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End of Days: Testing the Pre-Trib Rapture

There have been many staunch debates over the years as to just when the church will be taken. All seem to have their argument established and are ready to go down fighting to prove their case. It is our prayer that this teaching will offer some clarity on the topic.

We believe that just how the teachers of the first century missed Yeshua’s first coming, likewise, today, the majority of teachers are missing the Scriptures regarding His return.

Hopefully this teaching will show how history is indeed repeating itself in this area.

But before we begin to examine this topic of what many call the “Rapture,” let’s look at one verse in Isaiah 1.

Isaiah 1:18

“Come now, let us reason together,” says (Yahweh) the LORD.

Ask yourself the question, "Am I willing to reason with the Scriptures or am I wanting to debate my perspective?" This is imperative that we answer this question now. Are you willing to examine the Scriptures from the viewpoint that some of your existing beliefs COULD actually be wrong? Could you actually entertain the thought that something you have believed in for years may indeed not be true? This is difficult for many but something that needs to honestly be addressed.

All too often when someone presents something that opposes what we believe, our first “knee-jerk” response is to reject it, simply because we struggle with the thought that we could actually be wrong.

So again I say, ask yourself, "Am I willing to reason with the Scriptures or am I wanting to debate my perspective?" You, and only you, can answer this question.

Isaiah 1:18

“Come now, let us reason together,” says (Yahweh) the LORD.

Let’s touch on a couple of basics first.

Harmony of the Scriptures

This is a must. If you hold to a teaching or a belief that does not line up with ALL Scripture, then you need to seriously reconsider that view.

We believe that Scripture interprets Scripture. We do not believe that an interpretation of a Scripture is to interpret another Scripture. One more time. We believe that Scripture interprets Scripture. We do not believe that an interpretation of a Scripture is to interpret another Scripture.

Terminology

Terminology that one uses must be Scriptural. This is something that we believe is lacking with many believers today. We need to do our best in keeping with terms that are found in the Scriptures. What can develop is error. At the very least, misunderstanding will creep in over time.

Let's face facts... The word Rapture does not exist in the Scriptures. Should we use it? Many would say "Well, you know that it means the same thing."

We understand where you are coming from. But is it in the Scriptures? If we are trying to be a "New Testament church," shouldn't we be using New Testament terms?

Other phrases you will not see in the Scriptures are:

- Church age. You'll see the word church and you'll see the word age. But you'll never see them together to name a particular age.

Another:

- Tribulation saints. You'll see the word tribulation and you'll see the word saints. But you'll never see them together to name any particular type of saints.

This is truly imperative that we understand the importance of this. Not using biblical terms CAN eventually lead to unbiblical theology.

To begin our study, we need to briefly go over the five views of what has been traditionally called the "rapture." It's what the Scriptures refer to as the resurrection. Obviously, there will be variations within each camp of these views. But as a whole, these basically represent what each view holds to.

The first is the Pre-tribulation view. As you can see, the view holds to the rapture or resurrection taking place before the tribulation, with there being a seven year tribulation, in which the seals, trumpets and bowls all take place. Then after all this we have the return of Yeshua, followed by the millennial reign of Yeshua, then the white throne judgment followed by the eternal kingdom. This is the general understanding of the pre-tribulation view.

Next, we have the Mid-tribulation view. This view is very similar to that of the pre-tribulation view except that the resurrection takes place in the middle of the tribulation. All else is relatively the same with some minor changes depending on who you are asking.

Next we have what is called the "Pre-Wrath" view. It has the rapture/resurrection taking place just before the bowls. Again, all else is relatively the same.

Next we have what is called the “Post-tribulation” view, which basically has the rapture/ resurrection taking place at the return of Yeshua after the bowls.

Finally we have the last view. It’s simply referred to as the “Pan-trib.” Simply meaning, however it pans out. Taking the view that however it’s going happen, then that’s how it’s going to happen, really taking no stance on the subject for whatever reason. Maybe they believe it’s just beyond them or they’ve heard so many debates on the topic that they just don’t know what or who to believe.

As we’ve said before, everybody’s right on something and everybody’s wrong on something. And we truly need one another as we all learn and grow together.

With all that being said, let’s begin.

At one time, like so many, I used to believe in what is called the pre-tribulation rapture. But when I was a teenager, I started asking questions that weren’t getting answered. Not getting answered in my opinion anyway. The answers that were given sounded good. But they didn’t line up with other Scriptures. One verse that really tipped me over was this:

Revelation 20:4-6

⁴ I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ⁵ (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

So, here we have this verse telling us who is involved with the first resurrection. The first resurrection included those who did not receive the mark, they were beheaded, and they did not worship the beast. These are those who will be involved with the first resurrection. Immediately, I started thinking, If Yeshua comes before the tribulation, that’s a resurrection right there because it says the dead in Christ will rise first. That’s a resurrection.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

So now we have a problem. The pre-tribulation view says there is a resurrection BEFORE the tribulation. Before the antichrist appears and before the mark of the beast is introduced. But this verse in Revelation says that there are those who are a part of the first resurrection who do not take the mark and even some who are martyred by the Antichrist.

So how can the first resurrection contain these individuals if the tribulation has not started yet? Knowing that ALL Scripture is to be in harmony, it would seem that this verse alone makes it very difficult, at the very least, to hold to the pre-trib view. Yet there is much more. I remember once

hearing a prominent teacher in the Christian faith on the radio who actually addressed this very verse in Revelation 20 and how it flowed in harmony with the rest of Scripture. I remember it quite vividly even though it was MANY years ago. I was excited to finally hear an explanation on this verse in Revelation. That is, until I heard it. He simply said that the pre-tribulation rapture is the first part of the resurrection and the resurrection that is mentioned in Revelation 20 is the second part of it.

Talk about disappointed. I couldn't believe my ears. The Scriptures give us NOTHING about two parts to the first resurrection. Not even a hint of such a thing. It was as if he was doing all he could to defend his view, yet with no Scriptures to back it up. I was greatly disappointed.

The Scriptures seem quite clear that there will only be one resurrection consisting only of the righteous. Compare:

Luke 14:13-14

¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection [singular] of the righteous.

“You will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous”

There is only one resurrection of the righteous.

John 6:39-40

³⁹ And this is the will of Him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that He has given me, but raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁰ For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

“I will raise him up at the last day.”

What is the “last day”? We believe, quite possibly, that this is the millennium. The seventh day, the Day of the Lord. Many struggle with this because the millennium is normally explained as nothing but a time of peace. And we agree. It will be a time of peace. But is this how it starts?

The Day of the Lord is noted as a frightful day and a day of victory. It truly depends on what side you are on that will determine this for you. It will be a day of nothing but darkness for those who are evil in the eyes of Yahweh.

Compare:

Isaiah 13:9

See, the day of (Yahweh) the LORD is coming — a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger — to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it.

Ezekiel 30:3

For the day is near, the day of (Yahweh) the LORD is near — a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations.

Yet it is mentioned as both bad AND good at the same time. Again, it truly depends on what side you are on. Compare:

Acts 2:20

The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious Day of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 5:5

Hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the Day of the Lord.

It will be a time rejoicing as well.

2 Corinthians 1:13-14

¹³ For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand. And I hope that, ¹⁴ as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the Day of the Lord Jesus.

References to the Day of the Lord can be the very beginning, the middle and even the end of it like that found in Peter. Compare:

2 Peter 3:10-14

¹⁰ But the Day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. ¹¹ Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³ But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. ¹⁴ So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with Him.

So being raised at the last day truly seems that we are being raised at the time of the millennium.

Continuing on this topic of the resurrection in John chapter 6:

John 6:44

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.

Again, verse 54:

John 6:54

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

In this chapter alone, Yeshua keeps telling us that we will be raised at the last day.

We must understand that there is a difference between being raised to life and being resurrected. Raised to life is being raised from the dead only to die again.

Resurrected is being raised from the dead with a new body to never die physically again.

One who has been raised from the dead will die again because they are raised with the same body. Like that of Lazarus or any of those that Yeshua raised from the dead while He was walking the earth in His ministry. But those who are resurrected are raised with a glorified body.

So the question for us at this moment is, how many resurrections are there? How many resurrections does the Scriptures tell us will happen through all of history?

There are a total of three resurrections as given in the Scriptures.

Compare:

1 Corinthians 15:20-24

²⁰ But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.

²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when He comes, those who belong to Him. ²⁴ Then the end [will come].

I want to make a quick note here. There are many who use the NIV. If you have the NIV, you will notice the brackets around the two words “will come.” This is to let you know that these words were added and are NOT in the Greek text. So, since these are not in the Greek text, let’s read this without these words as added by the NIV.

Starting from verse 23.

1 Corinthians 15:23-24

²³ But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

²⁴ Then the end (omit), when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father after He has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

So, according to this text, we see that Yeshua was the first resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:23

²³ But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits.

Yeshua was the first one resurrected from the dead. There are other verses that confirm this for us. Consider.

Revelation 1:5

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead.

Colossians 1:18

And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead.

And then just at the beginning of the text we were discussing...

1 Corinthians 15:20

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

So there is no question as to Yeshua being the first resurrection, the first fruits from the dead.

Now, let's look at the second resurrection. Continuing in verse 23.

1 Corinthians 15:23

...Then, when He comes, those who belong to Him.

“When He comes;” “those who belong to Him”....

Let's look at some other verses that support this.

Matthew 24:30-31

³⁰ “At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. ³¹ And He will send His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

So even here we see that He gathers His elect AT HIS COMING.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; this is often referred to as the “Rapture verse.”

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

¹⁵ According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

So again, we see that the second resurrection takes place at Yeshua's next coming.

And now, the third resurrection: Back to verse 24.

1 Corinthians 15:24

Then the end [], when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father after He has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

There have been some that say this text is only talking about believers. However, if we look at the beginning of this text in 1 Corinthians, the context is all about ALL men. Consider:

1 Corinthians 15:21-23

²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.

²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in his own turn: through Adam, all die. Yet, through Yeshua, ALL will be made alive.

The context of these verses is the resurrection of all men. All men are going to be raised. Each in his own turn. Not just believers.

Even Daniel says the same thing about all being raised. It just wasn't defined as being two separate

resurrections then. Compare:

Daniel 12:2

Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.

So, we saw the first resurrection being Yeshua. It then explained the resurrection of those who belong to Yeshua. And now we see the rest.

1 Corinthians 15:24

Then the end [NOT... WILL COME], when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father after He has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

Another confirmation to this is found in John 5.

John 5:28

Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear His voice.

And another:

Acts 24:14-15

¹⁴ However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, ¹⁵ and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

Compare now this verse with what we read earlier in Revelation 20.

Revelation 20:5

(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection.

And now, to confirm with 1 Corinthians, let's read Revelation 20:12-13.

Revelation 20:12-13

¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.

With this in mind, we see just how Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15.

1 Corinthians 15:24

Then the end [], when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

And here we see in Revelation, the last resurrection just before He hands everything over to the Father. So we see Yeshua resurrected as the first fruits, those who belong to Him resurrected at His

coming, and the rest of the dead resurrected at the end just before He hands everything over.

Another Scripture that the pre-trib view seems to overlook is Acts 3:21

Acts 3:21

He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as He promised long ago through His holy prophets.

Here we see that Yeshua must remain in heaven until the restoration is to happen. Thus, He can't leave heaven until the Day of the Lord.

When discussing this with my youth pastor many years ago, he told me that Yeshua never leaves heaven at the time of the rapture. He said that heaven basically opens up and we all go up there with Him. It sounded good at the moment. That is until I read back over the verse noted by many as the "rapture verse." It says...

1 Thessalonians 4:15-16

¹⁵ According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven.*

So here we have the "rapture verse" telling us that He leaves heaven.

Thus, when Yeshua leaves heaven, it's for the restoration of all things before the millennium at His return.

Another Issue that needs to be addressed is that of the mystery at the trumpet.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

⁵¹ Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed — ⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound.

Notice there is a mystery. And what happens at the mystery? A trumpet sounds. At this trumpet we are changed. This is the resurrection. Again, a mystery, trumpet and resurrection.

Let us now compare this to Revelation...

Revelation 10:7

But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as He announced to his servants the prophets.

If you go to the verses just before the seventh trumpet blows, you see the two witnesses raised to life. We believe it's possible that all followers of Yeshua join them as it appears they seem to be resurrected since they are taken up.

The question here is this... Do we think Paul, writing to the Corinthians really knew about the 7th (last) trumpet of Revelation. Not at all. Nor do we believe that John, when writing Revelation, was reflecting on what Paul wrote to the Corinthians. However, we believe the Father is the one truly giving us these verses through these authors by way of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In that light, is it really that

hard to see these verses being tied together in such a way? At the very least, one can say it's interesting.

The next thing to consider when looking at the Pre-tribulation rapture view is the phrase "at that time."

Consider:

Matthew 24:29-31

²⁹ Immediately after the distress of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken. ³⁰ At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. ³¹ And He will send His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

At that time. What time? When sun is darkened, the moon does not give its light and the stars fall. So what happens at that time? He gathers His elect. The big question here is, "Who is the elect?" Some like to say that the elect are the 144,000. But is this really the case? Let's look to the Scriptures and see just who the elect really is. Please consider:

Romans 11:7

What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did.

2 Timothy 2:10

Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect.

Titus 1:1

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect.

1 Peter 1:1

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God's elect, strangers in the world.

To who? God's elect. We are the elect. We are the ones who He gathers at that time.

Let us briefly look at Luke's account of this same text found in Matthew 24.

Luke 21:27-28

²⁷ At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

²⁸ When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing nigh.

What things?

Many who hold to the pre-trib view use this verse in saying, "See? Look. When these things begin to take place."

The question though here is, "What things?" To answer this, we need to clarify the definitives that Yeshua gives us in this text.

In talking to His disciples, He says in Luke 21:

Luke 21:12

But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. (definitive) They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons (definitive), and you will be brought before kings and governors (definitive), and all on account of my name.

The mere fact that He says “all on account of my name” clearly lets us know that He is talking about believers here.

Continuing on:

Luke 21:13-14

¹³ This will result in your being witnesses to them. (definitive) ¹⁴ But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves.

Verse 16:

Luke 21:16-17

¹⁶ You will be betrayed even by parents (definitive), brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷ All men will hate you because of me. (again definitive)

Luke 21:20

When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies (definitive... Not if, but when), you will know that its desolation is near.

All these are definitives as to what He declared his followers would INDEED see.

Continuing with verse 25:

Luke 21:25

²⁵ There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. ²⁶ Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world.

Now verse 28:

Luke 21:28

When *these* things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.

When these things begin. Those which is mentioned in verse 25. At verse 12 we see the definitives of what we are going to see. Why would He take us out before seeing the things He's telling us that we are going to see? Thus, verse 25 is when we are going to lift up our heads.

Another topic that needs to be addressed is that of the “Day of Redemption.”

Ephesians 1:14

Who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 4:30

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

“For the day of redemption.” Singular. Not “days,” but “day.”

Romans 8:23

Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Philippians 3:20-21

²⁰ Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,
²¹ who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body.

“Will transform our lowly bodies.”

When He comes, He will redeem our bodies and transform them on the “Day of redemption.” Singular.

Another thing for us to consider in reviewing the pre-trib view is the parable given in Luke 19.
Consider:

Luke 19:12-13

¹² He said: “A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. ¹³ So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. ‘Put this money to work,’ he said, ‘until I come back.’”

“Until I come back.”

The parable continues and when we see the master come back the servants come to him. The first one comes and says how he earned 10 minas. The master responds with “Well done” and puts him in charge of 10 cities.

Then the next servant came with how he earned 5. “Well done” says the master and puts him in charge of 5 cities.

Remember, He said, “until I come back.” What happens when Yeshua comes back? We will rule and reign with Him in the millennium.

2 Timothy 2:12

If we endure, we will also reign with Him.

Revelation 20:6

Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

So what does this tell us? We are to continue steadfast until He comes to reign, and that’s when we get to reign with Him.

There are many debates that are brought up in discussing this topic with those who hold to the Pre-tribulation view.

The first, that is usually brought up, is that which is called the “Restrainer.” There are several views as to just who the “restrainer” truly is. One view is that it is actually the church, basically saying that the Antichrist cannot come until the church has been raptured away.

So let’s examine the verses where the restrainer is found. They are found in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2

¹ Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him, we ask you, brothers, ² 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.

First, we must note that the topic here is all about us being gathered to Yeshua. This is important to note. There are three things mentioned here. 1) The coming of Yeshua, 2) Being gathered to Him and 3) The Day of the Lord.

This tells us that the coming of Yeshua and our being gathered to Him equals the Day of the Lord. Because this is so important to understand, let’s establish a small timeline here.

On this line we see where the Day of the Lord begins. With the understanding that the Day of the Lord is when Yeshua returns and our being gathered to Him takes place. Now let’s continue to verse 3.

2 Thessalonians 2:3

Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for [that day will not come] until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.

This verse just told us that the Day of the Lord (His return and our being gathered to Him) cannot begin until the man of lawlessness is revealed. Telling us what? That it is not the church who is holding Him back. Thus the church cannot be the restrainer.

So, on the timeline, the man of lawlessness needs to be in front of when the Day of the Lord begins. Continuing:

2 Thessalonians 2:4-6

⁴ 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. ⁵ Don’t you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? ⁶ And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time.

Here we see that there is indeed something holding the Antichrist back, but it obviously is not the church. So, on our timeline, working backwards, we see the Day of the Lord beginning after the revealing of the Antichrist, which takes place after the restrainer is taken out of the way. Next verse:

2 Thessalonians 2:7-8

⁷ For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. ⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed,

whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of His mouth and destroy by the splendor of His coming.

There are many opinions as to who this restrainer really is. We currently hold that this is actually Michael the Archangel. This may sound strange at first, but please consider the similarities.

Daniel 12:1

At that time (speaking of the end) Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people — everyone whose name is found written in the book — will be delivered.

The word *arise* here in the Hebrew is *omed*. It actually means to stand still, to cease from action. We must remember, the context of this verse describes Michael as the one who protects the people. If he is protecting, he's not sitting. He's protecting. Thus, now, at this moment, he stands still. He ceases from protecting.

And at that time, it will be a time of great distress as the verse says.

Knowing that Michael is the one who protects the people, does it not sound like he could be the one who is actually holding the Antichrist back? This is not something that we believe can be declared as gospel truth. However, it does seem to line up with Scripture in that he could easily be the restrainer who holds the Antichrist back until the beginning of it all. But we can definitely see that the restrainer is not the church.

Another topic brought up for defending the pre-trib view is that which is referred to as the "Picture." It's found in Revelation 4.

Revelation 4:1-2

¹ After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." ² At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.

Many say that this is the "picture" of the church being raptured out because the church is never mentioned from this moment on in Revelation. To which, we agree. The word "church" is never mentioned from this moment on. However, "saints" ARE mentioned hereafter.

So just because the word "church" is not mentioned, this does not mean that the church itself is not there. Some are quick to say that these are the tribulation saints. But again, this is a term that is found nowhere in Scripture. So the question then becomes, "Who are the saints?"

Romans 1:7

To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints.

1 Corinthians 6:1-2

¹ If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? ² Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases?

Here we see the saints will judge the world. And then these here are told that they will be the ones judging the world. Meaning what? They are the saints.

Rom. 16:1-2

¹ I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. ² I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints.

The saints ARE the church. And we clearly see the saints, the church, in the tribulation after Revelation chapter 4.

Yet, regarding “pictures” as assumed for Revelation 4:1 and 2, please consider the following.

Isaiah 46:10

I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.

“From ancient times, what is still to come.” The ancient times are the pictures of what is to come.

What are the ancient times that we learn from? Those that could indeed be “PICTURES” of illustrations for us.

Consider Noah. The day they entered the ark, what happened? The rains came down (Genesis 7:11-13).

Consider Lot and his family. The day they left, judgment fell (Genesis 19).

Consider Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They went through the flames. Yet, they were protected (Daniel 3).

Consider the Ten Plagues. From the fourth one on, God’s people were exempt from the plagues. Though they were there they were protected and not affected (Exodus 7-12).

Pictures. These are the pictures we are to consider.

Isaiah 46:10

I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.

This brings up the next topic that is often mentioned when defending the pre-trib view. That topic is the “Wrath.”

The statement often said is, “We are not called to suffer wrath.”

And we completely agree. So let’s look at that verse.

1 Thessalonians 5:9

For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Again, we agree that we are not called to suffer the wrath of God. But consider some verses that show

God's wrath AND redemption on the same day. Though we covered Noah and Lot, consider here how even Yeshua refers to them both in this light.

Luke 17:26-30

²⁶ Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. ²⁷ People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. ²⁸ It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. ²⁹ But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. ³⁰ It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed.

Yeshua Himself is showing us wrath and redemption happen on the same day. Consider also 2 Thessalonians.

2 Thessalonians 1:5-8

⁵ All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. ⁶ God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you ⁷ and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. ⁸ He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Again, here we see wrath and redemption on the same day with the return of Yeshua.

Again, we agree that we are NOT called to suffer the wrath of God. Never. But we must also remember the Hebrews were protected during the judgments of the Ten Plagues. First, He indeed declares them as judgments.

Exodus 6:6

Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am (Yahweh) the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.

Then, as stated before, from the fourth plague on, we see the Hebrews being protected.

Exodus 8:22

²² But on that day I will deal differently with the land of Goshen, where my people live; no swarms of flies will be there, so that you will know that I, (Yahweh) the LORD, am in this land. ²³ I will make a distinction between my people and your people. This miraculous sign will occur tomorrow.

So the Father knows how to protect His people in the midst of pouring out His judgments on the rest.

Indeed, we agree that we are not called to suffer any wrath. However, the wrath of man, well, that's a different story. That's not guaranteed. In fact, our teaching titled "The Seven Churches" shows how the tribulation will be used as a time of refinement FOR the church.

However, we must understand that there is an element of God's wrath that is truly displayed every day. Let's look at some verses regarding the wrath of God that could apply to a daily form.

Psalm 7:11

God is a righteous judge, a God who expresses His wrath every day.

When does God express His wrath? Every day.

2 Peter 2:9

If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.

John 3:36

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

Ephesians 2:3

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

And consider here in Revelation.

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.

He's telling us right here that this is the completion of His wrath. The last of it all. Even when one looks at the end of the millennium when Satan is loosed, it says he deceives many. But then fire then comes down from heaven and destroys those who follow him. Yet there is no wrath mentioned. There's not even a fight. He simply wipes them out and then prepares for the final judgment.

Revelation is where God concludes His wrath, not starts it.

The next topic often referred to in defending the pre-trib view is that of the church of Philadelphia in Revelation 3. We cover this in much detail in our teaching titled "The Seven Churches." But let's look at it in the light of the pre-tribulation rapture.

Revelation 3:10

Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

If one holds to the belief that Yeshua is taking this church out from the world because of this one text that says "I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world," they are assuming that being kept from this temptation requires being "raptured" out of this world.

When in fact, this is the very opposite of what Yeshua prays in John 17.

John 17:15

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

Here we see Yeshua praying that they are not taken out but rather protected from the evil one. This being the case, why would Yeshua do something opposite in Revelation to what He prayed for here in

John 17? Yet it is clear that this church is indeed protected from something for some time. If we harmonize it with Yeshua's prayer, we see that they will be protected from the evil one during this time.

Again, for further detail on this, please see our teaching titled "The Seven Churches".

Another verse that is often brought up in defending the pre-trib view is found in Luke.

Luke 21:36

Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.

We have two things to pray for here. 1) to escape all things that are coming and 2) that we may be able to stand before the Son of Man. Let's read the verse again and we'll see there are clearly two things to pray for and not one wrapped together.

Luke 21:36

Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.

This verse is very similar to what is given to the churches of Revelation. Just as the church of Philadelphia was to escape the hard times of the tribulation. We are encouraged by Yeshua to pray that we escape as they. Just as all churches in Revelation were encouraged to be steadfast and overcome so they can receive eternal life, we see the same here that we may be able to stand before the Son of Man.

To make this text say anything other truly opposes the harmony of all Scripture.

Another argument given in defending the pre-trib rapture is that we can't know the day when Yeshua returns. Though we cover this briefly in two of our teachings, we will cover it here all together.

Many are quick to mention that Yeshua himself said, "No man knows about that day or hour." To which we agree. He did say that.

So let us address these statements as they are and see what we come up with.

First we have Matthew 24:35-36 where it says:

Matthew 24:35-36

³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away. ³⁶ But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

If we look at the context here, we see that the day and hour referred to here is when Heaven and earth pass away. Which only makes sense as there are several events given after the millennium that have no time frames allocated to them.

They are 1) the season that Satan is loosed; 2) The preparation for the final battle where fire comes down from Heaven and destroys the enemy; and 3) the Great White Throne Judgment. It is after these events that have no time designated to them, that the new Heaven and Earth appear. Thus, the context is in verse 35. "That day" is referring back to the day of heaven and earth passing away.

In reference to the return of Yeshua, the text that follows verse 36 describes that of the days of Noah. We obviously know that those who were to be judged in the days of Noah did not know the day or hour that the judgment was to come. However, seven days before the day of judgment came, Noah was informed of the day and was protected. Though it's important to note he did not know the hour. Compare:

Genesis 7:4

Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made.”

He did not know the hour but he DID know the day. Let us not forget that the Scriptures are cyclical. Showing us patterns and pictures of how the Father works. This is also in harmony with Amos.

Amos 3:7

Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing His plan to His servants the prophets.

Again, those being judged did not know when the judgment was coming while the righteous, Noah, did know.

Many are then quick to refer to verse 42.

Matthew 24:42

“Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.”

Again, this is just after Yeshua parallels His coming with the flood of Noah. The people who did not know the timing of the flood were taken away while those who did were protected.

Verse 42 is where Yeshua is telling His disciples to "be on the alert." Why? Because they did not know (present tense) when the Lord was returning.

Let's now look at the following verses to show how He explains the previous statement.

Matthew 24:43-44

⁴³ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him.

If you notice, He doesn't say that the owner would have known the time because he watched BUT RATHER that he would have watched because he knew the time. Let's read that part again.

Matthew 24:43-44

⁴³ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him.

So if we follow the Lord's command to be alert and watch, that means we will know the day of His return, just as the home owner would have, just not the hour.

Again, He doesn't say that the owner would have known the time because he watched, but rather that he would have watched because he knew the time.

Matthew 24:43-44

⁴³ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him.

So if we follow the Lord's command to be alert and watch, that means we will know the day of His return, just not the hour.

If someone is coming to visit you on Friday, you don't start looking for them on Wednesday do you? Of course not. You start looking for them on Friday around the time they said they would come. The same principle applies here.

This makes all the more sense as we compare other verses that talk about knowing the timing of His return. Compare:

1 Thessalonians 5:1-2

¹ Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, ² for you know very well that the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

But in whose perspective does He come like a thief in the night? To the believer or the unbeliever? To answer that question, let's read verse 4.

1 Thessalonians 5:4

But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise YOU like a thief.

Compare also in Revelation 3 where Yeshua is talking to the church in Sardis.

Revelation 3:3

Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

These two witnesses clearly show that Yeshua will come like a thief only to those who are not following Him. To those who are not watching. But those who are following Him will know when to start looking for Him. Only those who are to be judged will stay in the dark of not knowing.

If you are walking in the light and pursuing His feasts according to the mo'adim, (times and seasons) set in place from the beginning, then you will know when the Messiah will come.

Remember, He fulfilled the Spring Feast days to the day at His first coming. And He will do likewise for the Fall Feast days at His return.

Many also use Matthew 25 to say that we will not know the day. It reads:

Matthew 25:11-13

¹¹ Later the others also came. "Sir! Sir!" they said. "Open the door for us!" ¹² But He replied, "I tell you the truth, I don't know you." ¹³ "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day

or the hour.

To understand this, we must keep the context. Let's read the verses before.

Matthew 25:5-10

⁵ The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. ⁶ At midnight the cry rang out: "Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!" ⁷ Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ The foolish ones said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out." ⁹ "No," they replied, "there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves." ¹⁰ But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

These are representative of all "believers." Notice how they all fell asleep. But yet at the end only those who were ready were allowed in. This parallels exactly with what we see in Revelation 3:3 and 1 Thessalonians 5:4.

Many refer specifically to verse 13 of this text.

Matthew 25:13

Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

But our question is this: Does it say "you WILL not know" or "you DO not know"?

It says "You DO not know."

Did Noah know the day the flood was coming during the 100 years of making the ark? No. He didn't. Did the virgins know the day of the bridegroom's return at the beginning? No. Of course not. But was Noah eventually informed of the day? Yes. He was. Were the virgins informed of the return of the bridegroom? Yes. They were. And half were not prepared and missed it.

"Present tense" verses that of "future tense." This is the issue that we are truly discussing. In all the verses that we have found, the only thing given that we will not know in light of future tense is that of the "hour" and these are in harmony with that of Noah and the virgins.

Some have even referred to Acts 1:6-7 for their defense as well. It reads:

Acts 1:6-7

⁶ So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority.

As evidenced from Revelation 3:3 and 1 Thessalonians 5:4, the Scriptures indicate that we will know the times and season. Remember, in contrast to this verse in Acts, Christ also said that we WILL know the season. Compare:

Matthew 24:32-33

³² Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ³³ Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near,

right at the door.

Thus, His words in Acts 1 seem to contradict those in Matthew 24.

This leads us to wonder if Yeshua was actually meaning that those very individuals who heard Him speaking there in Acts 1 wouldn't know the times and seasons since they obviously wouldn't be around in the end times. There is much debate over these verses in Acts 1. However, we believe that all Scripture is to be interpreted in perfect harmony with each other. If we interpret something that does not line up with other Scripture, then our interpretations are making the Scriptures contradict each other.

We struggle with any interpretation that makes the Scriptures contradict.

Another verse that is often cited for the pre-trib view is John 14:1-3. It reads:

John 14:1-3

¹“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. ² In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

This verse clearly says “I will come back and take you to be with me”.

Now, if one is going to hold to the pre-trib view, please consider the logic that is being used through this verse.

He takes us up to heaven to the place He has been preparing for us for 2,000 years. We then stay there at that place for seven years. We then come back down with Him at His return and reign with him for the millennium on earth. Then after the millennium a NEW heaven and NEW earth appear. Telling us what? The place that He has been preparing for us for the last 2,000 years, according to verse 3, will only be occupied by us for seven years as we come down for the millennium and then comes the NEW heaven and NEW earth. He prepares it for 2,000 years and we're only there for seven. Does that even make sense?

Well, not to us.

Lastly, some time ago a book series came out titled *Left Behind*. The whole premise of the series was about those who missed the pre-tribulation rapture. Meaning, if you were left behind, you missed the resurrection and will face the time of the tribulation.

These books became a huge hit in the modern day church. Even had some movies made after them.

Let's let Scripture speak for itself and see what it has to say about who exactly is “left behind” and who is taken away.

First off, what does Yeshua say in Matthew 24:29-31?

Matthew 24:29-31

²⁹ Immediately AFTER the distress of those days ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’ ³⁰ At that

time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. ³¹ And He will send His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

When are the elect gathered? After the days of tribulation, not before.

Let's examine the Scriptures more closely to see who is left and who is taken. In Matthew 24:37-41, Yeshua says,

In Matthew 24:37-41

³⁷ As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹ and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

So, who is left behind? The righteous (Noah and his family). Who is taken? The wicked.

Also, let's examine the parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13:24-30 to see if there is a second witness to this.

Matthew 13:24-30

²⁴ Jesus told them another parable: The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. ²⁷ The owner's servants came to him and said, "Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?" ²⁸ "An enemy did this," he replied. The servants asked him, "Do you want us to go and pull them up?" ²⁹ "No," he answered, "because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn."

What harvest is being spoken of? The end time harvest. Again, who is taken? The tares (the unrighteous).

Consider the words of Yeshua as He explains this parable to His disciples. Matthew 13:36-43 says:

Matthew 13:36-43

³⁶ Then He left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to Him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field." ³⁷ He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. ⁴⁰ "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will weed out of His kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴² They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

So again, we see the tares (unrighteous) being taken and the wheat (righteous) being left to shine forth.

Let's look at another witness to this. Luke 17:23-37 says:

Luke 17:23-35

²³ Men will tell you, 'There he is!' or 'Here he is!' Do not go running off after them. ²⁴ For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. ²⁵ But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. ²⁶ "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. ²⁷ People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. ²⁸ "It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. ²⁹ But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. ³⁰ "It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. ³¹ On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. ³² Remember Lot's wife! ³³ Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. ³⁴ I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. ³⁵ Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left."

Again, who is taken? The wicked. Who is left? The righteous.

Consider even Proverbs 10:29-30 says:

Proverbs 10:29-30

²⁹ The way of Yahweh is a refuge for the righteous, but it is the ruin of those who do evil. ³⁰ The righteous will never be uprooted, but the wicked will not remain in the land.

After looking at what the Scriptures say about this topic, are you really certain you DON'T WANT to be "LEFT BEHIND"?

All that being said, we are often asked as to when we see the return of Yeshua actually happening. How we see it playing out with the Fall Feast days. Remember, as we explain in our teaching "Yahweh's Prophetic Calendar," we know Yeshua fulfilled, to the day, the spring Holy days. And it is in this light that it only makes sense He will return within the Fall Holy days.

Obviously we are still watching like everyone else. And we believe that as the time draws closer and we all continue to keep watch, we will all be able to see and know His return.

Could it be on the Day of Trumpets? That would make sense for the last trumpet to sound.

Could it be on the Day of Atonement? Every 50 years two silver trumpets are to be blown on the Day of Atonement to announce the next Jubilee.

Could it be on the first day of Tabernacles? This would be the first day that Yeshua would indeed be tabernacling with us and it would also better match the 1,260 days from the Passover 3½ years earlier when many believe the Antichrist could begin his rule.

We are open. But more than anything, we are watching.

In all of this, we ask you, are you defending your belief or are you seeking truth?

We know that this is not an easy teaching to hear, especially if you have been brought up all your life believing the pre-trib view. We simply ask that you stay open to the Spirit in examining the Scriptures. And remember:

Isaiah 1:18

“Come now, let us reason together,” says (Yahweh) the LORD.

We hope you have enjoyed this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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