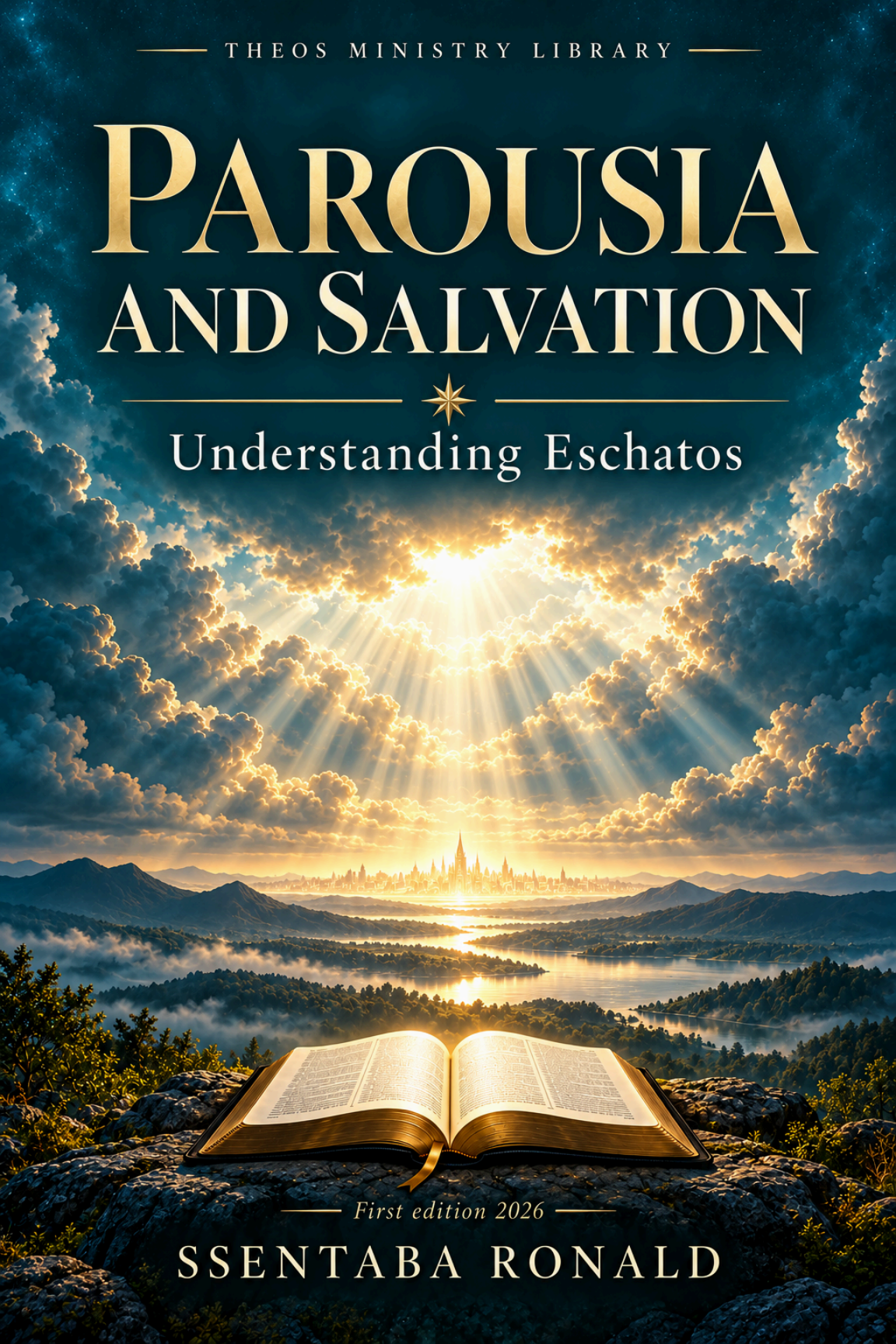
THEOS MINISTRY LIBRARY

# PAROUSIA AND SALVATION

## Understanding Eschatos



*First edition 2026*

SSENTABA RONALD

# Parousia and Salvation

*Understanding Eschatos*

Ssentaba Ronald

Theos Transforming Ministries Library

First edition 2026

# Copyright

© 2026 Ssentaba Ronald. All rights reserved.

Published by Theos Transforming Ministries Library.

First edition 2026.

Scripture study edition. Use the New King James Version as the principal companion Bible and the Amplified Bible for comparison. Biblical passages are explained in the author's own words; explanations and paraphrases are not quotations from either translation. Scripture references identify the passages to read in full.

No part of this publication may be reproduced for commercial distribution without the publisher's written permission, except brief quotations in reviews as permitted by applicable law.

theostransformingministries.org

Editorial correspondence: ronald@theostransformingministries.org

# Dedication

To all ministers of the gospel: prepare yourselves and those entrusted to your care. The last days call for sober faith, endurance and holiness, and the trials Scripture describes are serious. May we teach truthfully, serve faithfully and keep our hope in Jesus Christ.

To my children and my whole family, my close friends and ministry associates: may we remain watchful so that the Day does not overtake us like a thief. May we resist complacency, encourage one another and persevere in the Lord.

Our greatest aim is to enter eternal life in Christ and share the joy of His presence. May none of us exchange that hope for temporary gain. Let us prepare now, love deeply and remain faithful to the end.

With love and prayer,
Ssentaba Ronald

Scripture for reflection: 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11; Luke 21:34–36; Hebrews 10:23–25; 2 Peter 3:11–14.

# Acknowledgements

I give thanks to God, whose mercy in Jesus Christ is the foundation of our hope. I am grateful to my family, friends and ministry associates for their love, encouragement and fellowship.

I acknowledge Rev. Canon Wakhungu Nathan, Harvest University, and all my teachers of end-time studies. Thank you for helping me ask serious questions, return to Scripture and prepare for faithful ministry. This acknowledgement expresses gratitude; it does not imply that these teachers have reviewed or endorsed every interpretation in this book.

I also acknowledge the biblical translators, historical Christian writers and contemporary teachers whose work contributes to the study of these questions. The sources and reading guide at the back identify the works used in the manuscript, including Thomas D. Ice's earlier study of salvation during the tribulation. Their writing remains their own; this book offers its own synthesis and explanations.

Where Christians interpret a passage differently, I have sought to represent the disagreement fairly. Responsibility for this book's wording and conclusions remains mine.

# Contents

Introduction....6
01 Foundation....7
02 Rapture and Tribulation....13
03 Prophetic Witness....20
04 Jesus and the Apostles....28
05 Revelation and the Seven Seals....33
06 The Sealed People Israel and the Nations....41
07 The Seven Trumpets and the Two Witnesses....45
08 The Dragon the Beasts and Faithful Allegiance....52
09 The Bowls the Coming King and New Creation....56
10 Death and What Follows....66
11 Order of Events Judgment and Rewards....75
12 Salvation During Tribulation and Readiness....86
Discussion and feedback....94
About the author....95
Scripture study guide....96
Sources and reading guide....97

# Introduction

Christ's coming gives believers hope and raises serious questions. Will the church pass through the tribulation? What happens to those who die before the Lord returns? Can someone who previously refused the gospel repent during a future crisis? This book helps ministers, families and study groups examine those questions through Scripture.

Parousia means presence or coming; in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 it concerns the coming of the Lord. Eschatos means last or final. Eschatology studies the last things in the light of God's redemption. Salvation concerns reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ and the life He promises. The Saviour remains central to our understanding of the future.

Twelve chapters define the principal terms, compare rapture views, trace the prophets and apostles, and examine Revelation. Each seal, trumpet and bowl is explained in its visionary setting, with attention to meaning, timing and the physical implications of a future fulfilment. We also consider Israel and the church, death, resurrection, judgment, rewards and readiness. Salvation During the Tribulation is integrated especially into Chapter Twelve.

Pretribulation, midtribulation, prewrath and posttribulation interpretations are compared without adopting one as the book's final position. Readings that do not use a separate future seven-year period are also explained. Balanced study distinguishes explicit teaching, reasoned interpretation and speculation; it does not pretend that every claim has equal evidence.

Read each cited passage in the New King James Version, with the Amplified Bible available for comparison. The explanations here are our own wording, not quotations from either translation. Read the surrounding passage, especially when an interpretation is disputed. Sources and further reading are gathered at the back.

Our purpose is sober readiness, faithful service and enduring hope in eternal life through Christ. Discussion questions invite readers to weigh the evidence together; the feedback page provides room for questions and correction. We begin with the meaning of our words.

# CHAPTER 1
# Foundation

## 1.1 What eschatology means

Eschatology is the study of the last things. It includes the return of Christ, resurrection, judgment and the final renewal of creation. It also asks what death means for the individual and how the future promised by God changes life now. These two concerns are sometimes called individual and general eschatology. The first considers the person who dies; the second considers the completion of God's purposes for humanity and the world.

The Bible introduces this hope through a story. God creates a good world, humanity falls into sin, death enters human experience, and God promises redemption. Christ's death and resurrection are decisive events in that redemption. Its completion includes the defeat of death and God's dwelling with His people in a renewed creation (Genesis 1–3; Romans 5:12–21; 1 Corinthians 15:20–28; Revelation 21:1–5). The last things therefore grow out of the first things. They concern the repair of what sin has damaged and the fulfilment of what God has promised.

This helps explain why Christian hope is larger than the thought of a soul escaping earthly trouble. Paul expects bodily resurrection; Revelation ends with God dwelling with humanity. The Christian future concerns embodied life before God, justice for His creation and the removal of death. Whatever timetable a reader adopts must leave room for the fullness of that promise.

## 1.2 What the last days are

The phrase last days does not always mean the last few years before Christ returns. Hebrews 1:1–2 describes God's speaking through His Son as occurring in these last days. At Pentecost, Peter applies Joel's promise about the Spirit to what his listeners are witnessing (Acts 2:16–21). These passages locate the church within the last days already. Christ has come, the Spirit has been given, and the promised fulfilment has begun.

Yet the New Testament also speaks of conditions that will characterise the closing period of this age. Second Timothy 3:1–5 describes difficult times marked by distorted loves and outward religion without its power. Second Peter 3:3–4 speaks of scoffers questioning the promise of Christ's coming.

These descriptions warn the church about recurring patterns and the future culmination of opposition. They should not become a method of calculating a date whenever familiar evils appear.

The last days can therefore refer broadly to the period inaugurated by Christ, while particular passages look toward its final crisis. This is often described as already and not yet. Believers already receive forgiveness and the Spirit; they still await the redemption of their bodies (Romans 8:23). Christ already reigns, yet death remains an enemy awaiting its final destruction (1 Corinthians 15:25–26). Understanding this overlap prevents us from forcing every passage into a short period that lies entirely in the future.

## 1.3 The Day of the Lord

The Day of the Lord is a time when God acts decisively to judge evil, vindicate His rule and deliver His people. In the prophets, the expression can concern historical judgment as well as a wider final reckoning. Isaiah 13 announces judgment against Babylon. Amos 5:18–24 warns Israelites who assume that the day will favour them while they practise injustice. Zephaniah 1 exposes the same false security. God's own people cannot use their religious identity to make themselves immune from His searching judgment.

Joel 2 joins the warning of the day with a call to repentance and the hope that those who call on the Lord will be saved. In the New Testament, 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 describes the day as unexpected for those living in false security, while encouraging believers to sober readiness. Second Peter 3:10–13 connects the day with judgment and the hope of new heavens and a new earth. The phrase carries both terror for unrepentant evil and hope for those who belong to God.

The word day need not settle the duration of every event associated with it. Some interpreters understand an extended period of divine intervention; others emphasise the climactic coming and judgment. We must first establish what a passage includes before deciding how long its events occupy. Calling a period the Day of the Lord does not by itself prove a seven-year, one-day or thousand-year duration.

## 1.4 Related names for the coming day

Scripture also speaks of the day of Jesus Christ, the day of Christ, the day of our Lord Jesus Christ and the day of God (Philippians 1:6, 10; 2:16; 1

Corinthians 1:8; 2 Peter 3:12). These expressions focus attention on Christ's completion of His work, His people's accountability and the fulfilment of God's purposes. They belong in the same broad field of expectation, though context determines their particular emphasis.

Some prophetic systems assign these expressions to separate stages. Others understand them as overlapping descriptions of the same final intervention. A difference in wording alone cannot establish a separate date. We should ask what happens in the passage, who is addressed and how it connects with other texts. The day of Christ in Philippians, for example, encourages faithful perseverance and the completion of God's work; the passage is not giving a schedule of trumpet judgments.

## 1.5 Parousia and other words for Christ's return

Parousia can refer to someone's arrival or presence. Paul uses it of the arrival of fellow workers as well as of Christ's coming (1 Corinthians 16:17; 1 Thessalonians 4:15). Its meaning in a particular verse depends on the person and event being discussed. The word itself does not tell us how many stages Christ's coming has or how long an associated sequence lasts.

Other important words describe a revealing or appearing. Second Thessalonians 1:7 speaks of Jesus being revealed from heaven. Titus 2:13 speaks of the appearing of His glory. Second Thessalonians 2:8 brings appearing and coming together in describing the defeat of the lawless one. These expressions direct attention to the disclosure of Christ's authority. We should not assume that every different Greek word identifies an unrelated return.

Christians who distinguish phases of Christ's coming argue for that distinction from the relationships among passages. Christians who emphasise one public coming do the same. A responsible argument must show those relationships instead of expecting a dictionary definition to settle the debate.

## 1.6 Tribulation and great tribulation

Tribulation means distress, pressure or affliction. In John 16:33 Jesus prepares His followers for trouble in the world. Acts 14:22 describes hardships on the way into God's kingdom. John calls himself a partner in tribulation in Revelation 1:9. Ordinary Christian suffering is therefore already part of the New Testament's use of the word.

Great tribulation describes severe distress. Matthew 24:21, Daniel 12:1 and Revelation 7:14 are central passages in the debate. Futurist interpreters connect these passages with a final concentrated crisis. Other readers give greater attention to the destruction of Jerusalem, the church's suffering across history or a pattern that has both historical expressions and a final culmination. Each interpretation must explain the original audience and the language of unusual severity.

The common expression seven-year tribulation comes from an interpretation of Daniel's final week, connected with other prophetic periods. Matthew 24 does not directly announce, in one sentence, a seven-year tribulation. Calling the period seven years is a conclusion that requires explanation. Chapter Three will examine how that conclusion is reached.

## 1.7 Wrath and its relationship to suffering

Divine wrath is God's holy opposition to evil expressed in judgment. Romans 1:18 describes wrath already being revealed against human ungodliness; Romans 2:5 looks toward a day of judgment. Revelation 15–16 portrays the completion of divine wrath through the bowls. God's wrath is not uncontrolled temper. It expresses His just opposition to what destroys His creation and dishonours Him.

Suffering and wrath are related concepts, but they are not interchangeable. A believer may suffer because a persecutor hates Christ; that suffering does not prove that God condemns the believer. Revelation 12:12 also speaks of the devil's wrath. We must ask who acts, against whom, and for what purpose. This distinction becomes essential when Christians compare promises of deliverance from wrath with warnings that the church will suffer persecution.

The disagreement concerns how those realities are arranged in the final crisis. Pretribulation interpreters commonly treat the whole final seven-year period as a time from which the church is removed. Prewrath interpreters distinguish the Antichrist's persecution from a later outpouring of divine wrath. Posttribulation interpreters maintain that God can preserve His people from condemnation while they endure persecution. We will examine the arguments rather than deciding them through the definition alone.

## 1.8 Resurrection and eternal life

Resurrection is God's raising of the dead. Christian teaching centres on Jesus' bodily resurrection and the promised raising of those who belong to Him (Luke 24:36–43; 1 Corinthians 15:12–23). Resurrection is different from resuscitation into ordinary mortal life. Paul describes the promised body as incorruptible and transformed by the Spirit's power (1 Corinthians 15:42–54).

Eternal life begins in knowing the Father through the Son and reaches its fullness beyond death and judgment (John 5:24; 17:3). A believer may possess eternal life now and still await bodily resurrection. This is another example of a gift already received whose completion remains ahead. John 5:28–29 also speaks of the resurrection of those who have done evil. Resurrection itself does not mean that every person receives the same final destiny.

## 1.9 Judgment and the kingdom of God

Judgment means God's truthful assessment and just verdict. It can expose evil, vindicate the oppressed, discipline His people or announce the final outcome of a human life. The context determines which sense is in view. Romans 14:10–12 and 2 Corinthians 5:10 teach accountability before God; Revelation 20:11–15 describes the great white throne. Later chapters will examine their relationship.

The kingdom of God is God's royal rule. Jesus announces its arrival in His ministry, while teaching His disciples to pray for its coming (Matthew 6:10; 12:28). The kingdom is present in the King's saving activity and awaits its full manifestation. Questions about the millennium concern how that future rule relates to Revelation 20; they do not replace the wider biblical teaching about God's kingdom.

## 1.10 How we will read difficult passages

We begin with context. Daniel's visions came to a people who knew exile and foreign rule. Revelation was addressed to seven actual churches. We then consider literary form. A beast in an apocalyptic vision may represent a kingdom because the passage interprets it that way; a symbolic meaning is not a denial that the vision concerns real events.

Next we compare passages carefully. Shared imagery may establish a meaningful connection, but similar wording does not automatically prove that two scenes occur on the same day. We must also notice differences. A trumpet used to announce a gathering may not have exactly the same function as a trumpet introducing a judgment.

Finally, we distinguish explicit teaching, reasoned interpretation and speculation. Christ's return and the resurrection of the dead are clearly taught. Identifying a current politician as a particular horn requires additional evidence that is rarely supplied. Humility here protects both the church and the credibility of its witness.

## 1.11 Following the meaning through a passage

Consider a congregation reading John 5 together. Someone hears that the believer has already passed from death to life and asks whether resurrection has therefore happened already. Another reads about people leaving their tombs and wonders whether the earlier promise must concern only the future. The confusion arises because death and life are being used in related but distinguishable ways.

In John 5:24, the believer receives life through hearing and faith. In verses 28–29, people in their graves hear Christ's voice and come out. Reading both statements in their context allows present salvation and future bodily resurrection to stand together. We do not need to cancel either passage to preserve the other.

The same patient method helps with tribulation, day and kingdom. Ask what the word means here before asking how it fits a larger system. Then compare the related passages and explain the connection. A congregation that learns this habit can follow difficult teaching without being dependent upon the confidence of the speaker alone.

These definitions allow us to hear the rapture debate more clearly. The question is not simply whether Christians expect Christ to gather His people. The deeper disagreement concerns how that gathering relates to suffering, wrath and the public coming of the King.

### For discussion

Which terms in this chapter most change the way you read a prophetic passage? Explain your answer from the cited text.

# CHAPTER 2
# Rapture and Tribulation

## 2.1 The gathering that all four views seek to explain

The central passage is 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18. Some believers have died, and the church is troubled about their place in Christ's coming. Paul answers that the Lord will descend, the dead in Christ will rise, and living believers will be caught up together with them to meet Him. The lasting outcome is fellowship with the Lord. The passage ends with an instruction to encourage one another.

Rapture is the customary theological term for this catching up. The Greek verb in verse 17 describes being caught or taken up; the English theological term comes through a Latin rendering. The absence of the English noun from a translation does not remove the event Paul describes. Equally, the existence of that event does not settle where it belongs in every proposed timetable.

First Corinthians 15:51–54 adds the transformation of believers, including those still living. The four positions discussed below agree that Christ gathers and transforms His people. Their differences concern the relationship of that gathering to Daniel's final week, the great tribulation, divine wrath and Christ's manifestation to the world. There are variations within each school; the summaries describe representative arguments rather than a rule that every advocate follows.

## 2.2 Part A  The pretribulation view

### Its proposed arrangement

Pretribulationism places the rapture before the future seventieth week of Daniel, usually understood as a seven-year period. Christ gathers the church before this period; His public descent to defeat His enemies and establish the kingdom follows it. Many advocates describe these as phases of one coming rather than two unrelated comings.

### Its biblical argument

The view brings together Christ's promise to receive His people in John 14:1–3, the gathering in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18, deliverance from coming wrath in 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 5:9, and preservation from an hour of worldwide testing in Revelation 3:10. It reads Daniel 9:24–27 as a programme particularly concerning Israel and Jerusalem, with the final week still future. Advocates also appeal to the expectation of Christ's coming without a stated intervening sign.

John F. Walvoord's defence illustrates this combination of arguments: the gathering of the church is distinguished from Christ's later earthly manifestation, promises of deliverance from wrath support the distinction, and watchfulness is understood in terms of an any-moment expectation. These arguments are cumulative; no single verse explicitly states the entire proposed sequence. [1]

### Its assumptions and strengths

The interpretation commonly assumes a distinction between God's purposes for Israel and the church, an interval between Daniel's sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks, and a final week that belongs wholly to a special period of judgment. It gives serious attention to the comfort promised to believers and to the warning that judgment may overtake an unprepared world.

Another strength is its attempt to account for the different emphases of the gathering passages and the scenes of Christ defeating hostile nations. Advocates argue that the church's reception by Christ and His later descent with His saints are related movements that should not be collapsed without explanation.

### Objections and responses

Critics ask where the Bible explicitly places the rapture before the entire final week. They point to the gathering after tribulation in Matthew 24:29–31 and ask why Paul's comfort in 1 Thessalonians 4 does not itself mention removal seven years earlier. They also question whether exemption from wrath necessarily means physical absence from a period in which wrath occurs.

Pretribulation advocates respond that Matthew 24 primarily concerns Israel and a gathering different from the church's rapture. They argue that the combined promises make a pretribulation gathering the best explanation,

even if the order is not stated in one verse. In Revelation 3:10, they stress preservation from the hour itself. Critics answer that the promise first addresses the church at Philadelphia and must be interpreted in that setting before being applied to a universal timetable.

The central issue is therefore larger than a promise of protection. It concerns the identity of the elect, the relationship of Israel and the church, the scope of wrath and the meaning of imminence. A fair discussion should acknowledge the view's coherent reasoning while making its connecting assumptions visible.

## 2.3 Part B  The midtribulation view

### Its proposed arrangement

Midtribulationism places the gathering around the middle of Daniel's final seven-year period. The church experiences the first half but is gathered before the intensified suffering and judgment associated with the latter half. Some advocates prefer the expression midweek rapture because they reserve great tribulation for that final half.

### Its biblical argument

The starting point is Daniel 9:27, where a decisive interruption occurs in the middle of a week. This is compared with the three-and-a-half-year expressions in Daniel and Revelation. Some midtribulation interpretations connect the last trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15:52 with the seventh trumpet in Revelation 11:15–18, where royal victory, judgment and reward are announced. The resurrection and ascent of the two witnesses in Revelation 11 also enter some arguments.

Karl Kemp's midweek teaching gives Revelation 11–13 a central role, places the seventh trumpet at the middle of the final week and interprets the catching up in Revelation 12:5 corporately in relation to God's people. This last identification differs from the usual interpretation of the male child as Christ. His construction illustrates a developed midweek reading, rather than every detail of the general summary above; advocates differ over the placement of persecution and the symbolism of the visions. [2]