

Overview of the "Pre-Wrath" Rapture Theory

Description of the "Pre-Wrath" Rapture Theory

The "Pre-Wrath" rapture theory teaches that the rapture will occur sometime after the midpoint of the seven year tribulation but before the second coming.

History of the "Pre-Wrath" Rapture Theory

This theory was first proposed by Marvin J. Rosenthal in his book, The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church (1990). Rosenthal was the editor of a Christian magazine, Israel My Glory, for sixteen years and was a proponent of a pretribulational rapture of the church. He spends part of his book describing the turmoil surrounding the change of his beliefs.

Robert Van Kampen's book The Sign (1992) followed Rosenthal with more detailed support for this position. This view has created a bit of a stir among some evangelicals who have eagerly embraced its theories.

Argument for the "Pre-Wrath" Rapture Theory

Rosenthal's basis for his argument is from a redefinition of the length of the Day of the Lord and the wrath of God, limiting both to a brief period of less than three and one-half years at the end of the seven year tribulation period.

Rosenthal attempts to show the wrath of God is associated with the Day of the Lord, beginning inside last half of the 70th week of Daniel (9:24-27) with the opening of the seven seals of judgment (Revelation 7). Therefore, the church is raptured before the Day of the Lord and before the wrath of God.

Analysis of the "Pre-Wrath" Rapture Theory

Paul S. Karleen in The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church: Is it Biblical? (1991) shows that it is impossible to limit the wrath of God to Rosenthal's time frame, challenges much of his thinking regarding the Day of the Lord and points out numerous logical fallacies that are woven together in the complex pre-wrath position. A few of Karleen's arguments are as follows:

- Luke 21:23 shows that divine wrath occurs before the time when Rosenthal's definition of the Day of the Lord begins.
- Rosenthal claims that the Day of the Lord is limited to only a short period between the pre-wrath rapture and the second coming by claiming there are no blessings associated with the Day of the Lord. Karleen shows how this is inconsistent with several OT passages (Joel 2-3; Zephaniah 3; Isaiah 34-35; Haggai 2; Zechariah 12-14) and one NT passage (2 Peter 3:10).
- Rosenthal also claims that Matthew 24:22 demands that the Great Tribulation be shortened from three and one-half years to a lesser time period. However, this text does not indicate what the time period was shortened from or what it is shortened to. Rosenthal assumes the shortening fits his description.