

Does Revelation Indicate The Timing Of The Rapture.....

Lesson 9

Revelation Doesn't Directly Reveal Time But Logic Does

- This is not another overview of Revelation, just an evaluation of certain scripture verses used to support one rapture timing position or another.
- Is not the church interested in the contents of Revelation as heavenly participants—exactly the role of the first generation church—even though we will not be earthly observers?
- [Revelation 3:10](#), why the unique combination of "keep" and "from"?
- How could the twenty-four elders have crowns if Christ had not come previously?
- Why does [Revelation 13:9](#), contrary to expectation, contrary to the consistent pattern, address individuals instead of churches?
- Why does God deal in a special way with 144,000 Israelites.
- Why are the 144,000 called "first-fruits" instead of "last-fruits"?
- [Revelation 14:14-16](#) How can the harvest of Revelation be the rapture when Joel explains it to be the harvest of the wicked?
- [Revelation 19](#): Why are the white-robed armies all *in heaven* before Christ leaves heaven to return to earth?
- [Revelation 20](#): If the resurrection of Revelation 20 is the rapture resurrection, then why does it occur well *after* Christ sets foot on the earth?

Revelation 3:10 Unique Combinations of Keep From, Keep In, Save From

Different word combinations give different meanings.

To communicate *deliverance afterwards* you would say "save from."

To emphasize *protection during* you would say "keep in."

To promise *prior prevention* you would say, "keep from."

Word Combination	Meaning	Time Indicated
keep from	prevention	beforehand
keep in	preservation	during
save from	deliverance	afterwards

Keep From The Hour

- signifies separation from the *events* of the hour. By God's prior prevention we will be kept from entering into the events of the tribulation so that they "touch us not."
- Here lies one difference between [John 17:15](#) and [Revelation 3:10](#). Whereas it is possible to be totally separated from the evil one while still in the world, it is *not* possible to be totally separated from the events of the tribulation while still in the world as we will demonstrate below.

The Purpose Of The Hour

John 17:15	Revelation 3:10
Separation from the evil one does not require separation from the world.	Separation from tribulation requires separation from the world.

- Further support for the rapture of the church prior to the tribulation comes from the *purpose* of the hour.
- The purpose according to [Revelation 3:10](#) is "to try" those who dwell upon the earth. ("Temptation" here means "testing" instead of "temptation to sin.")
- That period has a purpose for tribulation saints because they have yet to be tested ([Daniel 12:10](#)), but the church has *already* been tried. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience...."
- The church has successfully passed the test and kept the word of His patience.
- As a reward God will keep her from further and unnecessary trial. Our trial is past!
- There is *no purpose* for the church in the tribulation! If there is a purpose, what is it?

Are We Exempted From Judgment And Not Persecution

- One approach says that we will be exempt from God's *judgment* during the tribulation, but we will not be exempt from *persecution*.
- First, it would be difficult to separate persecution from the hour of testing in light of other Scripture. [Matthew 24:15-21](#) indicates that persecution upon believers is a part of the great tribulation.
- The word "temptation" is elsewhere used for persecution of believers (see [Acts 20:19](#) and [1 Peter 1:6](#)).
- Daniel 12:10 shows that saints during the tribulation *will* experience trial. Tribulation saints are *not* kept. (See [Revelation 6:11](#); [13:7](#); [14:13](#). Except for Jewish saints—see [Daniel 12:1](#) and [Revelation 7:1-8](#)—there is no promise of protection in the tribulation. [Isaiah 26:20](#) refers not to the tribulation, but to when the Lord returns from heaven after the tribulation; notice [26:21](#), [27:1](#).)
- [Revelation 1:9](#) provides a contextual setting for [Revelation 3:10](#), revealing one aspect of the tribulation which is in view. [Revelation 1:9](#) (using the word "tribulation") clearly speaks of the patience of believers in *persecution*.

Are We Exempted From Judgment And Not Persecution (2)

- Those who have "kept the word of (His) patience" in [Revelation 3:10](#) are those faithful in *persecution* (not the judgments of God). The reciprocal promise to keep them would miss the mark if it too did not include persecution.
- To promise partial exemption (exemption from the judgments of God, but not from persecution) is to weaken the promise of [Revelation 3:10](#). God is promising a *reward*. What kind of reward would it be to say, "Since you have been faithful you will not have to suffer certain things during the tribulation, even though that hour will bring *greater* suffering for you in terms of fleeing for your life, and the chances are that you will be killed. But at least you have this reward: you will be exempt from the other judgments."
- Exemption from *all* the events of the tribulation are in view in [Revelation 3:10](#). Other Scriptures indicate that persecution is included in the hour of temptation, [Daniel 12:10](#) includes tribulation saints in the testing, contextual evidence includes persecution in the hour of testing, and the promised reward to be meaningful must be full. Therefore, if the "hour of temptation" signifies the events within that hour, then persecution must be included as one of those events, and to be kept from persecution we must be taken out of the world

The Twenty-Four Elders

- The scene is set in heaven in ([Revelation 4:4](#)). And round about the throne were four and twenty seats [thrones]: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.
- Does the twenty-four elders represent the church, and if so, a raptured church, or something else?
- The twenty-four elders represent only men.
 - Elsewhere in the Bible *only men* are "elders."
 - *Only men* sit on thrones (except God and Satan).
 - *Only men* wear white raiment (*hi-ma-ti-on* in Greek).
 - *Only men* wear crowns.
 - The Greek word means a "victorious crown" rather than a "kingly crown."
 - No heavenly being has gone through the battle of life on earth in order to earn the victor's crown.
 - All four characteristics constitute sufficient evidence that the twenty-four elders are *men*.

The Twenty-Four Elders Are Men

- It may be objected, "We cannot be certain who the twenty-four elders are."
 - They cannot be angels, ([Revelation 7:11](#))
 - They are not God the Father, God the Son or the Holy Spirit
 - If not men or angels, what other possibilities are there?
 - But remember Revelation is an *unsealed* book ([22:10](#)).
 - The twenty-four elders are the first feature focused on in the heavenly scene after God Himself.
 - They figure prominently no less than four times in chapters four and five.
 - Later in the book they reappear several times at strategic events.
 - Obviously, God intends for us to know who they are.

Crowns On Their Head

- The twenty-four elders are men that they have crowns on their heads.
- The time for men to receive crowns is *at the coming of Christ*, not before ([2 Tim 4:8](#); [1 Peter 5:4](#)).
- Of course, in [Revelation 14:14](#) Christ wears a crown because He is resurrected and glorified as we will be at the rapture.
- The rapture and crowning occur *simultaneously*. This accounts for John's seeing the elders with crowns the moment he was caught up to heaven.
- If men's crowns are received at the coming of Christ, and if these twenty-four men have crowns, then there must have been a coming of Christ prior to this.
- If all three previous points are correct, then we are committed to a pre-trib rapture.
- If this scene of the twenty-four elders comes at the beginning of the seven years, then this rules out even a mid-tribulation rapture.
- I conclude with the above statements that the twenty-four elders represent New Testament saints only, because the resurrection of Old Testament saints occurs after the tribulation ([Daniel 12:2](#)).

Revelation 7: Neither Jew Nor Greek

- How different is the account of the 144,000 Israelites. God is dealing with Israelites in a special way!
- To set them aside unto a special group tribe by tribe, and to even set a seal on their foreheads is something He never did in the church age. Obviously, the tribulation period is *distinct* from the church age.
- Today whenever a person believes, he automatically becomes a member of the church, Christ's universal body. This is true for Jew *or* Gentile, for in the church there is no difference between Jew and Gentile; it is all one.
- That distinction is fine for the tribulation, but there is no such distinction in this age. The church must be raptured and taken out of this world altogether before such a distinction can take place.
- Can we explain it away by saying the 144,000 are figurative? No, because John lists 12,000 from each tribe. And he *names* each tribe. John went to a lot of trouble and detail in order to explain who these 144,000 are. They are literal.
- If the church age extends into the tribulation period, then how do we explain God's special dealing with Israelites?

Revelation 14:4 first-fruits

- "first-fruits" are the first part of the harvest from the field. Scripture applies the term also to a spiritual harvest of men. For example, Epaphroditus was "the first-fruits of Achaia unto Christ" ([Rom 16:5](#)).
- The tribulation period also has first-fruits. [Revelation 14:4](#) says the 144,000 "were redeemed from among men, being the *first-fruits* unto God and to the Lamb." In what sense are the 144,000 the first-fruits of redeemed men?
- How could that be? By now millions the world over have been harvested into the church. The time for first-fruits has passed!
- They could only be first-fruits if God were starting over again with a *new class* of converts during the tribulation. This tells me the church has been completed and raptured before the tribulation.

Revelation 14:4 first-fruits (2)

- In order to get around this some post-tribs may object, "The 144,000 are first-fruits of the *millennium* rather than first-fruits of the tribulation."
- This objection cannot stand because the evidence shows that they are converted *during* the tribulation instead of after. What evidence? The seal. They have the seal of the living God on their foreheads ([7:2-3](#)) in contrast to the mark of the phony god which unbelievers wear. If they wear the seal of God, they must belong to God. This is no ordinary seal. It is no less than the "Father's name written in their foreheads" ([14:1](#)).
- Therefore, the 144,000 "were redeemed from among men [during the tribulation], the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb" ([14:4](#)). Being "first-fruits," the 144,000 are some of the *first* converts in the tribulation. Although most Jews will be converted at the end, just before Christ returns, a few will be converted earlier (see [Daniel 12:1, 10](#); [Matt 24:9](#)). The 144,000 are "first-fruits." If they were converted at the *end* they would be "last-fruits."

Revelation 14:14 The Harvest

- Revelation 14:14 pictures the coming of Christ after the tribulation as a harvest:
- And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.
- What is the sharp sickle for? One view is that He swings the sickle to catch up believers (post-tribulationism). The other is that He swings the sickle in judgment (pre-tribulationism). Which is right? The sickle signifies cutting, decision, judgment. Is Christ reaping believers or unbelievers?
- Let us run to the commentary for help. The best commentary on this passage was written by the prophet Joel, because Joel forms the backdrop for this passage in Revelation. Let us put his explanation alongside Revelation 14:14-20:

Comparison

Joel 3:12–13	Revelation 14:14–20
12. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat [compare "valley of decision" in verse 14]: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about.	14. And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.
13. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe:	15. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.
	16. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. [Compare Matthew 13:38, "The field is the world."]
	17. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.
	18. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.
	19. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.
Come, tread [the winepress]; for the press is full, the fats [vats] overflow; for their wickedness is great.	20. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

Reaping -- Treading

- The judging takes place in two phases,
 - Reaping
 - Treading.
- First, the Son of man reaps ([Revelation 14:15-16](#)). This is the cutting-off point for every person in the whole world. Not just believers are reaped, but the entire "earth" is reaped (compare [Matthew 13:38](#), "The field is the world," not the church).
- As the Son of man reaps, He makes His decision concerning every individual, saying, "This man believes in me, that one rejects me." This is the cutting-off point. Repentance now is too late.
 - Those who are wicked now will be wicked forever.
 - Those who are righteous now will be righteous forever.
 - The final results are in. The earth is reaped.
- After the Son of man passes judicial sentence, the angels carry out the execution of that sentence as phase two of the judgment, the treading ([Revelation 14:17-19](#)).
- After the Son of man has reaped, the angels gather the grapes and cast them into the winepress.
- Then comes the invitation to the Son of man to tread, according to our commentator, Joel. (The KJV in [Joel 3:13](#) reads "get you down," but "tread" is generally accepted to be the correct reading.)
- When the press is filled to overflowing the Son of man treads the winepress ([Revelation 14:20](#)).
- So the reaping of [Revelation 14](#) does not picture the rapture at all. After the tribulation comes, not rapture, but judgment. From start to finish it is judgment. Judgment in two phases, reaping and treading, or to put it another way, cutting and casting.

Does The Harvest Reveal The Timing

- The harvest of [Revelation 14](#) not only accords with Joel, but it also harmonizes with the *proper order* of gatherings.
- [Matthew 13](#) states that the *wicked* are gathered *first*.
- The post-tribulational interpretation of [Revelation 14:14-20](#) is precluded by the mere fact that they have the wrong order. They see a gathering of the righteous (verses [14-16](#)) *before* the wicked (verses [17-20](#)). Since the order is wrong this *cannot* picture the gathering of the righteous. Rapture doesn't fit here at all.
- Where does this leave us? Since the rapture is *not* pictured in R [Revelation 14](#), this means there is no description of the rapture whatsoever in the entire book of Revelation unless there be a symbolic representation of the rapture in [4:1](#), and that would place the rapture before the tribulation.

Revelation 19: The Armies of Heaven

- Revelation 19 mentions white-robed armies following Christ.
 - These saints coming with Him are those *already* "in heaven."
 - No mention of any saints "caught up" to join Him.
 - Why the omission of saints caught up, or raptured, to join the armies already in heaven?
- Post-tribs would say the omission is not significant and does not prove anything. I agree that omissions in some places are not significant, but here? Here is the *climax* of the whole book! At this climactic point in the drama I think that John would want to highlight and make the most out of the victorious King of Kings and His accompanying armies.
- Unless he omitted the rapture accidentally. But that couldn't happen because the Holy Spirit was guiding every word John wrote. It has to be a purposeful omission.
- According to post-tribulationism the armies in heaven are *souls* not yet resurrected. How easy it is to picture resurrected church saints riding down from the sky in one smooth descent. However, post-tribs insert the resurrection into the middle of the descent. Now imagine yourself as one of those white horses. You leave heaven with a soul on your back. But when you reach cloud level you halt while the horseless soul swoops down to the ground to get its body. A moment later the body hops on your back and you resume your descent. Not impossible, of course, but interesting. Not to mention the horses that must leave heaven riderless so that *living* saints caught up from the earth will have something to ride on.

Revelation 20 The First Resurrection

- After the tribulation we find an account of the "first resurrection" ([20:5](#)). Therefore some argue that the Rapture could not have occurred seven years earlier since the "First Resurrection" hadn't occurred.
- Let's evaluate this closely:
 - We know that Christ arose, along with other believers in Jerusalem ([Matthew 27:52-53](#)). This happened 2000 years ago.
 - Also the two witnesses arise *before* the end of the tribulation ([Revelation 11:12-14](#)).
 - If the first resurrection does not nullify these earlier resurrections, then to be logically consistent, neither does it eliminate an earlier resurrection with the rapture.
 - If earlier resurrections happen, then why is this called the "first" resurrection?
- The answer, as usual, lies in the context. In the context following we find the "second death" ([20:14](#)).
 - The reason for the term "first resurrection" is to contrast the "second death." A sharper contrast cannot be found.
 - "First" contrasts "second" and "resurrection" contrasts "death."
 - There is no "second resurrection," strictly speaking, the second is a death.
 - The unbeliever's body is *resurrected* alive again only to suffer a living *death* in the lake of fire for ever and ever.
 - Believers are in the first resurrection; unbelievers are in the second death. This is the contrast and this is the purpose of the terminology in this context.
 - One is either in the first resurrection or they are in the second death

When Is Daniel's Resurrection?

- A Post Tribulation position states the Rapture occurs upon Christ's return to establish His Kingdom.
- Read [1 Corinthians 15:54](#) "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. (This passage quotes [Isaiah 25:8](#))
- [Isaiah 25:8](#) which according to the context there places the time of victory over death at the *end* of the tribulation
- Here is the problem. If [1 Corinthians 15](#) is talking about victory over death at the *rapture*, then how can the rapture occur at the *beginning* of the tribulation if [Isaiah 25:8](#) places victory over death at the *end* of the tribulation?
- The resurrection of [Revelation 20](#) includes the resurrection of Old Testament saints. We all agree on this. Now Daniel was an Old Testament saint, wasn't he? Again we agree.
- But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days (Daniel 12:13).
- Daniel's last chapter gives three dates: 1,260 days, 1,290 days, 1,335 days
- When is Daniel's resurrection? The end of the days is the *1335th day*. Since Christ returns on day 1260, then Daniel's resurrection comes *75 days too late* to be a rapture resurrection!
- Therefore, the resurrection of [Revelation 20](#) *cannot* take place at the rapture.