

Appendix 1:

The Dispensational House of Cards

**Scripture is understood through legitimate, scriptural meditation.
(Psalm 1:2)**

**But today, end-time prophecy has been interpreted through
an intellectual approach, called Dispensationalism.**

Theologians use the term “dispensation” to express a specific era or Age. Dispensationalism teaches that history is divided into different Ages, during each one of which God conducts business in a different way. For example, the world passed from one dispensation to the next as God expelled Adam and Eve from the garden. Another dispensation passed away the moment God’s new covenant (New Testament) was established.

Because dispensational thought interprets scriptures using blocks of time, this method of interpretation surged to the forefront when contemporary end-time theories were developed. The block of time interpreted was Daniel’s final seven-years.

Dispensational models were developed for good reason; they help teachers and students in attempts to outline and comprehend the context of scriptures throughout history. Dispensational colleges include Dallas Theological Seminary and Moody Bible Institute. Leaders reported to support Dispensationalism include Billy Graham, Jerry Falwell, and Pat Robertson. Dispensational authors of end-time prophecy include Hal Lindsey, Tim LaHaye, and Jerry Jenkins.

Established prophecy experts, whom are overwhelmingly dispensational interpreters, have already made pronouncements that have proven blatantly incorrect. Today these prophecy experts continue to make critical assumptions that although difficult to disprove, will likely not stand the test of time.

Dispensational authors have falsely foretold the time of Jesus' return. The following scriptures fueled wrong interpretation. Jesus said, "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. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. (Matthew 24:32-34)

Because the *fig tree* is a symbol for Israel, the world's preeminent prophecy experts identified 1948, when the United Nations established modern Israel, as the start of this last *generation*. A generation was interpreted as forty years, so the conclusion was that by 1988 end-time events would unfold. This dispensational dogma was featured in a bestseller book titled: *The 1980s: Countdown to Armageddon*.(1) This book spent twenty weeks on the New York Times bestseller list. However, we have since learned the 1980s was not the end-times countdown decade.

Nonetheless, *Time* magazine proclaimed its author, Hal Lindsey, "the Jeremiah of our generation" for his argument that the end was rapidly approaching. Jeremiah wrote a portion of the Old Testament; as an authentic prophet, he wrote without error. Yet Lindsey accepted this comparison; his follow-up book boasted, "He has been called the 'Jeremiah for this generation' by *Time* magazine."(2) Lindsey sold 35 million books, published in over 50 countries, as dispensational teachers defined end-time prophecy beliefs worldwide.

Other prolific dispensational authors followed Hal Lindsey. Dr Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins wrote the popular *Left Behind* series, selling over 60 million copies.(3) Rather than compare Tim LaHaye with Jeremiah, *Time* magazine more directly referred to LaHaye as a being a prophet in an article titled, *Meet the Prophet*.(4) Time Warner owns *Time* magazine. This corporation distributes porn videos through its cable television business, Time Warner Cable. The result is that Christians have permitted executives with ties to the pornography industry to establish our prophets.

Confusion

Dispensationalists do not agree on the seven dispensations. The following chart gives an example of differing interpretations.

Examples of Seven Dispensations

	Interpretation #1	Interpretation #2
#1	Innocence in Paradise	Man under innocence
#2	Conscience after the Fall	Man under conscience
#3	The law—Old Testament	Man in authority over earth
#4	Grace in the Church Age	Man under promise
#5	Antichrist	Man under law
#6	Millennial Kingdom	Man under grace
#7	Perfection in Eternity	Man under reign of Christ on earth

In like manner, interpretation of the end-time rapture is also fraught with disagreement. Experts argue whether there is a pre-tribulation rapture, a mid-tribulation rapture, a pre-wrath rapture, or a post-tribulation rapture.

Dispensationalists Defined Prophecy Beliefs Worldwide

According to most dispensationalists, a pre-tribulation rapture must occur at the very beginning of the final seven years. Dispensational interpretation places what could be considered “bookends” around the seven-year end-time period—with landmark events starting and ending these seven years.

In the dispensational, pre-tribulation rapture, God removes all believers from earth at the very start of the end-times, with none left behind. The logic is—since a new dispensation began when God’s focus moved from Israel to the church, then as Israel turns to once again walk with God—that future change again triggers the start of a separate dispensational period. The logic follows that God must remove (rapture) the church at the very start of that seven-year period. This framework places the rapture at the seam, as it were, on the timeline where the seven years begin. This framework also makes the rapture of the church—a 100 percent rapture.

Were a rapture presented in scripture later in the seven years—or if multiple raptures occurred—it would not fit the dispensational framework. It tends to be rejected by dispensationalists as fragmenting God’s plans in small parts of time, instead of major dispensations.

Try To Find This Rapture

Dispensationalists place the pre-tribulation rapture at the very first verse in chapter four of Revelation. This is based on a belief that the New Testament church is taken to heaven (raptured) at the same moment that John, the writer of Revelation, is taken up to heaven to witness end-time events.

Yet this verse does not, in any manner, describe millions of people being pulled up from the earth into heaven.

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. (Revelation 4:1)

This verse describes John entering heaven to witness end-time events. However, dispensational attempts to categorize end-time events according to a strict paradigm (bias) caused an overload of meaning upon this verse.

Therefore, this verse is where all the following events occur.

- The seven-year end-time period starts. (Daniel 9:26-27)
- All believers (New Testament church) are taken up into heaven.
- Later believers are excluded from the New Testament church.
- End-time believers are reclassified as "Tribulation Saints."
- The Holy Spirit is removed from earth, releasing Antichrist.

This interpretation resulted from the hammering scriptural pegs into square theological holes.

The following verse reads like a rapture; it sounds like countless millions of people arriving in heaven!

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. (Revelation 7:9)

John did not say, "I turned my head and then saw a great multitude over there." John says, *I looked and there before me was a great multitude*. John was looking ahead and something appeared—*a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language*. This multitude is the recently raptured church.

If A Pre-Tribulation Rapture Takes 100 Percent ... Then Why ...

QUESTION #1: If every Christian goes to heaven in the first rapture, then how could a group of Christian servants feel like victims of a thief—as if robbed—upon departing earth to be with the Lord forever?

Jesus said:

It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. (Luke 12:37-38)

“Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.” (Revelation 16:15)

God’s servants who are left-behind following the early rapture will feel robbed of their inheritance—of salvation not just from eternal fire—but also from end-time nuclear fires. They will feel robbed—as if victims of a thief.

QUESTION #2: How will Jesus assign an end-time Christian (a servant) a place with the unbelievers ... a place with the hypocrites?

A place with the unbelievers and a place with the hypocrites will be a place left behind on earth following the rapture. Jesus gave examples of servants who did not keep watch. In both examples, Jesus did not say, “you are unbelievers and hypocrites.” Instead, Jesus said unprepared believers will suffer alongside unbelievers and hypocrites.

Jesus said:

But suppose the servant says to himself, “My master is taking a long time in coming,” and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers. (Luke 12:46)

The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 24:50-51)

QUESTION #3: If every single Christian travels up to heaven during the early rapture, then why is it critical for Christians to keep watch?

If there is a pre-tribulation rapture—and all believers are going to heaven in that rapture—then Jesus’ repeated and emphatic teaching to *keep watch* has no real meaning. (Matthew 24:42-43, 25:13; Mark 13:33, 34, 35, 37; Luke 12:39, 21:36; Revelation 3:3, 16:15) Only if the early rapture is not all-inclusive, with countless believers left behind, is there an indisputable reason to *keep watch*.

Biased Word Studies

Biased word studies provide the “proof” behind the dispensational pre-tribulation rapture belief. The following chart outlines the logic that supports the occurrence of this rapture. The chart depicts the hammering of square theological pegs into round scriptural holes.

“PROOF” OF A PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE

A word or scripture not clearly having a specific meaning is given a very specific meaning or interpretation	→	Then that specific meaning is used to prove a 100 percent pre-tribulation rapture of all believers at Revelation 4:1
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The use of “word interpretation” results in a contrived argument. Emphasizing a specific word within scripture and repeating that same analysis time and again—can produce an interpretation that proves whatever the theologian wants to prove. The pre-tribulation rapture belief is based upon the interpretation of specific words, such as *after this*, *church*, and *wrath*.

After This

Perhaps the most significant transition to new material in Revelation occurs following the seven letters to the seven churches. The first verse of the next chapter (Revelation 4:1) turns the reader—stating *after this ... after this* twice (Greek: meta taunta). This transition breaks the first three chapters of Revelation—from events that follow.

How big does this transition play out in actual end-time events? From the dispensationalist interpretation, *after this* is translated “after these things” or “after the things of the church” or after the “church dispensation.” However, scripture makes no direct reference to there even being a “church dispensation.”

Defeating

The Antichrist (*horn*) makes war against the saints and defeats them. *As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them* (Daniel 7:21). It is pointed out that these “defeated” saints could not possibly belong to the New Testament church, because Antichrist is *defeating them*—and Jesus told us *the gates of Hades will not overcome* the church (Matthew 16:18). Dispensationalists conclude that it would be impossible for the saints of Revelation 13 and Daniel 7 to be a part of the church, because Antichrist, being of Hades, cannot triumph over the church.

The flaw is that the very next verse is ignored—these saints are not defeated—note the word above is *defeating* (not defeated) and the qualifier below is that they were in the process of being defeated ... until! *until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.* (Daniel 7:22) Daniel described the military defeat of saints—that will ultimately be a victory after Christ returns, and rewards their faithfulness.

Seven Lamps

Hal Lindsey saw *seven lamps* before God’s throne in the following verse as being the seven churches of Revelation. *Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.* (see Revelation 4:5)

Lindsey further interpreted that these lamps were representative of all believers in the New Testament church—and that was proof the entirety of the New Testament church had been raptured into heaven by this point. Once again a very specific interpretation is made—this time concerning *seven lamps*—and that interpretation is used to “prove” a Revelation 4:1 rapture.

The one who now holds it back

According to the pre-tribulation rapture, Revelation 4:1 is the verse where tremendous transformation occurs. At this verse, a force that has held back the Antichrist for the past two thousand years will be lifted, and the Antichrist will be revealed: *And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. 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. And then the lawless one will be revealed.*... (2 Thessalonians 2:6-8)

The point made is that as God’s people are raptured at Revelation 4:1, the Antichrist is no longer held back, and the end-times begin. Dispensationalists interpret the *one who now holds the Antichrist back* today—as being the Holy Spirit, who is present on earth today only through the indwelling of believers, members of the worldwide church. The logic is that after all believers are raptured, the Holy Spirit is removed from earth, and therefore Antichrist is no longer held back.

How does anyone know that the force that *now holds* the Antichrist *back* is the Holy Spirit, present only through the indwelling of the church? It could be an angel—as angels carry out countless end-times functions. For example, it is consistent with scripture that God relegates such a tasking to an angel. Genesis describes the Holy Spirit inhabiting the earth prior to God’s creation of the first man: *Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.* (Genesis 1:2) To accept the dispensational interpretation, a person almost has to accept that the Holy Spirit “forgot” how to dwell upon the earth—other than through indwelling believers.

Church

The first three chapters of Revelation contain letters to seven churches: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. After Revelation 4:1 the word “church,” only appears once again. That mention is to describe the church in heaven. (Revelation 22:16) The pre-tribulation position is the reason the word “church” is not again used, is that God raptured the entire New Testament church to heaven at Revelation 4:1.

The dispensational position is that following that rapture the church is never reestablished on earth. Yet terms like *saints* (Revelation 5:8, 8:3-4, 11:18, 13:7-10, 14:12, 15:3, 16:6, and 16:6) and *redeemed* (Revelation 5:9 and 14:3-4) that characterize church members throughout the New Testament continue to be used.

Wrath

The pre-tribulation rapture requires a distinction between groups of believers. Those belonging to the New Testament church will not experience God’s *wrath* in eternity, or while living on earth. Accordingly, God must rapture the New Testament church at the very start of the end-times, because Dispensationalists have determined that these seven years are a time of God’s *wrath*.

If the pre-tribulation rapture is accurate—then promised protection from God’s wrath (Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 9:5) applies to more than eternal wrath—but also God’s wrath poured out upon an ungodly world. Moreover, this complete protection from all aspects of God’s *wrath* applies to New Testament church members, but not to Tribulation Saints, or to end-time Israeli believers.(5)

References:

1. Lindsey, H. *The 1980’s: Countdown to Armageddon*. Bantam rack-size ed. New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1982.
2. Lindsey, H. *Planet Earth - 2000 A.D.* hardcover ed. Palos Verdes: Western Front, Ltd., 1994: inside flap.
3. LaHaye, T. *Tim LaHaye Ministries*. <http://timlahaye.com>. Sep 1 2004.
4. Cloud, J. *Meet The Prophet*. Time magazine. Jul 1 2002.
5. *Wrath: The Dispensational Interpretation (Chapter Appendix)*

WRATH: THE DISPENSATIONAL INTERPRETATION

Pre-Tribulation Rapture at Revelation 4:1	Problem
<p>Based upon a belief that all New Testament Christians must be gone (removed, raptured) from earth at the very start of the end-times seven-year period—and that Revelation 4:1 is the start of that seven-year period.</p> <p>The primary argument for Christians all being removed from earth at the start of the final seven years is that the end-times is a time of God’s <i>wrath</i>, and Christians saved prior to the end-times are not meant to suffer God’s <i>wrath</i>.</p> <p>Interpreters believe that is true—because of the following scriptures.</p> <p><i>Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be <u>saved from God’s wrath through him!</u></i> (Romans 5:9)</p> <p><i>For God did <u>not appoint us to suffer wrath</u> but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.</i> (1 Thessalonians 5:9)</p> <p><i>and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming <u>wrath</u>.</i> (1 Thessalonians 1:10)</p>	<p>There should be a distinction between being delivered from God’s eternal wrath (e.g. hell) and avoiding God’s wrath upon the earth during the end-times.</p> <p>It is true that God does not intend for believers to <i>suffer wrath but to receive salvation</i>. Yet this scripture does <u>not</u> state that God’s people will be delivered not only from <u>eternal wrath</u>—but also from all effects of God’s <u>momentary wrath</u>—during the end-times.</p> <p>Clearly, Christians are spared from God’s <u>eternal wrath</u>. Not being children of wrath—refers to our eternal destiny.</p>
<p>Additional scriptures to back up this position:</p> <p><i>At that time 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 <u>at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.</u></i> (Daniel 12:1)</p> <p>(Jesus speaking): “<i>For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect <u>those days will be shortened.</u></i>” (Matthew 24:21-22)</p>	<p>Read in full context—is referring to eternal deliverance—not temporary deliverance from events on earth.</p> <p>Although an argument that all Christians must be removed the entire seven years can be constructed—it is <u>not</u> stated <u>anywhere</u> in scripture.</p>
<p>When the entire world realizes that events foretold in Revelation are actually occurring—they cry out that <i>the great day of God’s wrath has come...</i></p> <p><i><u>They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”</u></i> (Revelation 6:16-17)</p>	<p>“<i>They</i>” includes people who continue to reject God. “<i>They</i>” have no authority to declare when the <i>day of God’s wrath</i> occurs. This is simply a quote that tells us how people are reacting to the situation.</p>