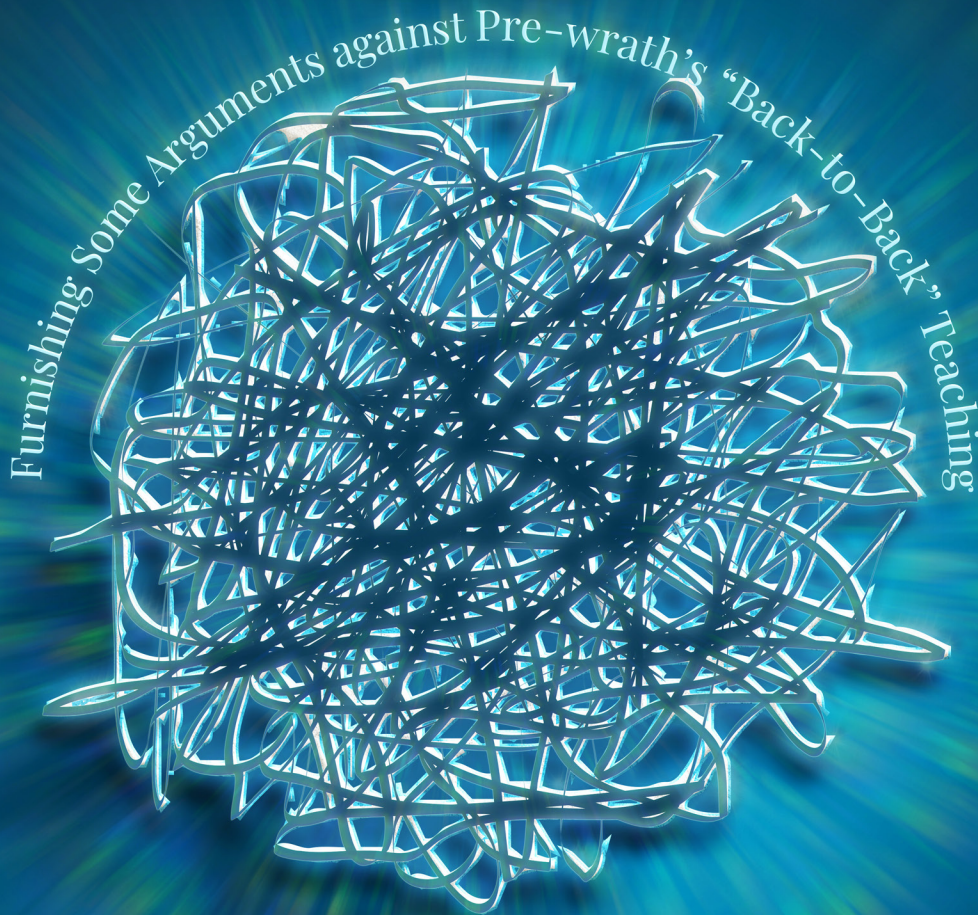




The Terms “Tribulation” and “Wrath” Are Interchangeable

By Michael Nissim



Pre-wrath advocates claim that the tribulation will consist of three parts: “the beginning of sorrows,” also called “man’s wrath”; “the great tribulation,” also called “Satan’s wrath”; and “God’s wrath,” also called “the Day of the LORD.” The pre-wrathers especially separate the second part of the tribulation into two distinct periods—so distinct, in fact, that these

periods will occur “back-to-back,” as they say. One cannot start without the other ending first.

According to the pre-wrath view, the tribulation starts at the midpoint of Daniel’s seventieth week and lasts for an *unknown* length of time. At some point after the middle of the seventieth week, the sixth seal is opened. Then Yeshua comes with all His pow-

er and glory to rapture the saints to Himself. This rapture includes the Old Testament saints (you read that correctly), and the tribulation comes to an abrupt halt. Then, and only then, can God’s wrath, or the Day of the LORD, commence, which could potentially last a few years.

Scripture does not support such a division of the seven-year tribulation.



PRE-WRATH'S 70TH WEEK MODEL

RAPTURE INCL. OT SAINTS
AT UNKNOWN POINT



It also does not support a distinction between the great tribulation and God's wrath. Rather, as the following verses will show, the terms "tribulation" and "wrath" are virtually interchangeable.¹

Zephaniah 1:15 Calls the Day of the LORD "Tribulation."

In Zephaniah 1:14, the prophet introduces *the great day of the LORD*, which is what pre-wrathers would call "God's wrath." Then, in verse 15, Zephaniah calls that same day *a day of trouble and distress*. The Hebrew word for trouble is *tzara*. This word is translated in the Septuagint (LXX) as *thlipsis*, the exact same word used for "tribulation" in all main New Testament tribulation passages, such as Matthew 24 and Mark 13. This makes the term "tribulation" and the expression "Day of the LORD" interchangeable.

Habakkuk 3:16 Calls the Day of the LORD "Tribulation."

Habakkuk 3 is another passage about the Day of the LORD. In this chapter, Habakkuk begs the LORD to be merciful during wrath (v. 2). Then the prophet talks about the light of God's glory covering the skies (vv. 3-4) and His trampling of the nations in anger (v. 12) as He goes forth to save His people Israel (v. 13). These verses are clearly talking about the last stages of Daniel's seventieth week. Habakkuk experiences an extreme physical reaction to the thought (v. 16). He wishes then that he *might rest in the day of trouble*, clearly referring to that same day. Thus, he makes "day of trouble" a description of that terrifying Day of the LORD. Yet here too, the Hebrew uses the general word *tzara* ("trouble") or *yom tzara* ("day of trouble"). This, again, is the same LXX word for "tribulation" in the

English New Testament translations, making "the tribulation" and "God's wrath" interchangeable.

Jeremiah 30:7 Teaches that the Tribulation Lasts until the End of the 70th Week.

Jeremiah 30:7 is an important tribulation passage: *Alas! For that day is great, So that none is like it; And it is the time of Jacob's trouble, But he shall be saved out of it.* From this verse, we learn a few things. First, a dreadful day is coming, causing similar physical reactions to those of Habakkuk (v. 6).

Second, that day is called "the time of Jacob's trouble," again using the Hebrew word *tzara* for "trouble." Through the LXX, it is translated as "tribulation" in all major New Testament tribulation passages. This is Israel's tribulation, which starts *at least* at the midpoint of the seventieth week, if not earlier.²

¹ In this article, the Septuagint (LXX) was used as a Hebrew-Greek bridge.

² The sequence of events in Revelation shows that the tribulation starts before the second half of the seventieth week, but for now, it will suffice to say that Israel's persecution in particular starts at the midpoint.



Third, it is described as a day so great that *none is like it*. This is very significant. According to the pre-wrath view, the worst part of the tribulation is a separate day called "the Day of the LORD," which can only start once the "great tribulation" is over. Yet, Jeremiah's description of the entire years of the tribulation period is that a worse day than the tribulation is nowhere to be found. This corresponds with Daniel's description in 12:1 that *there shall be a time of trouble [tzara], Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time*. It also corresponds with Yeshua's description in Matthew 24:21 that *there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be*. So, if the period of the tribulation is

the worst time ever, no one can argue that there is a worse day called "God's wrath." You can go from bad to worse, but you cannot go from "worst ever" to "even worse."

Fourth, Jeremiah 30:7 further states that it is *the time of Jacob's trouble, But he shall be saved out of it*, i.e., Israel will be saved out of the tribulation. That means that Israel is brought through the tribulation until its end and is then saved.³ The same is implied in Daniel 12:1-2. Israel is saved out of the tribulation, not out of a separate phase that comes after it. This means that the tribulation lasts until the end of the seventieth week. If anyone would think that the Day of the LORD is a phase occurring at the end of the seventieth week, then they must place that day **within** what is

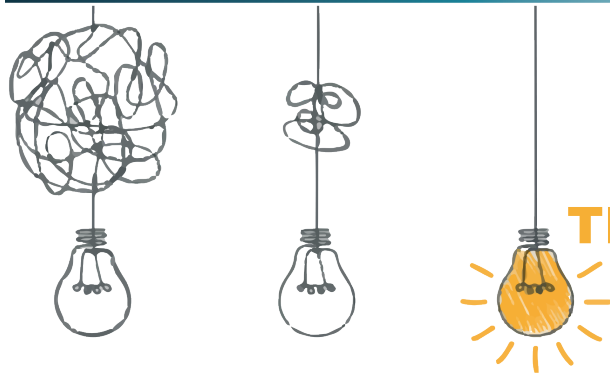
called "the tribulation," not separately and subsequent to it.

Fifth, to further strengthen the point above, we can conclude from Jeremiah 30:8-9 that Israel is freed from the yoke of her oppressors and worships God alone *in that day*, i.e., during the time of Jacob's trouble. That, of course, only happens at the very end of the seventieth week, showing once again that the tribulation continues until the end of the seventieth week

The Wrath Spoken of in Isaiah 26 Spans the Entire Second Half.

In Isaiah 26:20-21a, we read: *Come, my people, enter your chambers, And shut your doors behind you; Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, Until the indignation is past.*

³ In Hebrew, "time of" and "out of it" are both feminine, leaving no question as to what Jacob is being saved from.



Are You Considering the Pre-Wrath View?

Think Again.

Have any of you been considering the pre-wrath view lately? Could it be that you are feeling disillusioned with the pre-trib rapture view because you are basing your eschatological understanding on shallow arguments? Let me give you my humble advice, as one who grew up in a post-trib home. I should think that I would want to be the first to know if the rapture was not going to be pretribulational so that I

could be warned and warn others likewise. I have considered the pre-wrath view, held discussions, joined groups, watched videos, and read materials. I have walked away from this time of consideration with the conviction that none of it makes any sense. My research has only served to strengthen my pretribulational convictions. I have found the pretribulational view to be a thoroughly biblical, comprehensive, and satisfactory answer as to the timing of the rapture. I find comfort in it, and for twenty years I have never budged from it.



For behold, the Lord comes out of His place To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. Four observations can be made about this passage. First, the ending verses of Isaiah 26 speak about Israel's place of hiding during the tribulation. God's protection and nourishment of Israel, His vine, during this time is expressed a few verses later, in 27:2b-3: *A vineyard of red wine! I, the Lord, keep it, I water it every moment; Lest any hurt it, I keep it night and day.* According to Revelation 12:6 and 14, Israel will hide in the wilderness, a place prepared by God. There, she will be fed for *one thousand two hundred and sixty days*, which equals a *time and times and half a time*, or three-and-a-half years. When the abomination of desolation is set up, Israel will flee to this place in the wilderness and obey the command not to *go out* (Mt. 24:26) until Messiah returns (Mt. 24:15-16, 26). Israel's flight occurs at the midpoint of the seventieth week.

Second, in Isaiah 26:20, Israel is told to wait in hiding *until the indignation is past*. The Hebrew term for "indignation" is זַעַם (*za'am*), meaning "anger," "rage," "fury," or "wrath." The LXX uses *orgé*, the main Greek word for "wrath" in Old Testament passages such as Isaiah 13 and all main New Testament passages dealing with the wrath. One example is 1 Thessalonians 5:9, which states that the church is *not destined ... for wrath*. Another example is Revelation 6:16-17, which speaks of *the wrath of the Lamb*.

Third, Jeremiah 26:21a proves that the second half of the tribulation is entirely God's wrath. The reason Israel is going into hiding at the midpoint of the seventieth week is that YHWH Himself has come out of His place to visit the iniquities of the inhabitants of the earth. Hence, this is the *indignation* or wrath spoken of in verse 20. This practically equates the great tribulation with God's wrath.

Fourth, this natural understanding of the text is shared by the Septuagint translators, who rendered *za'am* in verse 20 as *orgi Kyriou*, meaning "the anger of the Lord" (Brenton's Septuagint Translation). This again shows that the great tribulation is God's wrath.

Luke 21 Calls the Second Half "Vengeance" and "Wrath."

Luke 21:21-23 reads:

²¹Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. ²²For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. ²³But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people (emphasis added).

Two observations can be made about this passage. First, the flight *to the mountains* and the warning to the pregnant women correspond to the midpoint of the seventieth week as

described in Matthew 24. Therefore, this passage in Luke is speaking of the tribulation. Second, in verse 23, Luke used the Greek word *orgé*, meaning "wrath," to describe the tribulation. He did not mention different types of wrath, such as "Satan's wrath" and "God's wrath." These ideas would have to be read into the passage by splitting the wrath mentioned in verse 23 into two phases or types. However, the phrase "wrath upon this people" suggests that it is God's wrath. The expression "this people" often conveys God's displeasure with Israel (e.g., Deut. 9:13, 9:27, 31:16; Isa. 29:13; Acts 28:26-27; 1 Cor 14:21).⁴ Likewise, when Luke used the phrase "days of vengeance" to describe the wrath during the tribulation, he implied that this wrath would come from God since in the Scriptures, revenge is usually ascribed to God, not to Satan (e.g., Isa. 34:8; 35:4; 61:2). God takes revenge for Israel's rejection of the Messiah.

All of the above shows clearly that the prophetic passages treat the terms "wrath" (or "the Day of the LORD") and "tribulation" interchangeably without the distinction that pre-wrathers claim exists. This leaves no room for the "back-to-back" teaching of the pre-wrath view.

Matthew 24:22

Some claim that Matthew 24:22 leaves space for a separate phase, the wrath of God, to come at the end. The verse reads: *And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would*

⁴ The secular Israeli philologist S. L. Gordon, who in Israel is considered an authority on the Hebrew text of the Bible, says in his comment on Isaiah 29:13 that "this people" is מבטא של בוז, "an expression of contempt" (in: S. L. Gordon, תורה נביאים כתובים עם ביאור חדש ["Torah Prophets Written with a New Explanation"], Masada, 1947, p. 275).

What?? Seven Things You Didn't Know about the Pre-Wrath Position.

The pre-wrath rapture theory teaches the following seven **untruths**:

- 1 Revelation's seals are not judgments, nor are they God's wrath.
- 2 The seventieth week does not end in Revelation 19, but in Revelation 11. The tribulation ends before that, at the end of Revelation 7.
- 3 The tribulation does not last seven years. In fact, it does not even last for three and a half years. Its length is "unknown."
- 4 There is no resurrection at the end of the seventieth week because the Old Testament saints get raptured to heaven together with the church, potentially a few years before the end of the seventieth week.
- 5 The bowl judgments, Armageddon, and Israel's repentance and salvation all occur after the seventieth week is over.
- 6 The Gog and Magog war of Ezekiel 38–39 occurs after the millennium is over, not before.
- 7 "He who restrains" (2 Thessalonians 2:6-7) is the archangel Michael.

be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. The answer to this claim is the following: No, those days are not literally made shorter than three-and-a-half years. In multiple places, we read that the severe persecution of the Jewish people in the second half of the tribulation will continue for *a time and times and half a time* (Dan. 7:25; Rev. 12:4), for *forty-two months* (Rev. 11:2; 13:5), and for *one thousand two hundred and sixty days* (Rev. 12:6). This is also the implication of the whole of Daniel 12.

What, then, does it mean that *those days will be shortened*? It simply means that the tribulation will end and will not be allowed to continue without ceasing. The time is set and limited.

Any other interpretation would render the many specific references to the exact duration of Daniel's seventieth week meaningless. A "back-to-back" doctrine cannot and should not be derived from this statement.

Conclusion

The distinction between the tribulation and the wrath (or "the Day of the LORD") is purely artificial. At first glance, it might seem plausible, but an examination of other relevant passages shows clearly that this distinction is forced upon the text. Nevertheless, sadly, many have bought into the pre-wrath view. The propagation of the "back-to-back" teaching has caused confusion for many who have not properly investigated the

matter, leaving them with false preconceptions. The prevalence of the pre-wrath model has undoubtedly opened a new front for pre-trib advocates. However, once its arguments are properly examined, it will be clear that the pre-wrath view should be rejected as inadequate.



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