



TIMING OF THE RAPTURE - DON'T BE DECEIVED

ELAINE BURTIN

Have you ever wondered about the 2nd Coming of Jesus? Have you heard of the "Rapture?" As we witness our world today and see the cultural decay, the chaos, and the evil seemingly winning the day, it can make you wonder where everything is headed. Many pastors, speakers, and authors are claiming that the timing of the "Rapture" is very near. As that time does in fact draw closer each day, it is important to know a few things explicitly that are described in the Bible that must take place prior to the "Rapture" occurring. Let's walk through what the Bible has to say.

First of all, the timing of the "Rapture" is NOT a salvation issue! Secondly, the timing of the "Rapture" is not a subject to be used as a dividing point among the members of the family of faith. It is important though to try to understand what the Bible actually says **so that** we can be prepared for what is to come! If we don't take the time to look at all the different passages and if we're not careful about taking verses out of context - which we **Do Not** want to do - I'm concerned that many believers may become part of the future apostasy - the falling away from the church and from God's Truth.

THE RAPTURE

There are some people who don't believe there will ever be a "Rapture" of believers, because they can't find that particular word in Scripture. However, the word rapture is the Latin translation of the words "caught up" or "taken up," which are found in numerous passages and we even find examples of people who have been raptured in the past.

(Genesis 5:24) Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because **God took him away.**

(Hebrews 11:5 confirms this) By faith, Enoch was taken from this life so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because **God had taken him away.**

(2 Kings 2:11) As they were going along and talking, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, which separated the two of them. And **Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven.**

(1 Thessalonians 4:17) 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.

There are many teachers, pastors, authors, and conference speakers today who are adamant that the "Pre-Tribulation" Rapture is the only way that the prophecies about the "Rapture" can be fulfilled, but there are actually 3 other options or theories - Mid-Trib, Pre-Wrath, and Post-Trib. These other theories must at least be considered, **so that** if the "Rapture" doesn't happen at the time the Pre-Trib speakers are stating, then people will not be disheartened or feel betrayed.

Jesus emphatically stated in Matthew 24:4, **"Watch out that no one deceives you!"** Jesus also said in Mark 13:32, **"but about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."**

We need to be careful about making blanket statements saying that we know when these prophecies will be fulfilled, because obviously we don't! So, let's see if we can look at various terms to get a more thorough Biblical understanding about what is being discussed, then we can look at some timeframes that are given in Scripture and decide for ourselves what we believe God's Word says.

DANIEL'S 70TH WEEK and THE GREAT TRIBULATION

We find the beginning of Daniel's 70th Week in Daniel 9:27, which describes a world leader making a 7-year treaty with the nation of Israel that must allow them to build their temple and start sacrificing again. Because this same ruler puts a stop to the sacrificing at the mid-point of this 7-year period - there has to be a temple in Jerusalem. At no other time has this happened, so it must be in the future.

(Daniel 9:27) The ruler will make a treaty with the people for a period of **one set of seven, but after half this time, he will put an end to the sacrifices and offerings**. And as a climax to all his terrible deeds, he will set up a sacrilegious object that causes desecration, until the fate decreed for this defiler is finally poured out on him."

Many teachers, pastors, conference speakers, etc. believe that the entire 7-year period of Daniel's 70th Week is the "Tribulation" described in Scripture. These scholars also believe that all 7 seals, trumpets, and bowls that are described in the book of Revelation have to happen in a linear fashion - one following the other in order - during this 7-year period of time. However, there are other scholars who realize that the Bible was not written in a linear fashion. It's almost always circular and there can be numerous levels and fulfillments of the same passage. So, again we must not be adamant about fitting these prophecies into our own linear, Western hemisphere mindset, but be flexible and open to studying what God's Word actually says - all of it - including prophecies from both the Old and the New Testaments which have not yet been fulfilled.

According to Scripture it's at the halfway point of Daniel's 70th Week - 3½ years in - that the Anti-Christ will stop the sacrifices in the rebuilt Temple and declare that he is god and he alone is to be worshiped. **At that time** - the half-way point, he will also set up the Mark of the Beast. In various Scriptures, the **Great Tribulation or the Time of Jacob's Trouble is described as 3½ years, 1260 days, 42 months, and in Daniel as Time, Times, and Half a Time** - which are all the exact same amount of time. The following verses help us understand the allotted time the Anti-Christ will wield his power.

(Daniel 7:25) He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for **a time, times, and half a time**. (1 year, plus 2 years, plus ½ year = 3½)

(Daniel 12:7b) I heard him swear by Him who lives forever, saying, "it will be for a **time, times, and half a time**. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed."

(Revelation 11:2-3) But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city **for 42 months**. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy **for 1260 days**, clothed in sackcloth.

(Revelation 13:5-8) The beast (the Anti-Christ) was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and **to exercise his authority for 42 months**. It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander His name and His dwelling place and those who live in heaven. **It was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation**. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.

We also have to consider the Jewish Feasts of the Lord, because the 1st Coming of Jesus was represented in exact detail by the Spring Feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, and Pentecost. These feasts were fulfilled with His crucifixion or sacrifice on the cross, His burial, His Resurrection, and the establishment of the Church when the Holy Spirit came to indwell believers. This seems to strongly suggest that the 2nd Coming of Jesus must then be represented by the Fall Feasts including the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles and the timing of each of these Feasts. Yes, it can get very confusing, but that's another reason to not ever be adamant about how we think it's all going to happen!

QUESTION: If the church - believers in Jesus Christ - who are called Overcomers in the first 3 chapters of Revelation, are Raptured before the beginning of Daniel's 70th week, then why did Jesus give promises to the Overcomers in the first 3 chapters of Revelation and tell them to stand firm to the end?

THE WRATH OF GOD

The Wrath of God seems to be another idea that has caused confusion among some people. Some scholars state that the Wrath of God is involved in all 7 years of Daniel's 70th week, but we find numerous passages in both the Old and New Testaments that describe God's Wrath, what it will look like, and when the earth will experience the full Wrath of God.

(Isaiah 13:9) See the Day of the Lord is coming - **a cruel day with wrath and fierce anger** - to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it.

(Zephaniah 1:14-15) The great Day of the Lord is near - near and coming quickly. Listen! The cry on the Day of the Lord will be bitter, the shouting of the warrior there. That day will be **a day of Wrath**, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness.

God's Wrath which is poured out on the earth - on those who have rejected God's Son are found in the 7 Bowls:

(Revelation 15:7) Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels **seven golden bowls filled with the Wrath of God**, who lives forever and ever.

(Revelation 16:1) Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go, pour out the **seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth.**"

The following verses reveal that God's people - believers in Jesus Christ - are not destined for Wrath, which is very good news.

(1 Thessalonians 5:9) For God has **not destined us for wrath**, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

(Romans 5:9) Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall **we be saved from God's wrath through him!**

(Revelation 3:10-11) Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also **will keep you from the hour of testing**, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth

(James 1:12) Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

QUESTION: Consider the previous judgments that God has brought upon the earth - i.e. the flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the 10 plagues of Egypt. In each case, God's people suffered persecution, injustice, and evil from man, but when it was time for God's judgment, God made a way of escape and protection for His people. How does this give you encouragement - regardless of the "timing of the Rapture?"

TWO RESURRECTIONS - 1ST AND 2ND

The next idea we need to look at is that there will be two resurrections. **The first resurrection is for believers who will rise to eternal life with God, the second resurrection takes place after the Millennium, when non-believers will rise to face the Great White Throne Judgment.** Both of these resurrections are described in Scripture - sometimes within the exact same passage.

(John 5:24-29) "Truly, truly, I say to you, **he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.** Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; **those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life,** (1st Resurrection) **those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.** (2nd Resurrection)

Scripture also tells us repeatedly about the Resurrection of Jesus and that He is considered the "firstfruit," which means there is definitely a future harvest to come.

(1 Corinthians 15:20-23) But in fact, **Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest (the firstfruit) of all who have died.** So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, **everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life. But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back.**

(Revelation 20:4-6) Then I saw thrones, and the people sitting on them had been given the authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony about Jesus and for proclaiming the word of God. **They had not worshiped the beast or his statue, nor accepted his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They all came to life again, and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years. This is the first resurrection. (The rest of the dead did not come back to life until the thousand years had ended.)** Blessed and holy are those who share in **the first resurrection.** For them the second death holds no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him a thousand years.

These verses make it clear that the **first resurrection** (the resurrection of the believers) takes place **before** the 1000-year reign of Christ on the earth and the 2nd Resurrection will take place **after** the 1000-year reign of Christ - the Millennium. The 2nd Resurrection involves the non-believers, who will then face the Great White Throne Judgment and the 2nd Death - which is the Lake of Fire. According to Revelation 20:14-15, the 2nd death will not affect the true believers - the Overcomers - at all.

*****This passage is extremely important because it also clearly states that the **first resurrection - the resurrection of believers - includes people who did not worship the beast or his statue, and they did NOT accept the Mark of the Beast either.**

QUESTION: The Pre-Trib and Mid-Trib scholars use Revelation 20:4 as their proof text that there will be Tribulation saints in addition to the saints raptured before Daniel's 70th Week - because it clearly states that these believers did not take the Mark of the Beast. But if the believers have been resurrected and raptured before Daniel's 70th Week ever begins or at the Mid-point - then when would these "Tribulation saints" who have been killed be resurrected? Remember we find only 2 resurrections in Scripture.

Now let's see if we can clarify the possible timing of the "Rapture" from what we've learned so far.

(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, **we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died.** We tell you this directly from the Lord: ***We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves. Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever.*** So encourage each other with these words.

*****These verses clearly state that the **First Resurrection will take place at the same time - minutes before - the Rapture.**

(1 Corinthians 15:51-53) But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. **We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed.** For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

According to 1 Corinthians 15, we also see the 1st Resurrection and the "Rapture" taking place at the same time, but we're also given the time frame of the Last Trump. By studying the Jewish Feasts of the Lord, it may be possible to explain this timing as well.

INTERESTING FACT: During the Feast of Trumpets, the shofar is sounded 100 times throughout the day - the rabbis believed this was done in order to confuse Satan and lead him to believe that the Messiah had arrived - It's especially fascinating that the 100th blast was called, "**The Last Trump**".

So let's consider something that may be very new to you - the idea of a Pre-Wrath Rapture:

(Revelation 7:9-17) After this (after being shown the 144,000 Jews who are sealed) I looked and there before me was **a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.** And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

Then one of the elders asked me, **"These in white robes - who are they and where did they come from?"** I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, **"These are they who have come out of the Great Tribulation,** they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Many scholars believe the 7th Trumpet of Revelation could be the time for the 1st Resurrection and the Rapture to happen - **before God pours out His Wrath on the unbelieving world.**

(Revelation 11:15-18) Then **the seventh angel blew his trumpet,** and there were loud voices shouting in heaven: "The world has now become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever." The twenty-four elders sitting on their thrones before God fell with their faces to the ground and worshiped him. And they said, "We give thanks to you, Lord God, the Almighty, the one who is and who always was, for now you have assumed your great power and have begun to reign. **The nations were filled with wrath, but now the time of your wrath has come. It is time to judge the dead and reward your servants the prophets,** as well as your holy people, and all who fear your name, from the least to the greatest. It is time to destroy all who have caused destruction on the earth."

This passage may be an indication that the Seals and Trumpets have been filled with the wrath of man against man, while the Bowls as we saw earlier will be filled with the Wrath of God.

(Revelation 15:1) I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the **seven last plagues - last, because with them God's wrath is completed.** And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire **and standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name.**

We also find other passages that indicate several things that need to take place before the Rapture can happen.

(2 Thessalonians 2:1-4) Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and **our being gathered to Him** (the Rapture) we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any **way for that day will not come - until the rebellion** (the Apostasy) **occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.**

According to this passage, 3 things must take place before the coming of the Lord and our being gathered to Him:

1. The Apostasy or rebellion or falling away from the church must take place
2. The man of lawlessness must be revealed
3. The way the Anti-Christ is revealed is that he sets himself up in God's Temple (which must be rebuilt) and proclaims that he himself is God.

QUESTION: Looking logically at Revelation 20:4-6 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4, does the 1st Resurrection and the "Rapture" occur before or after the appearance of the Anti-Christ?

These passages of Scripture all seem to underscore the idea that believers – the Overcomers – will need to stand firm and not worship the Beast or take His Mark.

******* IMPORTANT FACT: The idea of a Pre-Wrath Rapture still includes the promises that we will not have to suffer the Wrath of God – only the wrath of man.**

As we approach End Time events – we need to know, understand, and accept that God is Sovereign. He is in Complete Control of EVERYTHING and His Plan and His Purpose are being accomplished. Regardless of when the Rapture takes place, if we're believers – true Overcomers – then God has given us wonderful promises that we can stand firm no matter what takes place – persecution, apostasy, or tribulation. The words of Jesus give us further instruction and confirmation of this as Jesus warns us to Not Be Deceived and He also describes the Tribulation, the Apostasy, and the Overcomers.

(Matthew 24:4-13) Jesus answered: **“Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains. “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. (Tribulation) At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, (Apostasy) but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.”** (the Overcomers).

QUESTION: After reading these verses for yourself – especially 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4, Revelation 7:14-17, Revelation 20:4-6 – where do you think Scripture points to for the “Timing of the Rapture?”

Based upon the Scriptures cited in this article, it appears to me that believers will experience persecution from mankind even to the point of martyrdom, but not God's Wrath. So we must be prepared to stand firm in our faith, trust in God, and not be vulnerable to the Apostasy of the church. We must not turn away from our faith in Jesus Christ or be deceived!

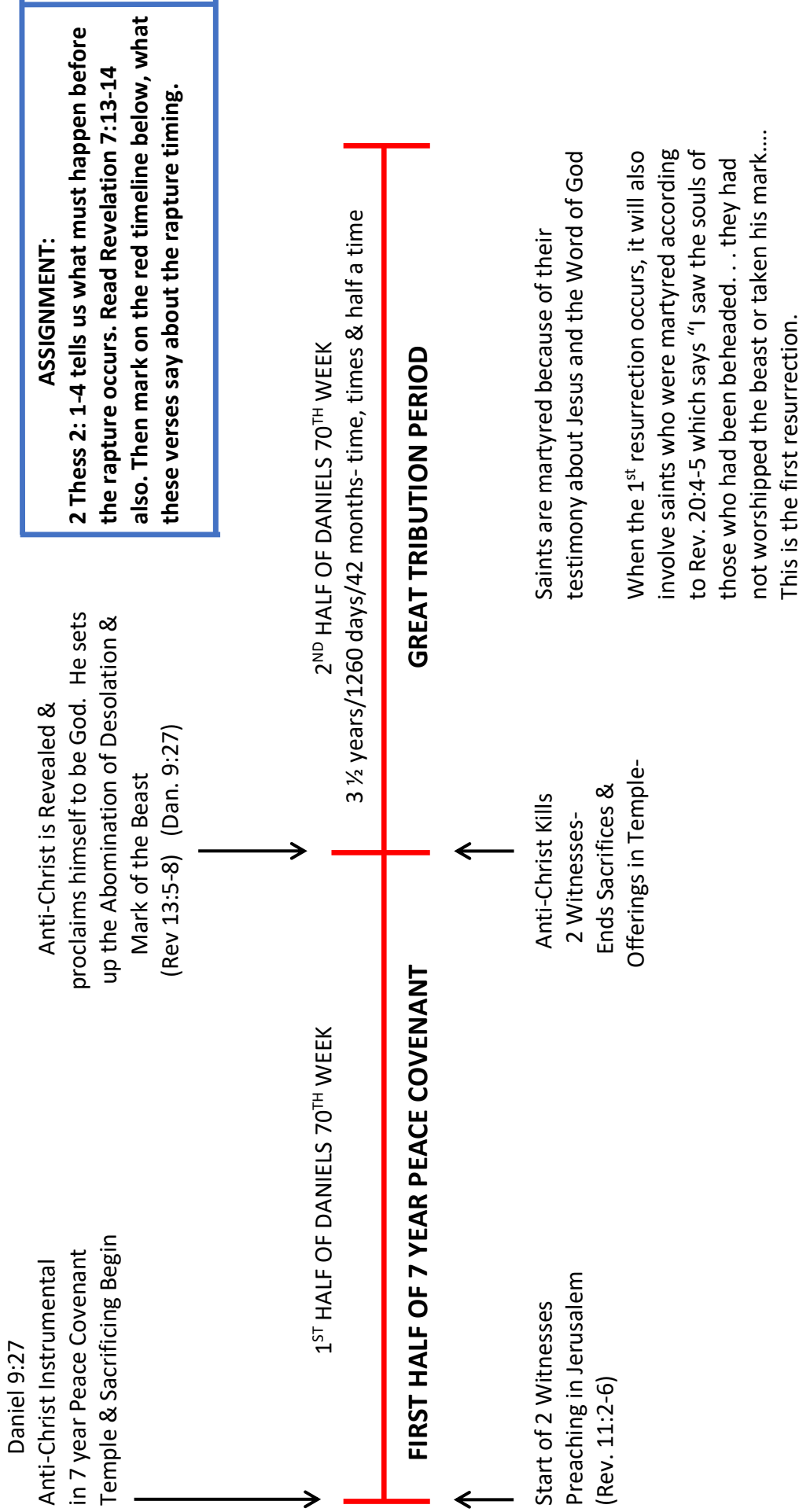
- One of the main things to be looking for is a Treaty that includes Israel and allows them to build their Temple in Jerusalem and begin sacrificing again.
- Also look to see who is involved in the signing of this treaty.
- Please remember, we must look at God's Word in its entirety and in context when addressing the “Rapture” theories being promoted today. Also remember, **“No one knows for Sure!”**

To help summarize the many verses addressing End Times future events that support a possible Pre-Wrath Rapture, look at the following diagram showing a timeline of Daniel's 70th Week.



DIAGRAM OF EVENTS LEADING TO THE RAPTURE USING DANIEL'S 70TH WEEK (Refer to Scripture Verses Used in the Article)

[As background to Daniel's 70th Week, we need to understand that the first resurrection and the rapture occur at the same time according to 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17.]. Read this passage on your own to confirm this. z



The 1st Resurrection involves martyrs who have not taken the mark of the Beast. Also, the 1st Resurrection and Rapture happen at the same time. Knowing this information, logic would say this event takes place during the last 3 ½ years of Daniel's 70th week= Great Tribulation Period.