

The Church and the Tribulation Sermon Handout  
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- I. Big Idea- **The Church will be raptured before the Tribulation.**
- II. Application – **The hope of the rapture should motivate us to Look for Him, Trust Him, and Grow in Him** (1 Thess 5:11; Heb 10:25; 1 Jn 3:3)
- III. There are different views on the end times, and **this is not something to break fellowship with other Christians over.** Regardless of someone’s views, we can still encourage one another to live for “that day.”
- IV. Is there a specific time called the tribulation or will things just get progressively worse at the end? There is clear evidence that **there will be a seven year tribulation.**
  - I. Daniel 9:24-27 – Daniel is told by the angel Gabriel that 70 weeks have been decreed. Both the context and traditional interpretation (by both Jewish and Christian theologians) understand the “weeks” as units of seven years, thus a total time period of 490 years.
  - II. From the decree of Artaxerxes to Nehemiah in 444 B.C (Neh 2:1-8), to the triumphal entry of Christ was 483 years, or 69 weeks. The pinpoint accuracy of the 69 weeks is a strong evidence that the 70<sup>th</sup> week is also 7 years long.
- V. Has the Tribulation happened already or is it still in the future? **The tribulation hasn’t happened yet. It’s still in the future.**
  - I. Looking at verse 27, which is clearly in the 70<sup>th</sup> week, these events happened yet. Christ didn’t make a 7 year covenant with Israel during His earthly ministry. And, if He had, when did He break it? Would He break His covenant? Verse 27 isn’t referring to Christ, it is Antichrist. The immediate context shows the events of the 70<sup>th</sup> week haven’t happened yet. This is called “Prophetic postponement” – Prophecy often looks like downtown skyscrapers or mountains. From a distance they look like they’re really close together, but as you get closer you realize they’re actually far apart. Many prophecies refer to two different times or events with significant time gaps (eg. Is. 9:1-7).
  - II. Many of the events in the tribulation (see Rev 4-19) are supernatural, and people know it (see the reactions of people in Rev 6:15-17; 16:9, 11, 21). Since this reaction hasn’t happened in history, it shows that this period of time is still to come.
  - III. Even Jesus placed the events at the middle of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel’s prophecy would happen at the end of the age, just before His own return in power and glory (Matt. 24:15-30).
- VI. **What will happen during the Tribulation?** (A Brief outline of events)
  - I. The Tribulation begins when the Antichrist is revealed by making a covenant with Israel (Dan 9:27)
  - II. Seal judgments (Rev. 6)
  - III. Antichrist becomes world ruler, breaks the covenant, abomination of desolation (Dan 9:27)
  - IV. Trumpet judgments (Rev 8-9) and Mark of the Beast (Rev 13:16-18)
  - V. Bowl judgments (Rev 16)
  - VI. Jesus stands on the Mount of Olives and rescues the people of Jerusalem (Zech. 14:4-5)
  - VII. Armageddon (Rev. 19) and the return of Christ in power and glory (Matt 25:31)

VII. What is the rapture?

**Christ will descend from heaven to the clouds, everyone in the Body of Christ (in all its diversity and unity, faithful and unfaithful), and only they, will be caught up to be with Christ forever (1 Thess 4:16-17), and we will be immediately changed (1 Cor. 15:51-52, 1 Jn, 3:2).** What an amazing hope!

VIII. When is the rapture? **The rapture will happen before the tribulation.** Why can we believe this?

I. **Jesus promised it.** Rev. 3:10 “I will keep you from the hour of testing.” The Greek term for “from” is “ek.” It carries the idea of a position outside of something without needing to have been in it or brought out of it. The Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) uses “ek” with this meaning in Josh. 2:13, Ps. 33:19, 56:13, and Pr. 21:23. In the New Testament, it is used with this meaning in Acts 15:29 and Ja. 5:20. Even Homer used “ek” to mean an outside position.

We can't just analyze the preposition “ek” by itself; we need to look at the phrase “keep you from.” In the Greek, it is “tereo ek,” and it's used in only one other place in the New Testament: John 17:15. In both places it's Jesus who said it and John who wrote it down. In Jn 17:15, Jesus is praying that the Father would keep the disciples out of the spiritual realm of the evil one, as He Himself had protected them (see verse 12). In other words, He's praying that they be *totally excluded/given immunity* from apostasy and spiritual death. Likewise, in Rev 3:10, **He's promising total exclusion/immunity from the hour of trial (the tribulation).**

1 Thess. 5:9-10 also explains that we will not go through God's wrath. We've been saved from it.

II. **It is a time for Israel**— Daniel 9:24 also states that the time “has been decreed for your people and your holy city...” Elsewhere, the time of the tribulation is called “Jacob's Trouble” (Jer. 30:5). Since the Church has not replaced Israel in her covenants with God, and since God has future plans for her, it makes sense that the tribulation isn't for the Church. **It is also for the nations**— Revelation 3:10 also states that it is a time of testing upon those who dwell on the earth (Rev 3:10) – those who've committed themselves to the world and its system and religion. Again, Not a description of the Church.

I. **“Testing”: a time of demonstrating the true nature, not a time of purifying.** The purpose of the tribulation is to demonstrate the true heart of mankind, not to purify the Church.

**III. The rapture is imminent.**

I. Imminent means that it could happen at any time. No one knows when it will happen, and no prophecy needs to be fulfilled before He returns.

II. 1 John 3:2 “If” He returns. The Greek implies some uncertainty, specifically about the timing of His return. The verse in Greek has the idea of “whenever He appears” (as in the NET Bible).

III. 1 Thess. 1:9-10 “To wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus who rescues us from the wrath to come.” Like waiting up for someone to come home, because we don't know when they'll arrive.