Because [the Day of the Lord] cannot [come] [except, unless] the falling away comes first, and [then] the unlawful man [the Rebel, *Ellicott*] should be revealed forth.**

*Unless the falling away comes first* is a third class subjunctive with the negative condition, and the aorist tense. “It expresses that which is not really taking place but which probably will take place in the future.” (Summers) The apostasy (the rapture, or the religious apostasy), has not yet taken place. This is yet future. Neither had the unlawful man arrived.

Lightfoot says the order of things here is important. “*The [Coming] of the Lord will not take place unless there come the Apostasy first.*” When will this happen?

The time of this apostasy from Christ of which the apostle speaks is not indicated. The centuries since the words were written have not produced the person here described as displaying fully the characteristics of the apostasy. The conclusion that the prophecy awaits fulfillment seems inevitable. (Vine)

Putting all of this section together it could read:

**Now we urge you, brothers, with reference to the [subject] of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, even our gathering together up to Him, that you be not shaken ... thinking that the terrible Day of the Lord had arrived already! It has not!**

Or,

**We urge you not to be shaken in thinking that the day of the Lord has come, because when we told you before about the coming of the Lord to take you home, we indicated that you would not go under the wrath that would follow!**

**2:4 ... 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.**

The self-exaltation will take place halfway through the tribulation. This unlawful one, or rebel, the beast of the book of Revelation 13, will speak arrogant and blasphemous words (v. 5), blaspheme against God, His name, and His temple, and all who are in heaven (v. 6). While he makes his move against the world and against God halfway through the tribulation, it must be remembered that he starts this terrible period when he, described as “the prince” in Daniel 9:26, makes the seven year covenant that turns out to be the seven year period of tribulation (v. 27).

The antichrist then is right up front when the covenant is made. This covenant, I believe, is the seven-year tribulation, and the Day of the Lord. Therefore, the church will not see any of the activities of the antichrist, nor will she go through the Day of the Lord, i.e., the tribulation and the wrath. It must also be remembered that he is revealed “in his time” (2 Thess. 2:7). Or, “in the season of him.” *Season* is *kairos*. I believe the antichrist’s *kairos* is part of the Day of the Lord Paul speaks of in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2.

Antichrist is to come at just the right and appropriate period of world history, i.e., *his season*. The iniquity of the Gentiles will be piled up, and judgment through his evilness will be due upon the nations. “As there was an exact season for Christ to appear, so also is there for Satan’s false christ. He is but a man; [but] God will determine his permitted season.” (Ritchie)

Again, there is no evidence whatsoever that believers “in Christ” (the technical expression for the church) will see the antichrist in action, though we may see him soon as some charismatic and talented military or political world figure. But before the rapture of the church I do not believe we will recognize his real identity.

There is no evidence whatsoever that the church will experience the period of the seven-year tribulation. Try as they may, posttribulationists cannot make their scheme work.

The arguments above make sense to most premillennialists in demonstrating the fact that the church will not go through the “wrath” of the tribulation, therefore, church saints will not see the revealing of the antichrist and the tribulation. However, these arguments are not sufficient for posttribulationists because they do not observe carefully enough the contextual settings of Matthew 24 and the Olivet Discourse. This is also true of how

they see the issue of the “saints” on earth, and the “saints” in heaven, in the book of Revelation, and as well, the prophetic events described that are going on in the two Thessalonian letters.

*The issue of **context** becomes one of the most important tools for answering posttribulationism.*

## **The Contextual Issues**

Bob Gundry wants to make a distinction between God’s wrath and the seven-year tribulation. He argues that “No saved person can suffer [God’s wrath]--that much is clear. So whoever they are [in the book of Revelation], saints of the tribulation won’t have the bowls of God’s wrath poured out on them. ... the wrath ... will fall only on unbelievers.” (51) By arguing this way, Gundry can state that the church will not be raptured until the tribulation is complete. However in his view, the church will avoid the wrath.

But then Gundry goes silent. He makes no honest effort to explain how all this works out. He has no argument as to why there are no passages in the Pauline writings that tell us how to be prepared for the devilish deeds of the antichrist. Gundry simply fights with all of his might against pretribulationism, as we speak of it, and then comes to a dead end as to what the tribulation will be like for the church.

Besides placing the church in Matthew 24, Bob Gundry sees the church in the tribulation of the book of Revelation. He writes, “The Book of Revelation puts saved people in the tribulation. Lots of them, in fact.” (47) By this he means the church saved. He then cites Revelation 7:9-10, 11-17 and adds, “Elsewhere the Book of Revelation calls these people ‘saints’ (see especially 13:7, which reports that the Beast will make war against the saints and conquer them, that is, persecute them to the point of martyrdom; also 5:8; 8:3, 4; 11:18; 13:10; 14:12; 16:6; 17:6; 18:20, 24; 19:8).” (48)

Bob Gundry continues to mix apples and oranges and refuses to see, in this Revelation 7 context, that the church has already gone into heaven in the pretribulation rapture (1 Thess. 4:13-18), before the day of the Lord (5:1-on).

Despite how Bob Gundry argues and attempts to place the church in the period of the wrath, there is an overwhelming silence about the church being in the tribulation events of Matthew 24. (Walvoord and Ryrie have pointed this out.) By the argument of silence I mean that there is nothing that would indicate that the church believers are being addressed in the context of the Olivet Discourse, and in the book of Revelation. We see believing Jews there, the generic **you**, those who are caught in the tribulation, who are enlightened and who trust their Messiah.

To me, Paul seems clear about this when he says **they**, implying **the world**, will say “peace and safety,” with destruction coming upon **them** (1 Thess. 5:1-3). Despite what the Gundrys say, Paul does not warn the church believers that they will see the son of destruction entering the temple and declaring himself God (2 Thess. 2:4-9), nor does he say the church believers will be deceived, or even be around, when the Lord sends strong delusion on **them**, the world (vv. 10-12).

While it is true there are saints mentioned in Revelation 6-18 (8:3, 4; 11:18; 13:7, 10; 14:12; 16:6; 17:6; 18:20, 24; 19:8; 20:9), after chapter 3, one does not see the expressions “those in Christ,” “the body of Christ,” “Christian,” or the word “church.”

While arguing from silence must be handled carefully in interpretation, silence is still a compelling hermeneutical principle that can be taken into consideration. In the passages of Scripture where the posttribulationists want to place the church (as in: the Olivet Discourse passages; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, and the book of Revelation), good hermeneutical observation in these passages does not come up with the church, the body of Christ. Paul never says the church is being warned about the coming antichrist, nor are “those in Christ” seen as going under the wrath and the terrors of the Day of the Lord. Remember, the expressions “in Christ,” “the body of Christ” are technical expressions for the dispensation of the church.

Paul writes, “Yourselves know perfectly well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:2). Paul reminds the Thessalonian church that he had taught about this earlier (v. 1). In 2 Thessalonians 2:5 he adds, “Do you not remember that while I was with you, I was telling you these things?” The apostle goes on and writes that the Thessalonian church “*knew*” what was now restraining the antichrist (v. 6), and that *in his the season (“kairos”) that is particular to him* (v. 6b), he would be *uncovered, revealed (“apokalupto”)*.

The unlawful one will *then (“tote”)* “at some future time be uncovered” after the “restrainer,” who I believe is the Holy Spirit, will move aside from His work of restraining (v. 7). Ellicott writes, “The Spirit shall become out of the [one] sphere into another,” or “He that withholds disappears from the midst.” Alford says, “He that hinders shall be removed.” “The Holy Spirit is present in order to save the lost during the tribulation, but He will no longer restrain sin; His restraining activity will but cease.” (Couch)

### **The Question Remains ... Will the Church Go into the Tribulation?**

While Paul writes about the day of the Lord in verse 2, he in no way implies that the church will be living through this period. Here posttribulationists use silence in reverse. Gundry would say: “The church must be going through the period of the Day of the Lord because Paul did not say it would not!”

Bob Gundry tries to use the argument of silence *against* pretribulationist-rapturists. He writes, “‘What is good for the goose is good for the gander’: If the absence of ‘church’ from earthly scenes [in the book of Revelation] were to imply an absence of the church down here, then the absence of ‘church’ from heavenly scenes would imply an absence of the church up there.” (84)

How do we answer this charge?

Bob Gundry seems to have us in a hermeneutical chock hold! We have argued that the word “church” is not mentioned after Revelation 3, and specifically, she is not seen on earth in the chapters on the tribulation. He would argue against us, that we cannot call the great heavenly company in 5:8-14 the raptured church.

We would respond back the following way:

1. This great company from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation in chapter 5 is seen in heaven *before* the tribulation begins in chapter 6. It is important to observe that this great crowd is not described as martyrs. (Though there certainly have been martyrs during the church

age.) As the book of Revelation develops, all other references to great companies of heavenly worshippers have come out of the tribulation as martyrs (7:9-8:6; 14:1-5; 15:1-8).

2. We would further add: an *a priori* argument is legitimate in hermeneutics. By this I mean, to settle the Revelation 5 issue with Gundry, we can go back to earlier clear and airtight rapture passages. The great rapture passages tell us the church *will be* delivered “from (away from) the wrath to come” (1 Thess. 1:10), “will be caught up to heaven to meet the Lord in the air” (4:17), is “not destined for wrath” (5:9), and is even presently “looking for the blessed hope *even* the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus” (Titus 2:13). Such verses set the direction for other later contexts that come along, say in Revelation.

As pretribulation-rapturists, we do not place our full weight of arguments on Revelation 5:8-14. But that this passage seems best to represent the church in heaven of those who have died, and even the raptured church; such an argument appears to make the most sense. A sound theology is constructed by placing all the doctrinal pieces together. The pretribulation rapture of the church seems to make full sense when all the evidence is examined.

### **The Posttribulation Contextual Failure**

One of the greatest problems Bob Gundry and other posttribulationists seem to have is, they fail to fully understand the unique nature of this dispensation of the church. Gundry admits there are people saved in the tribulation, as all pretribulationists do. But he then gets upset when pretribulationists argue that church saints will be raptured before the tribulation, but that those who become believers during the tribulation are not spared from the wrath, and are martyred. He notices that they are worshipping the Lord (Rev. 7:9-17) with a heavenly tent spread over them (v. 15).

But Gundry then raises certain questions and writes: take those tribulation saints

who come out of that period. What kind of salvation  
are they celebrating if not a salvation from God’s wrath? Washed  
white in the blood of the Lamb yet suffering the wrath of God  
because they missed a pretrib rapture? (49)

While it is true that one of the elders in heaven tells John that the robed believers “are the ones who come out of the great tribulation” (7:14), the focus of this section of Revelation is on their martyrdom, while living in that great tribulation. The focus of the context is not that they are celebrating “a salvation from God’s wrath.” Revelation 8 extends the thought of chapter 7 and emphasizes the suffering of the saints below by the world. Their prayers come up to God, and a censor is filled with fiery wrath that is thrown to the earth, accompanied with thunder and lightning, and with a mighty earthquake (8:3-7). This retribution brings on even more spectacular horror below on the unrepentant world (vv. 7-11).

In my opinion there is another area where the posttribulation teaching fails! Church age believers are those who have experienced like never before the personal grace of God. This dispensation is without parallel. By the witness of the individual, and the astounding ministry of the Holy Spirit within the believer, the gospel of Christ has spread worldwide. Sadly, tribulation saints will be blessed and have a profound place in the plan of God! But they will find themselves in the crucible and cauldron of the most cursed period in human history.

While church saints have been persecuted, and still are, we are now a body of believers scattered throughout the nations for a distinct purpose that will end with the rapture. While the truth of salvation will go forth in the tribulation period, the great forces of sin, and evil, and calamities both human and natural, will crush the human soul and spirit. Men will seek death, hide below ground, curse and kill, steal and numb the conscience with *pharmakeia*.

Believers in Christ cannot boast that we have blessed this dispensation of the church; this dispensation of the church has blessed us!

Posttribulationists blend church saints with tribulation saints. They seem to fail in acknowledging the unique features of this dispensation of God's graciousness in the message of the gospel. In Ephesians 2-3, we see how the apostle Paul lifts to the heights God's glorious purposes for the sainted believers in this age of the church, this age of grace! While these verses do not in themselves present a case against posttribulationism, they do make this dispensation of the church a center piece of world history, activated and enlivened by the Holy Spirit. There is no indication that this dispensation will be placed under the terrible wrath of God. The body of Christ is also the bride of Christ and will not be "punished" under the wrath to come.

Dispensationists certainly argue that after the church has been raptured, and the tribulation begins, many people will be saved during that period. But tribulation saints are not designated the body of Christ. And a great host of them will die the death of the martyr. They will undoubtedly suffer from the wrath falling from above, but that suffering is interpreted in terms of a great storm of persecution.

## **Contextual Comparison**

Below is a chart that may bring light to the war over contexts. Carefully observing contexts is important in answering the posttribulationists.

### **To Whom Is Jesus Speaking?**

**Matthew 24:3.** Jewish disciples ask Christ Jewish questions about "the sign" of His coming, and the end of the age. Their questions had to do with Israel and the messianic hopes. The answers Jesus gives have to do with relatively near prophecies, and with far off prophetic events.

### **Who Is *The You* In The Context?**

**Matthew 24:4-on.** Jesus answers the disciples questions about the destruction of the temple, and about His far off return, by using what I call the generic *You*. To some, Jesus

was speaking about near events; to others, He was speaking about far distant events. The “generic” *You* is a pronoun that must be taken in specific contexts, and those contexts could be close or far off.

**Deuteronomy 28-30.** For example, Moses tells the generation about to enter Canaan that *you* will be scattered among the nations (Deut. 28:64-on), but he then says *you* shall be restored from your captivity (30:3). Clearly, this restoration and return is addressing another *you* future generation. The history of the whole nation is in view. Jesus does this also in the Olivet Discourse context. He addresses *You*, the generation that will see the destruction of the temple. And He addresses *You*, that is another generation who will see the Abomination standing in the temple (Matt. 24:15).

**1 Thessalonians 5:3.** In a little different way, Paul writes something similar. He says the day of the Lord will fall on *Them*, the lost, “and *they* shall not escape” (1 Thess. 5:3). It is a future *them* and not those to whom Paul is writing.

### On Whom Will The Tribulation Fall?

**Matthew 24:6, 8.** Speaking to the Jews, the Lord says that he beginning of the tribulation events **will frighten** (*throeo*) a far future generation of Jews whom He addresses as *You*. But Jesus goes on and says there is more: “the end is not yet” (v. 6). However, what *You* will see is only “the beginning of the birth pangs” (v. 8).

**2 Thessalonians 2:1-3.** Because of their persecutions, the Thessalonian Christians also thought they were in the **day of the Lord**, the end times. These believers **were frightened** (*throeo*), but Paul reminds them that the apostasy must come first before the unlawful man comes (v. 3). **Paul never tells the Thessalonian Christians to watch for these things as if they were to see them; his silence on this issue speaks volumes—they are not to undergo the day of the Lord!**

### The Birth Pangs and the Day of the Lord

**The Prophecy:** “[Israel] with **pains of a woman in childbirth**. Alas! for that day is great, there is none like it; and it is the time of **Jacob’s distress**” (Jer. 30:6-7).

**Matthew 24:7-8.** A future generation of Jews will see “famines and earthquakes” ... these are the **beginning of birth pangs.**”

**1 Thessalonians 5:3.** “While THEY (not church believers who have been raptured) are saying ‘**Peace and safety!**’ then “sudden destruction” like ***birth pangs upon a woman with child*** and THEY will not escape.” **Paul never says the church is to experience these birth pangs!**

### The Temple Abomination

**The Prophecy:** The prince will make a firm covenant with many for one week. ... On the wing of **abominations** will come **one who makes desolate**” (Dan. 9:27).

**Matthew 24:15.** “When you see the **Abomination of desolation** standing in the **holy place** ... flee.”

**2 Thessalonians 2:4.** “[The unlawful one] takes his seat in the **temple of God, displaying himself as God.**”

**Paul never says church saints will see this take place.**

### **The Great Tribulation**

**The Prophecies.** “*Great* is that day; Jacob’s *distress [tribulation]*” (“*gad’ol tzah’rah*”) (Jer. 30:6-7), and “a time of *distress [tribulation, “tzah’rah”]*”(Dan. 12:1).

**Matthew 24:21.** A future generation of Jews will see “a **great tribulation** (“*megale thlipsis*”), since has not occurred since the beginning of the world.”

**Revelation 7:14.** The **tribulation martyrs** “are the ones continually coming (*hoi erchomai*, present active participle) *out from* (“*ek*”) **the tribulation the great** (“*tas thlipseos tas megalas*”).” **They are in it and they are coming out from it!**

**The Church is not seen nor represented in these verses.**

**Posttribulationists Say The Word “Elect” Always Means The Church.  
They Place The Church In The Context Of Matthew And Make  
Specific Verses Mean The Rapture.**

**Matthew 24.** The *elect* in the context of this chapter are the Jews who are instructed by Christ to flee on the Sabbath (v. 20), who will hear of false Christs (Messiahs) (vv. 23-24), and who will be told “the Christ” may be out in the wilderness (v. 26).

But the **Son of Man** (a Messianic title never used in reference to the church) will be seen by all the tribes of earth coming from heaven. He will gather together His **elect** (chosen ones, *eklektos*) from “one end of the sky to the other” (v. 30-31). **By context, this is the elect of Israel not of the church.**

**The Prophecies about the “elect” of Israel who are being gathered:**

- . “My **elect** (chosen ones, *bah’gheer*) shall inherit [the land]” (Isa. 65:9).
- . “I Myself shall gather **the remnant** of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and shall bring them back to their pasture; and they will be fruitful and multiply” (Jer. 23:3).
- . “I will gather you [**Israel**] from all the nations, where I have driven you ... and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile” (29:14).
- . Further, “**I will gather them** from the remote part of the earth ... a great company shall return here” (31:8).
- . “From the ends of the earth, from there the Lord your God **will gather you [Israel]**, and from there He will bring you back” (Deut. 30:4).
- . “He who scattered Israel **will gather him**” (Jer. 31:10).
- . “**I shall gather them** from the remotest parts of the earth ... they shall return here” (v. 8).

**The Rapture of the Church is not in Matthew 24! The gathering**

## of the Elect is not about the rapture of the church!

### The Issue of the Birth Pangs

**The Prophecy.** “On that great day of Jacob’s tribulation, a sound of dread and **no peace**, it is the **birth pangs** of Jacob” (Jer. 30:6).

**1 Thessalonians 5:3.** “While **they** are saying ‘**peace and safety!**’ then sudden destruction will come upon **them** suddenly like **birth pangs** upon a woman with child, and **they** shall not escape.”

**It is never said that the Birth Pangs fall on the Church**

### A Comparison of Matthew 24:13 and 1 Thessalonians 5:9

Posttribulationists use Matthew 24:8 to argue that the church must go through the birth pangs. Again, they take verses dealing with a far off future generation of Jews and apply these words to the church. They then quote verse 13 that reads: “**But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.**” When the birth pangs (Matt. 24:8) come to completion, “the one who remained under (*“hupomone,” aorist active participle*) [it], [on] into (*“eis”*) the end (*“telos”*), shall in the future be **saved, delivered, spared** (*“sozo,” future passive indicative*) (v. 13).

Working from Matthew 24:13, the posttribulationists go over to 1 Thessalonians 5:9 and tie the two passages together. Some then argue that the church will go through the tribulation but will not suffer the wrath of God. The church saints will be spared and will be raptured just before the end, or at the very end.

But how does 1 Thessalonians 5:9 differ from Matthew 24:13?

In 1 Thessalonians 5 we read that, “The thief comes at night (vv. 2, 4), but we are not in night/darkness (v. 5), we are sons of light and of the day (v. 5). Since we are of the day, we can put on “a helmet, the **anticipation** (Hope) of **deliverance** (*“sotarias”*)” (v. 8). By this, Paul is indicating we do not belong to the night of the day of the Lord; we will be delivered from that day, and from the birth pangs (vv. 2, 3).

### The Reason We Are Delivered ...

“**Because** God has not Himself **placed, positioned\*** (*tithemi*, aorist middle indicative) us into (*“eis”*) [His] **wrath** (The tempest of), **but** (*“alla,”* in contrast) [He has Himself placed us] into (*“eis”*) a **kept-safe, preserved** (*“peripoiasin,” “to make an encirclement”\*\**) **deliverance** (*“sotarias”*). This **deliverance** is a **salvation** from the wrath. Paul is not speaking about spiritual salvation *per se*. He is arguing that present-day saints are now, presently, placed into a safe-mode, and will by no means go into the period, the tempest of God’s wrath and anger.

\* “Appointed us not to be a prey to wrath,” “a keeping-safe” (Alford)

\*\* “Bring about, make secure, preserve.” (BAG). “Keeping safe.” (L & S)

We need to continually be reminded that scriptural passages about our escaping the wrath of God, must be tied together to form a total teaching. The two passages above must be placed in context with 1 Thessalonians 1:9b-10. From the Greek text these verses read: “You turned from idols

to be serving a living and true God, and to be waiting for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who is our **Deliverer** (Alford) or **Rescuer\*** (Robertson) who delivers us from the **wrath to come.\*\***”

**\* Deliverer, Rescuer (*ruomai*):**

.”**The One who is rescuing**” (present active participle)

.**To drag away, rescue friends** (L & S)

.**To draw one away from danger, evil** (Vincent)

.**The One who will drag us [to Himself]**

(The present participle probably has the force of a prophetic future. Couch)

**\*\* Wrath to come** (*orges erchomai*):

.**[This passages] teaches the soul to wait for His appearing** (Barnes)

.**Wrath coming** (present active participle)

.**The certainty of a future event** (Lightfoot)

.**The Wrath, the absolutely coming** (Vincent)

.**The wrath is on its way** (Ellicott)

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## Summary and Conclusion

Posttribulationism teaches:

1. The church will be on earth during the tribulation.
2. The rapture and the second coming are facets of the same event at the end of the tribulation.
3. The tribulation saints are the same as the church saints.
4. Some teach, the wrath is not poured out until after the tribulation, and the church is raptured prior to this outpouring.
5. As Moo does, that the church and Israel are to be kept separate, but they are somehow put back together under the expression, “The people of God.”
6. Imminence is no longer “the blessed hope.”
7. Rapture passages are mingled with “watching and waiting” passages of Matthew 24-25.
8. Moo holds church believers can avoid “wrath” by living godly lives.
9. Moo sees the day of the Lord as the Parousia and the rapture of the church.
10. Say Paul is telling believers to be watchful and sober for the coming of the antichrist.

## Answering Posttribulationism:

1. Critical passages such as 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 never say the church will go into the day of the Lord.
2. The argument from silence is a valid argument when used appropriately. What the apostles Paul and John *do not say* about the church in the tribulation must be taken into consideration.
3. The technical concept “the church” is not seen on earth from Revelation 4-on.
4. Words such as “saint, elect, witness” must always be interpreted in their context.
5. The overpowering implication of the key rapture passages clearly imply the church will not go through the tribulation and the wrath.
6. No where does Paul say the church will see the antichrist.
7. Posttribulationists cannot create a biblical scenario as to how the church is to go under the wrath of God and survive.
8. By saying Christians are to be “watching” for the antichrist and living a holy life for survival, is a poor and weak argument that even most Posttribulationists avoid.
9. Posttribulationists must be forced to be more careful in observing what a passage is actually saying in its context.

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