

A Response to Cooper Abrams' Critique of the Pre-Wrath Rapture Position

By Charles Cooper

Although we who advocate the Prewrath Rapture position are certainly open to critical analysis by those who disagree with us, it is especially troubling and sad to see how they attempt to counter our arguments. Cooper Abrams' critique is typical of those who attempt to set the record straight without reading the original sources. How can one attempt to evaluate a position without directly quoting those he is supposed to be correcting? Mr. Abrams does not offer a single direct quote from either Marvin Rosenthal, Robert Van Kampen or Charles Cooper. Hearsay and arguments ad hominem will only appeal to, and satisfy those who may be willingly convinced apart from the benefit of serious study.

Mr. Abrams' paper is an illogical compilation of nonsense. We wrestle with the Scriptures because we know that one man's opinions or presuppositions carry no more weight than those of another man. But he does not offer a detailed explanation of even one passage of Scripture as he attempts to prove the Prewrath position wrong. No one will be convinced by Mr. Abrams' arguments, with the exception of those having a prejudiced view beforehand. In other words, one's mind must be open to discover the truth.

For the reader who takes Scripture for what it clearly states, the following arguments serve to expose the fallacy of Mr. Cooper Abrams' critique of the Prewrath Rapture position: (Paragraphs in red are the quoted material taken directly from Mr. Abrams' paper)

First, **The basic difference is that the Pre-Tribulational view places the Rapture before the coming seven year Tribulation or Daniel's 70th Week. (See Dan. 9:27).**

Now I would like for someone to show me where in Daniel 9:27 it says the rapture precedes Daniel's final week. In fact, pretribbers teach that the church is not mentioned in the Old Testament. What gives pretribbers the right to make this claim? Show me the passage of Scripture that is the basis for this claim. It is a presupposition without any biblical support whatsoever. Daniel 9:27 says absolutely nothing about a rapture. It is strange that someone trying to prove the pretrib position would use a verse totally silent on the matter. This passage only works if one conjures up several presuppositions which simply cannot be proven from this passage in any manner whatsoever.

Second, **The Pre-Wrath view places the rapture of believers as occurring sometime during the middle of the Tribulation.**

This is a clear indication that Mr. Abrams is attempting to prejudice the reader. In no writings of Mr. Rosenthal, Mr. Van Kampen or Charles Cooper has it ever been argued that the rapture occurs during the “middle of the tribulation.” If one is going to argue against the Prewrath position, he or she ought to at least present the position correctly. The Prewrath position is not Midtribulationism. It is totally inaccurate to describe the Prewrath position as midtrib. The Bible never describes or calls Daniel’s final week – “the tribulation”. This is a manmade term that is devoid of biblical support.

Third, **It [the Prewrath position] concludes that believers, of this present Church Age, will experience the beginning years of the Tribulation, but be raptured before God pours His wrath upon the earth.**

Where in Scripture is the final week of Daniel called “the tribulation?” Where in the Bible is this present age called “the church age?” Why does Mr. Abrams continue to use terms and phrases that have no biblical basis? The New Testament explicitly calls this present age – the last days (Acts 2:17). Mr. Abrams defines terms as he likes, but fails to show the biblical basis for his claims. The Prewrath position correctly sees God’s elect experiencing the persecution of Satan and his Antichrist, and the Bible refers to this time as “the Great Tribulation”. (See Rev 7:14)

Fourth, **The view further teaches a split rapture with only some believers being raptured and others left on earth.**

This is tiresome. Where in the writings of those who argue for the Pre-wrath position is it taught that there is going to be a partial rapture of believers? To say that the position teaches a certain idea, but gives no quote or page number or who said it, is the poorest form of scholarship. It is not fair and shows a complete lack of integrity. Where in the writings can such a view be found? This is an assumption that Mr. Abrams makes because pretribblers argue that the rapture occurs before Daniel’s final week begins.

Fifth, **The biblical view of the Pre-Tribulationists is that the whole of the seven years, called the Tribulation, Daniel's 70th Week, or the Time of Jacob's trouble, is a period of God pouring out His wrath.**

A good student of Scripture would demand a book, chapter and verse for such a claim. Notice the absence of this in Mr. Abrams’ writings. Nowhere in Scripture is the final week of Daniel called “the tribulation.” Nowhere in Scripture is the final week of Daniel called “the wrath of God.” Please show me where in the Bible a person finds the evidence to say these things? The time of Jacob’s trouble is equal to the Day of the Lord, which is not the final week of Daniel’s prophecy (See Jer. 31).

Sixth, However, the Book of Revelation teaches the judgments or wrath of God on earth begin at the start of the seven years of Tribulation with the Seal Judgments (Rev. 6:17, 8:1-60)

Please show me where in Rev 6:17 and 8:1ff one can get the evidence to say that the wrath of God is involved in seals one through five. In fact Revelation 6:17 makes clear that the wrath of God does not begin before Revelation 8:1ff. The wicked are running to hide from the Throne-Sitter and the Lamb. If the wrath of God has been falling beginning with seal one, why are the wicked – six seals later – just beginning to run and hide? If seals one through six are the wrath of God, the wicked do not know it until chapter 8. It is hard to imagine that God's wrath has been falling on the earth for six seals before the wicked will know about it. If the rapture of the church occurs before the final week begins, surely the wicked will know that the wrath of God began long before the sixth seal.

If the seals are the wrath of God, then why is God only concerned to protect some of the Jews before the first trumpet judgments. Revelation 7:1-3 indicates that God will protect the first fruits from among the Jews before the trumpet judgments. This seems strange that these individuals who appear to be precious to the Lord are not protected from the seals, but will be protected from the trumpet and bowls.

The Greek language in Revelation 6:17 supports the conclusion that the wrath of God is imminent but still has not actually begun, which is precisely why the wicked are trying to find a hiding place. In the Greek language an aorist verb can indicate an action is just beginning (ingressive); an action has been going on for a long time (historical); an action just happens without emphasis on when it will happen (gnomic); and several other options are possible. It is clear that based upon the actions of the wicked, an ingressive aorist is the correct usage in Revelation 6:17. The wrath of God is imminent, but it has not yet begun. Thus the wicked can still run and attempt to hide. Mr. Abrams' lack of knowledge of the Greek language is evident, which leads him to make observations about the text which are clearly wrong.

Seventh, There are many flaws within the Pre-wrath view. One of its glaring flaws is that it teaches that the Seal Judgments are the wrath of Satan and the Antichrist, or man, and not the judgment or wrath of God. It is their position that Matthew 24:22 is a reference to the "Church" being raptured thus removing believers from the earth and ending their persecution of the Antichrist and Satan.

"And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." (Matthew 24:22)

The first problem with this view is the presumption that Matthew 24:22 is referring to Church Age saints. The Pre-Wrath position is that God will rapture Church Age saints in sometime in the middle of the Tribulation before He begins to pour out His wrath on earth. This view ignores the fact that many people, Jews and Gentiles, will be saved on the earth during the seven year Tribulation. God's purpose in bringing the seven year Tribulation on earth is to fulfill His promises to Israel and purge the earth prior to His setting up the Millennial Kingdom. God will be once again working with the Jews and the Nation of Israel. Matthew 24:20 specifically states that those who are fleeing the persecution of the Antichrist should pray it will not be on the Sabbath. Christians in this age are not under the Mosaic law and do not keep the Sabbath.

"But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day"
(Matthew 24:20)

Where in the Bible are the last days called "the church age?" Again, this is manmade logic. Matthew 24:20 and 22 are clearly written to Jews who will be living in Jerusalem just prior to the beginning of the Great Tribulation. There are messianic Jews living in Jerusalem at this very moment. Jesus was speaking to messianic Jews at the time He gave the Olivet Discourse. What Scripture gives pretribbers the right to make messianic Jews non-members of the Church? Show me what passages of Scripture give pretribbers the authority to say that God is not working with Israel today, or in 1965, or in 1948, or during the destruction of the second temple. Who believes that God has not worked with the Jews since before the destruction of the second temple? Pretribulationists make claims without any substantiation whatsoever. Only those who want to believe it will believe the pretrib position. It is long on claims, but short on Scripture. Matthew 24:20-22 is clearly written to Jews living in Jerusalem. There is nothing in the text to claim that the rapture has already occurred. Show me, if you can. Matthew calls his audience "saints", but pretribbers want to call them "church age believers." What Scripture gives them the authority to do this?

Eighth, Jesus Christ will once again be presented to Israel as the Messiah as the 144,000 saved Jews preach the Gospel around the world... There is nothing in Matthew 24 that refers to Church Age saints. Those saved in the Tribulation are a different group of believers.

Where in the Bible does it say that 144,000 Jews will preach the Gospel around the world? Pretribbers just make this up. Book, chapter and verse please!!!!!! Matthew 24 begins with a prophecy that God will destroy Jerusalem. The fulfillment of that prophecy occurs more than 35 years later according to pretribbers. The destruction of the second temple occurs during the "so-called church age." Now if God could fulfill Matthew 24:3 during the "so-called church age," then he can fulfill other prophecies during this period. This proves that pretribbers are arguing from silence. God can work with the church and national Israel at the same time: he did during

the destruction of the second temple and in 1948, 1965, and he will do it during Daniel's final week.

Where in the Bible does it say that people saved during Daniel's final week are a different group of people from those saved before Daniel's final week?

Ninth, Another error of the Pre-Wrath view is in purporting that the first part of the seven year Tribulation, the Seal Judgments, are not the wrath of God, but the wrath of "man" which means Satan and the Antichrist. Further the Pre-Wrath view concludes that the seal judgments are a time of peace on earth. However, this view ignores a vital truth clearly stated in Revelation 5:12 and 6:1f. These verse plainly state that at the beginning of the seven year Tribulation the wrath and judgment of God begins with the opening of the Seal Judgments by Jesus Christ (the Lamb of Rev. 5:12, 6:16).

No prewrath teacher teaches that the first six seals are a time of peace. Mr. Abrams, please show me in the writings of Rosenthal, Van Kampen, or Cooper where this argument is advanced. Otherwise, you must apologize for misleading your readers. Jesus said clearly that the beginning of Daniel's final week would be marked by wars and rumor of wars. From where, Mr. Abrams, are you getting this stuff? And please show me where in Revelation 5:12 the text says the wrath of God is falling on the earth. Revelation 6:16-17 proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that the wrath of God begins just after the seventh seal is broken. The Greek is clear. It's too bad that Mr. Abrams does not understand the Greek.

If the verses Mr. Abrams refers to **plainly state** what he says, then everyone should be able to read it for themselves. Please show it to me.

Tenth, Clearly, these are not judgments initiated by man or Antichrist, but by the Worthy Lamb of Chapter 5. It is Jesus Christ who opens each of the seals in the first half of the Tribulation and brings God's wrath on the earth.

Where in Scripture are the seals called "judgments"? That Jesus breaks the seals does not necessarily mean that God's wrath is falling on the earth. Clearly, martyrs died during times of persecution on the earth. Is God responsible for the death of His people? Will believers during the final week of Daniel not be able to claim the promises of God's Word to the effect that they will not experience His wrath? It is true that pretribbers do teach that believers during Daniel's final week will not be able to claim God's promises. However, His promises never were, nor will they ever be rescinded. Opening the seals merely authorizes that certain actions can occur, but it does not mean that God is the one directly responsible for the actions committed.

Eleventh, There can be no mistake, the New Testament says in this dispensation of the Church Age, which began at Pentecost (Acts 2) and will continue until the Rapture, believers will not go through wrath the of God. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 deals with instruction concerning the end times and verse 19, gives Christians the promise of God, *"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

It's too bad that those saved after the final week begins will not be able to claim this promise. Those poor believers will have the Bible, but they will not know what to claim and what not to claim. The Bible says believers will not experience God's wrath, but if you are saved after the week begins – that passage does not apply. This is madness! Only Thessalonians living before the final week of Daniel begins can claim this promise. Those saved after the final week begins cannot claim it.

Please notice that up until this point, Mr. Abrams has not given one passage of Scripture that explicitly states his position. Not one book, chapter, or verse supports his claims. Simply stated, Pretribulationism is a presupposition that is not based on Scripture.

Twelfth, The Pre-Wrath advocates say this will be a time of peace on the earth. But Revelation 6:2 states, the Antichrist will be *"going forth to conquer and conquering,"* and this is clearly not a picture of a period of peace.

Jesus teaches in Matthew 24:4-8 that the first half of Daniel's final week will not be troublesome for His people. In fact, He tells those living in Jerusalem not to fear what they hear regarding wars, famines, and earthquakes. So in a real sense, believers will be at peace during the first half of that final week. Jesus says that His people are not to run, hide, or be fearful about the events connected with the beginning of the birth of God's kingdom on earth. It is only at the midpoint that believers will have concerns. He tells those living in Jerusalem to flee when they see the abomination of desolation which everybody knows initiates the second half of Daniel's final week. Therefore, God's people will not be the object of those events which precede the abomination of desolation in the temple of God. I would call that peace for God's people.

Thirteenth, Further it is God, who after the Rapture, stops the present retraining work of the Holy Spirit and allows Satan to go forth bringing destruction on humankind through his control of the Antichrist. In our present dispensation of the Church Age, the Holy Spirit is preventing or restraining Satan from unleashing his destructive wishes on the earth.

Paul reveals this in 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12,

"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall

consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness”.

Where in 2 Thess 2:7-12 does it say that the Holy Spirit is restraining Satan? This is only an assumption; there is no proof of it. Pretribbers make claims but give no explicit Scriptural basis for their claim. Where does Scripture say that the Holy Spirit is restraining evil on the earth at this time? Mr. Abrams makes bold claims but is very short on explicit or even implied Scriptural support.

Fourteenth, The Pre-Wrath view purports that Revelation 6:9-11 is a reference to the Rapture. They preclude that these saints of God are Christians, of the present Church Age, who have been resurrected in the Rapture and are now seen in heaven. This is a serious misinterpretation of this passage.

This is a bold falsehood. Mr. Abrams makes claims, but fails to show where he found these arguments in the writings of Rosenthal, Van Kampen, or Cooper. These writers have never taught that Revelation 6:9-11 is talking about raptured saints. If you are a person who seriously studies God’s Word and you want a good argument against the Prewrath position, Mr. Abrams must not be your source, because he has never read any of the writings on Prewrath. I don’t know where he is getting his information, but it is not from the writings of those who support the Prewrath position.

There is no indication in Revelation 6:9-11 that raptured saints are in view. In fact, it is just the opposite. These people must wait until the rest of those who are to be killed are actually killed. How can these people be raptured saints? It is not fair to claim that a particular position teaches something, but give no proof of it and then try to disprove it. This is called “creating a straw-man”, i.e., the idea of setting something up in order that it can then be knocked down. It is poor scholarship and very sad that some people argue in this manner.

Fifteenth, A carefully and scholarly study of the Book of Revelation shows that between Revelation 3:22 and 19:1 there is no mention of Church Age saints. The events between these two references reveal the progression of the seven year Tribulation until it ends with the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If the basis for truth is the absence of a specific term, in this case the term *church*, then we can say that the rapture occurred before the book of Jude was written, because the term *church* does

not occur in it. So this is an argument from silence. In this entire critique, this is the only accurate argument that Mr. Abrams has made. The term *church* does not appear between Revelation 3:22 and 19:1. Still, I find it interesting that he stopped at Revelation 19:1, because the term does not occur in Revelation 20 either. Is the church absent from the Millennial Kingdom too? By Mr. Abrams' reasoning, it is!

Sixteenth, Another point revealed in this passage and overlooked or ignored by the Pre-Wrath position is that all these saints, both in heaven and on the earth are seen as one group. A part of the group is shown as having been slain and are in heaven. The other part of the group is still on earth and waiting to join the slain saints in heaven, by experiencing their eventual deaths as well at the hands of the Antichrist. Thus is reveal another flaw in the Pre-Wrath view. It has part of believers raptured and part awaiting for the rapture? These cannot be Church Age saints. 1 Thessalonians 4:17 as all believers, both dead and alive raptured and taken to meet the Lord in the air at the same time. Nothing in the New Testament suggests a partial rapture of some believers and others are left behind. Throughout history many believers have been persecuted and killed for their testimony for Christ. But most believers in this dispensation have died naturally and were not martyred. This passage says that every one of this group of saints were martyred for their testimony for the word of God. This plainly is not a reference to the Rapture of believers of the Church Age, but rather to those who believed and were saved in the seven year Tribulation.

This is a textbook example of an argument ad hominem. Nowhere in the writings of those who support the Prewrath position is it taught that the martyrs of Revelation 6 are raptured saints. This whole line of reasoning makes no sense. I cannot offer an argument against it because it just does not make sense. It is pure foolishness.

Seventeenth, Revelation 6:17 completely dispels any validity to the Pre-wrath view stating: "*For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*" The "*great day of his wrath is come,*" clearly is referring to the events that just were previously described. The word "to come" means "as appeared, accompanied, entered or be set." After experiencing these six seal judgments people on earth will be terrified, and thus the answer to the rhetorical question "*who will be able to stand,*" is no man could stand against God's wrath which has just been revealed.

Since I don't know Mr. Abrams personally, I want to be gracious here. If he is a true believer, and I have no reason to believe he is not, then he is a brother in Christ and I must love him and treat him as such, but it is very difficult when he makes claims that are patently false and makes them dogmatically as if he had firm ground on which to stand.

"For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" is what the text says. Now if the text had said, "For the great day of his wrath had come", or "for the great day of his

wrath will have come”, or “for the great day of his wrath came”, maybe Mr. Abrams would have a leg to stand on. However, the Greek text means, “For the great day of his wrath began to come”. The text is not pointing backwards; it points forward. If Mr. Abrams knew the Greek, he would know that the assertions he is making are completely false. The ingressive aorist points forward and not backwards. The action is beginning with the seventh seal, but God’s wrath actually falls at the first trumpet. It’s regrettable that Mr. Abrams built his whole case on a false grammatical conclusion. The Bible exhorts that not many attempt to be teachers, for they shall incur a greater wrath.

Eighteenth, The Pre-Wrath view states that the reason for believers going through part of the Tribulation is that "the church" needs to go through a period of cleansing before the rapture.

Finally, Mr. Abrams wrote something with which I can agree. It’s that Mr. Van Kampen indeed teaches that “the church” will experience the Great Tribulation of Satan and his Antichrist as a means of purifying the Body of Christ. But even if this is not true, it does not render the position untrue, for the purpose of God in allowing the Church to be tested by persecution during the Great Tribulation is the same for both national Israel and the Church.

Conclusion:

If you are a person seriously interested in studying God’s Word, you are honest and would like to have “book, chapter and verse” for what you believe, then get a copy of Mr. Rosenthal’s book (The Prewrath Rapture of the Church), Mr. Van Kampen’s book (The Rapture Question Answered, Plain and Simple) or Charles Cooper’s book (God’s Elect and the Great Tribulation), and read the position for yourself. The only way you will agree with Mr. Abrams’ critique is that you likely have been influenced to believe the Pretrib position, and the truth of Scripture has not been your primary concern. Read the position for yourself. Let your understanding of God’s Word convince you where truth is to be found!