A Review of
Marvin Rosenthal's Book
"The Pre-Wrath Rapture of The Church"

by Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

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A REVIEW OF

THE PRE-WRATH RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

by Marvin Rosenthal

Reviewed by Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum
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This book has a basic two-thrust or double-edged approach. First, it is an attack on Pre-Tribulationism. Second, it is a defense of a new view of the timing of the Rapture, which is, as the title implies, the Pre-wrath Rapture of the Church.

The title of the book and the title of the view is neither ideal nor unique. The fact is that *all* Rapture views are pre-wrath views. Pre-Tribulationism, Mid-Tribulationism and Post-Tribulationism all believe that the Rapture will occur before God pours out His wrath. The disagreement in these views is as to when, in the seventieth week of Daniel, is the wrath of God poured out; i.e, when does the wrath of God begin? The more correct description of Rosenthal's view is the "three-quarter Tribulation" view. By Rosenthal, the Rapture occurs somewhere between the middle and the end of the Tribulation; or, as he would prefer to call it, the seventieth week of Daniel.

The tone of the book is aggressive, as the author feels he has to totally demolish Pre-Tribulationism, and with it is a decisive lack of humility, with pride strongly coming out in various statements in the book, which this review will cite. The work is frequently infested with "braggamony" statements (to coin a word), that are best left for others to state, rather than the author.

The book has already received several reviews which approve it from a thematic approach. This review will be handled in a more chronological approach, in that the reviewer will comment on Rosenthal's view by working through the book page by page. Obviously, not every page can be covered, or this will make the review a book in itself. However, every page where the reviewer feels that Rosenthal has made misstatements and is in error, will be covered.

In a chapter entitled "The Tension and Anguish Surrounding a Consideration of the Timing of the Rapture," Rosenthal states:

> But through many more months of conversation and biblical investigation, something began to happen. I can only describe it by saying that I believe the Spirit of God began to sow a seed of honest inquiry in my heart. Was it possible? Could it be? Notwithstanding my earnestness and sincerity, was I proclaiming a concept which the Bible did not substantiate?

> Was I prescribing a false hope? Could I be dispensing candy-coated pills that tasted good but did no good? And in the doing, was I keeping from God's children a medicine that would truly help? Was I, however unintentionally, misrepresenting a considerable body of truth, truth that God intended to be a catalyst for holy living at all times and of paramount importance for the generation of believers that will, in fact, move into the seventieth week of the book of Daniel? (p. 19)

This is one of the early "braggamony"-type statements. It is always easy to claim that one arrived at his convictions by the Holy Spirit. Many people make this claim, even as they totally contradict each other. It would be wiser (and more humble) to simply state one's convictions and reasons behind it without claiming divine authority or special, direct or indirect revelation. Let others discern if this was truly of the Holy Spirit. Further on, the author makes a passing statement that he develops in a later chapter: that this view is a necessary one to help the saints make it through the first three-quarters of the Tribulation. Rosenthal feels it is *his* view on the timing of the Rapture that is "a catalyst for holy living," especially for the generation entering into the Tribulation. The simple fact is, that the "catalyst for holy living" is what Christ accomplished for us on the cross, and not any particular view of the timing of the Rapture. Throughout the New Testament, where holy living is called for, never is it based on the Rapture, or its timing, but on what God has already done for the believer (e.g., Romans 12:1-2).

Later, in the same chapter, Rosenthal writes:

> By this time I wanted additional help. I wanted an objective evaluation of where I felt our study was leading us, not verification for an approach that was new, still very much incomplete, and with a multitude of loose ends. I solicited that help from a highly qualified Christian leader. His response was an eighty-eight-page refutation of a rough, preliminary document which my businessman friend had prepared.
>
> I was hoping for non-adversarial counsel—counsel I eagerly sought—but that would not be the case. This experience did enable me to see with greater clarity the emotional implications bound up in the Rapture issue—and the almost reflexive defense posture that is often taken when one's view of the Rapture is questioned. The new position being espoused was not, in my opinion, examined for merit. It was attacked out of fear and intimidation. The reviewer shared the fact that he spent two sleepless weeks contemplating the implications of the position being espoused. If it were right, he was wrong. It was that simple. (pp. 20-21)

This reviewer happens to have a copy of the 88-page refutation referred to by Rosenthal, and Rosenthal's evaluation of the motivation behind the refutation is not fair.

Rosenthal claims that he wanted "an objective evaluation," and, in this reviewer's opinion, he got one. But Rosenthal did not like its conclusions and chose to ascribe wrong motivation. This reviewer found in the refutation a concern for where Rosenthal is headed, a concern for theological correctness, as well as the implications for the ministry of the Mission with which both (the writer and Rosenthal) were connected. These were legitimate concerns. Rosenthal claims that the refutation was "adversarial"; however, any work that refutes the position of another is, by its very nature, adversarial. In the mind of this reviewer, the refutation was far less adversarial and far more gentlemanly and gracious than Rosenthal's own work. Rosenthal reduces the issue to: "If it were right, he was wrong. It was that simple." But the reverse is also true: If the writer of the refutation were right, then Rosenthal is wrong. It is that simple! In my reading of both works, I was surprised how many of the cogent arguments in the 88-page paper Rosenthal ignored without even trying to respond. It appears that arguments to the contrary did not matter once Rosenthal made up his mind. This is not good scholarship.

Rosenthal's lack of humility comes out later in the same chapter:

> . . . It is my opinion that if men of absolute neutrality, average intelligence, and belief in the authority of the Word of God were given an ideal presentation of the commonly held Rapture views and the one presented in this book, they would choose the latter because of its simplicity, clarity, logic, and, above all, because it would be seen as the fruit of unstrained, clear, unified, and normative interpretation of the Word of God. But such ideal circumstances do not exist. (pp. 30-31)

One should not miss how Rosenthal categorizes those who accept his view as "men of absolute neutrality, average intelligence, and belief in the authority of the Word of God." So, those who do not accept his view are obviously not neutral, and do not have average intelligence, and do not accept the authority of the Word of God. And, why would they choose only his view? Because his is simple, clear and logical; and the only one resulting from a normal interpretation of Scripture. This is nothing but "braggamony," and a self-serving evaluation of those who agree with him as over against those who disagree with him. Perhaps this reviewer's intelligence is too far below average, but he often had problems following Rosenthal's "logic," and his defense was not always so "clear" on these issues. Rosenthal can learn much from Charles Ryrie, whom he frequently criticizes, about clear thinking. This kind of verbal description seems to be an attempt to intimidate someone into accepting his view, rather than presenting a position that is logical and clear.

Another example of this self-esteem is the following:

> . . . The first statement was, "If Marv stays, his position will eventually dominate the Mission." I thought, *Perhaps he is right, and maybe it is*

> *inappropriate for me to stay*. But it also occurred to me that the comment was an oblique admission to the strength of my position. These were seminary-trained Bible teachers. If the view I espoused had no biblical basis and strength, the concern that it would one day dominate the Mission would not have surfaced. (p. 32)

The reviewer is a mission head himself, has worked for two other missions, and has had close contact with many others. It is simply a natural fact that a leader attracts workers with the same basic frame of reference. It has nothing to do with the strength or weakness of the position. Whoever may have made that statement was only expressing his concern for the doctrinal integrity of the mission; a doctrinal integrity that was the attraction for most of its staff. Now a new group of potential workers could be attracted, making those who joined that mission under a different frame of reference feel very uncomfortable; especially since the director himself is now a supporter of the new view. It is only Rosenthal's own delusion of grandeur that makes him assume that the comment was an "oblique admission" of the strength of his own view. It was more a statement in reference to Rosenthal's strong personality, rather than his strong position.

That same sense of high self-importance and of his own view in the presence of God comes out yet again in the same chapter:

> I write with a great sense of urgency. Conservative, evangelical Christianity, with which I identify, is in grave crisis at the present hour of history. In the church, historic foundations are cracking, values are slipping, humanism is penetrating, and materialism is dominating . . .
>
> The central message of this book—the prewrath Rapture—if heeded by God's servants, could be a catalyst to call them to holiness and genuine revival during this crucial moment of history. (pp. 34-35)
>
> If I am wrong, ten thousand angels arguing my cause would not make it right, and I will have played the fool. If I am right, and one soul for whom Christ died enters the seventieth week of Daniel prepared to be an overcomer, I will be sufficiently rewarded. If that soul refuses the mark of the Antichrist, worships the Son of God only, and remains doctrinally pure like the church of Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13), I will rejoice. (pp. 35-36)

Again, this is *the* view that will provide a catalyst for holy living. But Rosenthal adds a further note. This is *the* view that will prepare one for becoming an overcomer, and *the* view to keep one from receiving the mark of the beast. The implication in all this is that the Pre-Tribulationist—if Rosenthal is right—will be ill-prepared for holy living and the mark of the beast. But again, holy living is not motivated by one's eschatological position. Furthermore, a Pre-Tribulationist would just as easily recognize the mark of the

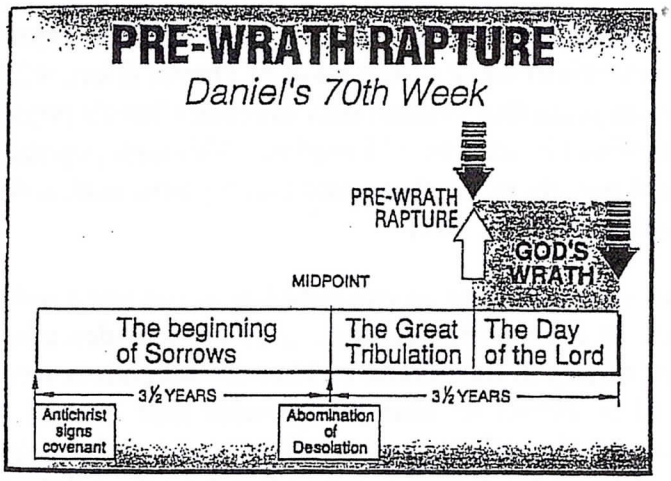
beast as would a Mid-Tribulationist, a Post-Tribulationist, or a three-quarter-Tribulationist. Even if Rosenthal proves to be correct, a Pre-Tribulationist will have plenty of time—at least three and a half years according to Rosenthal's own view—to get ready for the persecution that begins after the mid-point of the seven years. Even the Pre-Tribulationist will know from the time the seven-year covenant is signed, that the seventieth week of Daniel has begun, and he is still here. Whatever the merits of Rosenthal's position may be, to make a claim that it has a special role for holy living and for preparation for the mark of the beast is again a delusion of grandeur. This is not the way one should try to sell his own book.

In a chapter entitled: "The Options of 'When' Laid Out," Rosenthal presents the basis of his position:

> The basic theses of this book are simple:
>
> 1. The Rapture of the church will occur immediately prior to the beginning of the Day of the Lord.
>
> 2. The Day of the Lord commences sometime within the second half of the seventieth week.
>
> 3. The cosmic disturbances associated with the sixth seal will signal the approach of the Day of the Lord.
>
> 4. The Day of the Lord will begin with the opening of the seventh seal (Rev. 8:1)
>
> Everything else will be presented as confirmation of those theses.
>
> The Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24-25) will be a central text. It is the author's contention that the Olivet Discourse is Jewish in character, sequential in progression, logical in argument, parallel to the seals of Revelation 6 in nature, covers the seventieth week of Daniel in scope, answers the dual question concerning the Lord's coming and the end of the age posed by the disciples (which was the catalyst for the Lord's teaching), and encompasses both the Rapture and the return of Christ within its borders. It will also be demonstrated that the seventieth week of Daniel has three major, distinct, and identifiable periods of time: the "beginning of

sorrows," the Great Tribulation, and the Day of the Lord—all found in the Olivet Discourse.

The prewrath rapture is charted below. (pp. 60-61)



Absolutely essential to Rosenthal's view are the following points. *First*, that the "Day of the Lord" does not encompass the whole seven years, but only the last quarter or so. *Second*, that the Tribulation does not encompass all seven years; and also, that the "Great Tribulation" (which some, but not all Pre-Tribulationists apply to the second three and a half years) does not encompass all of the three and a half years, but only about a quarter (the final quarter) of the seven years, or about half of the second half of this period. *Third*, that the seventieth week of Daniel is not comprised of two equal halves, but of three distinct periods: The "beginning of sorrows" (the whole of the first half); the Great Tribulation (the third quarter); and the Day of the Lord (the fourth quarter). *Fourth*, the Rapture will take place between the third and fourth quarters. *Fifth*, the sixth seal, the seven trumpet judgments and the seven bowl judgments all take place in the last quarter of the Tribulation.

Rosenthal then tries to fit Scripture into the mold presented in this chapter. The validity of this position will be critiqued as the review continues. But, as a preliminary observation, Rosenthal's view will totally collapse if certain crucial points are made: if it can be shown that the Day of the Lord covers more than just the last quarter of the seven years; that the Bible views the seven years as being two parts, not three parts; that the wrath of God is not limited to the fourth quarter of the seven years; and that the seventh trumpet and the seven bowl judgments cover a greater period of time than the last quarter of the seven years. Rosenthal brings in corollary evidence, such as the seven churches and the "last trump," which he forces into his scheme; and these, too, will be critiqued as we come to them.

The next relevant chapter is entitled, "And What of the Tribulation Period?" Here Rosenthal tries hard to do away with some common terminology.

> The designation *the tribulation period* should properly be omitted from any honest consideration of the time of the Rapture of the church. The term *tribulation period* is normally used by pretribulation rapturists as a synonym for the seventieth week of the book of Daniel (Dan. 9:27); that is, to describe the seven years that immediately precede Christ's physical return to the earth to establish His millennial kingdom. Although popular and used by many competent preachers, teachers, and theologians, such a designation has no biblical justification. (p. 103)

> A clear fact emerges from an examination of the word *tribulation* as used in the Bible. In a prophetic context, it is used to describe only the period of time that begins in the *middle* of Daniel's seventieth week—never of the first half of it. *Based on that indisputable fact, to call the entire seven-year time frame the tribulation period is to coin a technical phrase and superimpose it upon the Scriptures, reading into the biblical text that which it does not itself declare.* (p. 105)

Rosenthal's points are: first, the seven years should not be called the Tribulation; and, second, the Tribulation begins only in the middle of the seven years. He cites passages in the Olivet Discourse where the term "tribulation" is used and concludes:

> . . . Of the four times the Lord spoke of *tribulation* in a prophetic context, He was speaking of the Great Tribulation which begins in the middle of Daniel's seventieth week—precisely three and one-half years into it. (p. 105)

However, Rosenthal ignored Matthew 24:9, which he places in a prophetic context, and which he places in the first half of the seven years. That verse uses "tribulation" in reference to the first half of the seven years! Rosenthal totally contradicts himself, and one wonders whether he merely missed seeing the word in Matthew 24:9, or deliberately chose to ignore it since it totally devastates his argument in this chapter. Rosenthal claims that using the designation "tribulation" for the first half "has no biblical justification"; but obviously it does. Rosenthal dogmatizes that the usage of the term is only for what "begins in the *middle* of Daniel's seventieth week," and is an "indisputable fact." It is not at all indisputable, even based on his own outline of Matthew 24.

Was this only an oversight? With as much work as Rosenthal does on Matthew 24 in the book, it seems unlikely that he merely missed it. This reviewer believes that Rosenthal betrays himself when he writes:

> ". . . What's the difference if it is called the seventieth week of the book of Daniel or the Tribulation period?" The answer to that question is, it means a great deal. If the seventieth week of Daniel is inappropriately given the technical designation the Tribulation period, and believers are reminded that they are "not appointed . . . to wrath" (I Thess. 5:9), that they are "saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5:9), and that they "are not in darkness, that that day should overtake [them] as a thief" (I Thess. 5:4), an *a priori* case is built for pretribulation rapturism on a false foundation. If the seventieth week is the Tribulation period, or "the time of wrath," and God's people are exempt from "wrath," the matter is settled. But such an argument is both unbiblical and illogical and cannot be allowed to stand.
>
> If, in fact, the first three and one-half years are not part of the Tribulation period and God's wrath does not start, as pretribulationists assume, at the beginning of the seventieth week of Daniel but considerably further into it, they have built their argument on a foundation that will crumble.
>
> . . . The use of the phrase *tribulation period* (coined by men but not justified in the Bible) creates, at the very least, a built-in bias for pretribulationism. (pp. 106-107)

There you have it. Rosenthal does not like the term "tribulation" used for the first three and a half years, for it automatically creates a bias for Pre-Tribulationism. But Matthew 24:9 *does* use it for the first half. Furthermore, he states that the term "tribulation period" is a term "coined by men but not justified in the Bible," and the reason he does not like it is because it has a "built-in bias for pretribulationism." However, Rosenthal does here what he will often do in his book: be guilty of the very thing he accuses others of. Rosenthal's own view is labeled as: "The Pre-wrath Rapture of the Church." But that, too, is man-made and not found in Scripture. This is one of those times when Rosenthal tries to disprove Pre-Tribulationism, failing to see that the same argument discredits his own view.

As to what the term means, Rosenthal claims:

> In each instance where the *Great Tribulation* is used in a prophetic setting, it always refers to the persecution of God's elect by wicked men,

> never to the wrath of God being directed toward mankind. Prophetically, therefore, the Great Tribulation speaks of man's wrath against man, not God's wrath against man. (p. 105)

Basic to Rosenthal's position is that the Tribulation is only what man does to man, not what God does to man, a point that we will come back to later.

Rosenthal wants to make the first half of the seven years not part of the Tribulation, or Great Tribulation, but only "the beginning of sorrows." He tries to parallel Matthew 24:4-8 with the first five seals of Revelation six, but there are three basic problems. *First*, the similarities are quite superficial and the differences outnumber the similarities. Nowhere in Matthew does it mention a destruction of humanity, and there is no mention of martyred saints. Revelation does not mention the fact of many deceivers, while Matthew does not mention the Antichrist. There are other dissimilarities as well. *Second*, even if there were a greater level of similarities, it would not prove his point since similarity does not mean sameness, and a more exact linguistic correlation than found in the two texts is necessary to prove sameness. *Third*, Rosenthal has not actually proved that verses 4-8 are part of the seven years. He merely assumes it to be true and cites Pre-Tribulationalists who agree with him. But verses 4-8 can also refer to prophetic events preceding the seven years, with the seven years only beginning at verse nine. Regardless, Rosenthal builds his three-fold division of the seven years on a very tenuous foundation.

To claim, as Rosenthal does, that the first five seals are not the wrath of God but only the wrath of man is to try to force his position on the text. The fact is that all seven seals are broken by Christ; the first five seals are as much a part of "the wrath of the Lamb" as are the last two. Furthermore, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse in the first four seal judgments are initiated by the four living creatures; so these judgments not only concern "man's activity under the controlling influence of Satan." To claim that these seals are only describing the wrath of men goes contrary to the context, since all the seal judgments originate in heaven. In fact, the very damage that they do is described in the Old Testament as resulting from the wrath of God. For example, the seal judgments mention four things: death by sword (Rev. 6:7-8); famine (6:5-6, 8); wild animals (6:8); and pestilence and plague (6:8). Ezekiel 14:21 states:

> *For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the evil beasts, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast!*

While all four things could be said to be what man does to man, yet it is clearly God who sends all four of these things. The wrath of man may be involved, but not to the exclusion of the wrath of God. That these four things all result from the wrath of God is clearly

stated in Ezekiel 14:19. Other references to God sending these four things as part of divine judgment include:

SWORD - Leviticus 26:25; Deuteronomy 28:22, 25-26; 32:25; II Chronicles 29:8-9; 36:16-17; Jeremiah 15:2-3; 16:4; 19:7; 44:12-13; Ezekiel 5:12, 17; 6:11-12; 7:14-15; 33:27; 38:19.

FAMINE - Leviticus 26:26; Deuteronomy 11:17; 28:23-24, 38-42; 32:24; Jeremiah 15:2; 16:4; 19:9; Ezekiel 4:16-17; 5:12, 17; 6:11-12; 7:14-15.

WILD ANIMALS - Leviticus 26:26; Deuteronomy 32:24; Jeremiah 15:3; 16:4; Ezekiel 5:17; 33:27; 39:4.

PESTILENCE - Leviticus 26:25; Numbers 11:33; 16:46; 25:6-11; Deuteronomy 28:21-22, 27, 35, 59-61; Jeremiah 15:2; 21:6-7; 44:12-13; Ezekiel 15:12, 16-17; 6:11-12; 7:14-15; 38:22.

To claim so dogmatically, as Rosenthal does, that the first five seals have nothing to do with the wrath of God is to do three things: *first*, it is to ignore the Bible's own statements on the matter; *second*, it is to force one's preconceived view on the passage; *third*, it is to set up an artificial dichotomy, that if it is the wrath of God, it is a direct judgment; but if it comes through human agency, it is not divine judgment. Nothing is further from the truth. In Revelation 17:16-18, John says it is God who divinely judges the Harlot of Babylon, but this destruction is done by human agency.

As all the above references clearly show, the things in the first five seals are all part of the wrath of God. To put the Rapture any time after the fifth or sixth seals would *not* be a pre-wrath Rapture.

Not only does Rosenthal not want the term "tribulation" applied to the first half of the seven years, he does not want it applied to all of the second half either; only to the third quarter:

> But now another crucial issue arises: Does the Word of God teach that the Great Tribulation is three and one-half years in duration, as pretribulation rapturism insists? Or is that an unfounded assumption with no biblical justification? The Lord, in His Olivet Discourse, spoke of the coming Great Tribulation which would begin in the middle of Daniel's seventieth week (Matt. 24:21). In the next verse He declared, "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matt. 24:22). A normative understanding of the Lord's teaching is quite clear. The only possible antecedent to "except those days be shortened" is the Great Tribulation. The

> Lord is teaching that the Great Tribulation will be cut short. The exact same truth is taught in the gospel of Mark: "For in those days shall be affliction (tribulation), such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be" (Mark 13:19). Again this truth is presented, *"And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days"* (Mark 13:20). Once more, it is the Great Tribulation that is shortened. . . .
>
> This, then, is clear. The entire seventieth week is not shortened. The last three and one-half years of that seventieth week are not shortened. What the Lord Himself teaches is shortened is the Great Tribulation. It is less than three and one-half years in duration. It begins in the middle of the seventieth week, but it does not run until the end of the seventieth week.
>
> The Great Tribulation will be cut short for "the elect's sake" (Matt. 24:22). In light of this truth, the Lord's teaching regarding His return takes on added significance. "Immediately after the tribulation [Great Tribulation] of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give its light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:29-30). The Lord is speaking of an event (cosmic disturbance) which occurs after the Great Tribulation but *before* the end of the seventieth week. (pp. 108-110)

This is a good example of reading one's position into the text. Rosenthal sees the second half (42 months) as containing two distinct parts: the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. Therefore, the Tribulation is not the entire second half, but only the third quarter. Rosenthal cannot avoid the fact that the seven years must last a full seven years, and also that the second half must last a full three and a half years; therefore, in Rosenthal's view, "the Great Tribulation" is shortened to about 21 months. What this means is that as far as the Book of Revelation is concerned, then, this does not leave much space for the Great Tribulation, limiting it all to the time of the fifth and sixth seals only. It would mean that this major New Testament book on prophecy devotes very little space to the Great Tribulation.

However, that is not the only option, or even the best option for the meaning of Matthew 24:22 and Mark 13:20. The context of that verse (Matt. 24:15-22; Mark 13:14-20) is dealing with the persecution of the Jews, instigated by the Abomination of Desolation which occurs at the mid-point of the seven years; and Matthew 24:15 reminds the hearer that it is the same one spoken of by Daniel the Prophet (Dan. 9:27; 12:11). This

persecution of the Jews will be worse than anything they have ever suffered in the past, and never will they suffer anything like this again. In fact, if God did not at some point put a stop to this persecution, no Jews would survive. And so God will bring the period of persecution to a stop. What is being "shortened" is the persecution period so as to allow the Jews to survive. Now comes a question: How long is this period of Jewish persecution to last? Is it only 21 months? Only one quarter: the third quarter of the seven years? On the contrary; the period of persecution of the Jews, which is the context of Matthew 24:15-22 and Mark 13:14-20, is exactly three and one-half years, the second half of the seven years. This is twice stated in Daniel (Dan. 9:27; 12:5-7)—and it is Daniel who gave the beginning point of the persecution as being the Abomination of Desolation. It is this very point that Jesus picked up (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14) and gave it as a sign for the Jews to flee the land. The Book of Revelation also gives the timing of Jewish persecution as being three and one-half years (12:6, 13-14), even specifying that it will be exactly 1,260 days. Obviously, the period of Jewish persecution is not being "shortened," and neither is the rest of the Great Tribulation being "shortened" since here, in the Olivet Discourse, the two are contemporaneous. So, what is being "shortened"? As Rosenthal himself noted in the above quotation, the word can also have the meaning of "cut short." That is the meaning here. In other words, the period of Jewish persecution and the period of "great tribulation" for the Jews will be suddenly cut short in the sense that it will not be allowed to continue even one day beyond its allotted time. God will allow the Antichrist to persecute Jews for exactly 1,260 days, and not one second beyond that. Once the last second comes, it will be suddenly cut short for the sake of Jewish survival. In fact, Mark's Greek tense (13:20) speaks of this shortening as already having taken place; as an accomplished fact. There is no exegetical requirement to make the shortening mean that the persecution will last for a shorter time than three and a half years. Nothing in the passage indicates that the term "shortening" actually means less than three and a half years. Only Rosenthal's preconceived need to divide the second half into two parts introduces an unnatural meaning to the text.

Not only has Rosenthal failed to prove that the term "tribulation" cannot be used for the first half of the seven years, he has also failed to prove that the term is limited to the third quarter, and is not applicable to the fourth quarter. Using the term "tribulation" for the whole seven years is not without biblical justification as Rosenthal claims (p. 103). Also, as quoted earlier, Rosenthal claimed that the term *Great Tribulation* "always refers to the persecution of God's elect . . ." (p. 105). As has just been shown, this persecution is to last a full 1,260 days and, therefore, using Rosenthal's own logic and definition (without inferring its correctness), the Great Tribulation is to last the full second half of the seven years, and this will terminate with the second coming. The conditions of the Tribulation simply cannot be limited to one-fourth of the seven-year period. One more point can be made. There is a clear linguistic parallel between Daniel 12:1 and Matthew 24:21:

> *And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.*
>
> *. . . For then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be.*

Both are talking about the same distress, for both speak of it in the same way, as the worst that will ever come upon the earth. Matthew refers to the period as the "great tribulation." Daniel 12:5-7 presents the length of that period, which is exactly three and a half years. Revelation 12:6 and 14 also correlates with Daniel and Matthew, and states that it is both three and a half years and 1,260 days. All this shows that the Great Tribulation for the Jews will not be shortened to less than that period, but cut short so as to not go beyond that period.

Later in the same chapter, Rosenthal states:

> The following facts cannot be set aside: (1) The Great Tribulation begins in the middle of the seventieth week, but it does not run to the end of that week. It is cut short. (2) *Immediately* after the Great Tribulation, there will be cosmic disturbances; these phenomena will signal the coming of the Son of Man from heaven. (3) This coming commences *before* the end of the seventieth week, and is consummated after the end of the seventieth week (Rev. 19:11). For pretribulationism to be sustained there must be *another* coming at the beginning of the seventieth week. Evidence for such an event is simply nonexistent. It will later be demonstrated that following the cosmic disturbances (the sixth seal, Rev. 6:12-14), the Lord's coming from heaven will be for the purpose of rapturing the church before the Day of the Lord's wrath begins with the opening of the seventh seal. (p. 110)

As has just been shown, Rosenthal's first point can easily be set aside since he presupposes his position in interpreting the text. His second point is certainly correct, except that these cosmic disturbances take place after the second half of the seven years. His third point also presupposes his position. But at this point, Rosenthal criticizes Pre-Tribulationism for requiring another coming of Jesus before the seven years commence and insists that "evidence for such an event is simply nonexistent." Rosenthal seems to have a blind spot, in that his system requires the very same concept. According to that section, the Rapture of the Church to meet Christ in the air takes place at the three-quarter point, and the return of Christ to the earth takes place at the end of the fourth quarter. No

matter what semantics Rosenthal may use, his system requires the Rapture and the second coming to be two separate events, separated by a period of time. The only disagreement between Pre-Tribulationism and Three-quarter Tribulationism is how much time there actually is in between.

Towards the end of the chapter, Rosenthal writes:

> The shortening of the Great Tribulation to less than three and one-half years is one of the most important truths to be grasped if the chronology of the end-time events is to be understood. It literally is the key that reveals the sequence to Matthew 24-25 and the chronology of the book of Revelation with the opening of the seals, trumpets and bowls. Because pretribulation rapturists do not recognize the cutting short of the Great Tribulation (i.e., making it less than three and one-half years), they are logically forced to place the sixth seal at the end of the seventieth week in their interpretation of Matthew 24:22, if they are consistent, and are then faced with the unsolvable dilemma of what to do with the trumpet and bowl judgments of the book of Revelation which arise out of the opening of the seventh seal. It is, above all else, for that reason that a logical, unforced, chronological unfolding of Revelation has evaded pretribulational, premillennial commentators and, in large measure, is the explanation for the fact that the last book of the Bible has largely remained an unsolvable riddle for students of the Word to this very hour. (pp. 111-112)

It is Rosenthal himself who states that the shortening of the Great Tribulation is crucial to his position, and much of his system stands or falls on this one point alone; a point already dealt with. After assuming his position to be absolutely proven, he then forces a view on Pre-Tribulationalism and does exactly what he claimed he would not do: use a straw man argument. According to Rosenthal, since Pre-Tribulationalists fail to see the Great Tribulation as not extending to the end of the seven years, "they are logically forced to place the sixth seal at the end of the seventieth week in their interpretation of Matthew 24:22, if they are consistent, and are then faced with the unsolvable dilemma of what to do with the trumpet and bowl judgments of the book of Revelation which arise out of the opening of the seventh seal." This reviewer, a Pre-Tribulationalist, never knew he had such a position! Nor does he have it now, in spite of Rosenthal's wishes. The reviewer's own work (*The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*; published in 1982 and now in its third printing), put the sixth seal in the middle of the first half of the seven years and has not had any "unsolvable dilemma" as to what to do with the trumpets and bowl judgments. It is Rosenthal's assumption that Pre-Tribulationism can only put the sixth seal at the end of the seventieth week, and it is a totally unwarranted assumption. Rosenthal here attributes a problem for Pre-

Tribulationalists which is simply not a problem. There is no exegetical necessity to connect the sixth seal with Matthew 24:22.

Rosenthal then again resorts to self-aggrandizement. He claims that a proper understanding of the Book of Revelation has escaped Bible students "to this very hour." The implication is that only his view will unlock the mystery of the book. But this reviewer has not had any trouble understanding Revelation or teaching it. Nor have this reviewer's students, as their response has shown. There is very basic and substantial agreement among Pre-Tribulationists as to the meaning of the Book of Revelation. The book is not a mystery to everyone else, and only revealed to Marvin Rosenthal, and all based on realizing that the Great Tribulation will not extend to the end of the seven years.

In a chapter entitled "And Then the Day of the Lord," Rosenthal argues against the common view that the term "Day of the Lord" includes the Millennium. Many have assumed this, based on the common use in the Old Testament of the phrase "in that day," which speaks of both the Tribulation and the Millennium. Many have assumed that "in that day" is equivalent to the "Day of the Lord," and so include both the seven and the one thousand years in it. While it is true that "in that day" includes both a time of judgment (Tribulation) and a time of blessing (Millennium), the same is not true of the "Day of the Lord" which in every context is always judgment and is never found in a millennial context. Blessings, however, could be found in the context of judgment, but these are not millennial blessings. The "Day of the Lord" does not include the Millennium, and on this point Rosenthal is correct. This was the reviewer's own position in the work cited earlier. In his defense, however, Rosenthal does make a major blunder, showing he is not always careful with the text: "The prophets . . . spoke of the Day of the Lord with the definite article—they knew of only one such event" (p. 129). As anyone in first-year Hebrew class would know, never, in any of the appearances of the term in the Hebrew Bible, is it used with the definite article. He is obviously relying only on an English translation; yet he uses this as evidence of his own position. Even if the definite article was there, it would not, by itself, prove his point, for the use of the definite article in Hebrew and Greek—or in English, for that matter—never means that there is only one thing which this term could refer to. Rosenthal is guilty of a linguistic flaw.

However, Rosenthal wants to limit the "Day of the Lord" to the last quarter of the seven years, insisting that it cannot be applied to the whole seven years, or even to that part Rosenthal calls the Great Tribulation: the third quarter. But, the facts are, the Day of the Lord cannot be limited to only the last quarter, and actually covers the whole seven-year period. How the Day of Jehovah affects the Gentiles is detailed in Isaiah 2:12-22; 13:6-16; Ezekiel 30:1-9; Joel 1:15-20; Obadiah 10-20; Zephaniah 1:14-18; and, II Peter 3:10-12. How the Day of Jehovah affects Israel is given in Ezekiel 13:1-7; Joel 2:1-11; 3:14-17; Amos 5:18-20; and, Zephaniah 1:7-13. It is mere assumption to limit all this to the last quarter.

Later in the same chapter, Rosenthal focuses on "the last trump":

> . . . The apostle Paul gives the timing for the Rapture of the church. Writing to the Corinthians he said, "Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" (I Cor. 15:51-52). In context, Paul is not simply speaking about resurrection but of the believer's future glorified body and the fact that one generation will escape physical death by rapture. That Rapture will occur at the last trump. The last trump is the final outpouring of God's wrath.
>
> A cursory examination of the book of Revelation will indicate that all seven trumpets are contained in the seventh seal, and the seven bowls are contained in the seventh trumpet. Therefore, the trumpets and bowls are contained in the seventh seal. They are a comprehensive whole, the final wrath of God—the last trump. (pp. 131-132)

This is a point Rosenthal will come back to in a later chapter. Here, he defines "the last trump" as being "the final outpouring of God's wrath." But, in neither passage on the Rapture (I Cor. 15:50-58; I Thess. 4:13-18), where the trumpet is mentioned, is it connected with God's wrath. While the trumpets of Revelation are connected with God's judgment, even Rosenthal does not try to connect "the last trump" with the seventh trumpet of Revelation, as Mid-Tribulationists and Post-Tribulationists often do. Rather, he makes "the last trump" to include "a comprehensive whole," which includes the seventh seal, the seven trumpets and the seven bowls. Here again, Rosenthal is reading his position into the text. The seventh seal, the seven trumpets and the seven bowls are events that will take a great number of months to complete (the fifth trumpet judgment alone lasts for five months). But "the last trump" is quite instantaneous; it is "in a moment," to use Paul's own words. There is no exegetical basis for connecting "the last trump" with the long, drawn out process of the seventh seal, the seven trumpets and the seven bowls. Nor is there any reason to assume that the trumpet at the Rapture is connected with the final outpouring of God's wrath. No wrath is mentioned in either passage. Furthermore, the trumpet is used in strictly blessing contexts as well. According to Isaiah 27:12-13, it will be the sound of a great trumpet that will signal the final regathering and restoration of regenerate Israel. Here is another example where Rosenthal interprets a passage based on the assumption that his view is proved and, therefore, it is read into the passage.

In a chapter entitled "Cosmic Disturbance," the author again deals with the Day of the Lord. How important the issue is to him is made clear in the opening statement.

> The issue developed in this chapter is crucial. It deals with a main artery leading directly to the heart of the rapture issue. It will be

> demonstrated that if the Day of the Lord does not start at the beginning of the seventieth week of Daniel, pretribulation rapturism is fatally flawed. It is not a matter of a hole in the dike that can be plugged—it is a veritable flood that cannot be averted. If, on the other hand, as the thesis of this book contends, the Day of the Lord starts with the opening of the seventh seal, then it will be seen that the church must enter the seventieth week of Daniel, there to experience the testing and then deliverance by rapture before the Day of the Lord begins. (p. 137)

One need not take Rosenthal's bold statement too seriously. Pre-Tribulationism does not stand or fall upon the issue of when the Day of the Lord actually begins in relation to the seven years. Rosenthal states the issue in such either/or terms because he is looking for evidence of his position. In this chapter, he again will use straw-man arguments. He will also tend to make a view held by some Pre-Tribulationists germane to the system; which it need not be. The following is one example:

> The vast majority of pretribulational writers believe that the Day of the Lord will begin with the Rapture of the church—that it will encompass the entire seventieth week and beyond. (p. 138)

True; some do. But some do not. The reviewer does not start the Day of the Lord with the Rapture, but with the signing of the seven-year covenant. Nor does he place the Day of the Lord beyond the seven years. However, neither position actually effects Pre-Tribulationism, though Rosenthal obviously wishes that it did.

The straw-man approach is seen again in the following statement:

> The Scriptures do not allow that kind of extended gap between the Rapture and the Day of the Lord judgment. The Word of God teaches that the Day of the Lord wrath will commence immediately the church is raptured. In a classic Second Coming text, the Lord taught, "For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven, so shall also the Son of man be in his day" (Luke 17:24). The phrase "in his day" is a clear reference to the Day of the Lord. In this connection the Lord said, "And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until *the day* that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all" (Luke 17:26-27). The point of the Lord's teaching is clear. Noah entered the ark, then the judgment began—on the same day. For emphasis, the Lord gave another illustration of the same truth: "But the *same day* that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all" (Luke 17:29). On the same day that Lot fled Sodom, the Lord judged

> Sodom. That this deliverance of the righteous and immediate judgment of the wicked are used to illustrate the Second Coming there can be no doubt. The Lord's next words were, "Even thus shall it be in *the day* when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:30).
>
> Deliverance of the righteous immediately precedes judgment of the wicked. To postulate a period of time between rapture (deliverance) and wrath (judgment) is to contradict the Scriptures. (pp. 139-140)

The straw-man approach is Rosenthal's insistence that Pre-Tribulationists have to have the Rapture take place just before, or at the start of, the seventieth week of Daniel. Some Pre-Tribulationists have taught this. Many have not; and that has never been this reviewer's position. Rosenthal is simply trying to force a position on all Pre-Tribulationists so that he huffs and puffs to prove his own position. Pre-Tribulationism simply means that the Rapture will come sometime before the seven years begin. It may come just before; it could come many years before. While there are signs for the Tribulation (the seven-year period), and prerequisites for the seventieth week of Daniel to begin, there are no such signs or prerequisites for the Rapture. Rosenthal insists that "The Scriptures do not allow that kind of extended gap between the Rapture and the Day of the Lord judgment." That is nothing but a dogmatic statement which has neither the force of logic nor Scripture to support it, to use Rosenthal's own framed phraseology. Where in Scripture does it say that the Day of the Lord immediately follows the Rapture? Neither of the two central passages on the Rapture say that. Nor does any other. One should note that Rosenthal does not provide a single passage that actually says that the Day of the Lord immediately follows the Rapture. His evidences are all based either on analogy or presupposition, not on exegesis.

An example: the author cites Luke 17:24 and dogmatically asserts that "in his day" must refer to the Day of the Lord; and he insists that this is a "clear reference" to that effect. This is a case of presupposition, since the Day of the Lord has not been mentioned in the preceding context. It is Rosenthal himself who has shown that the common phrase "in that day" does not always refer to the "Day of the Lord"; and the same thing holds true right here: "in his day" need not refer to the Day of the Lord, and the context does not demand it, nor does it even imply it. The verse is clearly speaking about the second coming itself, which will be seen everywhere. "In his day" is a clear reference to the day of the second coming and not a return to a period of time known as the Day of the Lord, whether that period includes the entire seven years or the last 21 months.

The analogy Rosenthal uses is that of Noah and Lot. In the day that Lot left Sodom the city was destroyed; and in the day that Noah entered into the ark, the flood came. Rosenthal states: "Noah entered the ark, then the judgment began—on the same day." The statement is correct for Lot, and the text does teach that Sodom was destroyed the same day Lot left Sodom. But, the statement is *not* true in reference to Noah. Luke 17:27

simply states *that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.* There is nothing Jesus said that implies that the judgment came "on the same day" that Noah entered the ark. In fact, Genesis 7:10 states that the waters of the flood began seven days *after* Noah entered the ark, and continued forty days. The flood did not come the same day that Noah entered the ark, nor was all flesh destroyed in that day. So, Rosenthal's own analogy breaks down. Just as there was a period of time between Noah entering the ark and the start of the rain, so there can also be a period of time between the Rapture and the start of the seven years. Once Noah entered the ark and the door was closed, no one else could enter, but were subject to the judgment whenever it came. Once the Rapture takes place, the door is closed, and no one else is taken up. Those left behind are subject to judgment. But one more point: even if the rain did begin the same day Noah entered the ark, one does not prove doctrine by analogy, for a Pre-Tribulationist can himself use the analogy of Noah to show a time between the Rapture and the seven years. An analogy, like a parable, can be used to illustrate doctrine; but one does not derive doctrine from parables and analogies. Even if Rosenthal can prove (and he cannot) that the rain began the same day Noah entered the ark, he has proven nothing about the timing of the Rapture, and God does not have to do the same thing in the same way each time. Rosenthal needs a passage that clearly states that the Day of the Lord immediately follows the Rapture, and this he does not have. Instead, he resorts to analogy, and resorts to forcing a position on Pre-Tribulationism that is anything but true, or germane to the system.

When Rosenthal cites Luke 17:30, he even misses the point of his own analogy! Jesus is describing what will be the "days" of the Son of man, using a plural, not a singular (Luke 17:22). The question pertains to: what will world society be like, and be doing when the climactic changes take place? Jesus answers that society will be eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. This was true in "the *days* of Noah" (Luke 17:25-27) and in the "*days* of Lot" (Luke 17:28-29). In verse 30, when the phrase is used *after the same manner*, it is *not* a reference to judgment coming immediately after deliverance, but it is a reference to the practice of eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. That is the real point of the analogy in its own context, and not what Rosenthal wishes to teach: judgment immediately follows rescue.

Rosenthal's concluding statement, "Deliverance of the righteous immediately precedes judgment of the wicked," is strictly a fallacy. Rosenthal's comment that "To postulate a period of time between rapture (deliverance) and wrath (judgment) is to contradict the Scriptures," is patently untrue, and *none* of the passages cited by Rosenthal prove this bold assertion. Rosenthal intends to assert this so as to prove Pre-Tribulationism wrong and his own view right. He wants to insist that Pre-Tribulationism requires the Rapture to take place immediately before, or at the beginning of, the seven years. This is *not* a biblical, theological or exegetical necessity for Pre-Tribulationism.

Later in the same chapter, Rosenthal insists that the first six seal judgments have nothing to do with the wrath of God:

> . . . Nor can it be demonstrated that the opening of the seals reflects an outpouring of God's wrath. Not until the opening of the sixth seal, which initiates cosmic disturbance, does God begin to actively intervene in the affairs of men. With the opening of the seventh seal His wrath is about to commence. (pp. 140-141)
>
> . . . What is conspicuous by its absence on the part of those who advance the view that the seals are God's judgment, is any convincing explanation of the first and fifth seals. The first seal depicts a white horse and rider (Rev. 6:1-2). Dispensational pretribulationists have consistently and almost universally interpreted the emergence of this horse and rider to represent the Antichrist who will first conquer by deception (Matt. 24:5; Rev. 6:2). If the second, third, and fourth seals are attributed to God, so also must the first one be. If the seals are God's wrath, then God alone must take direct responsibility for a counterfeit religious system and the emergence of the Antichrist, for that is precisely what the first seal depicts.
>
> To attribute the emergence of the Antichrist to God is obviously preposterous. . . . To suggest that the first four seals are God's wrath is totally unfounded. It strains reason to think that once God begins His Day of the Lord wrath, the Antichrist is able to assume control of the world.
>
> But what of the fifth seal? It cannot be omitted from this discussion. When the fifth seal is opened, it depicts the martyrdom of a believing remnant who have not bowed to the Antichrist. . . . If the seals are God's wrath, then He is responsible for the martyrdom of His own faithful children, those who refuse to give their allegiance to the Antichrist and thereby forfeit their lives. Impossible, you say. That is correct. The very testimony of the martyrs settles the matter. They pleaded for divine retribution against their persecutors. That is another reason why the seals cannot be God's wrath, and the Day of the Lord cannot begin at the beginning of the Tribulation period.
>
> . . . pretribulationism suggests that in the book of Revelation it is the Lamb of God who takes the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sits upon the throne (Rev. 5:6-7). The scroll, as it is opened, brings to fruition the seventieth week of Daniel. Since it is the Lamb alone who has the right to open the scroll and loose the seals thereof (Rev. 5:9), the entire tribulation period is the outpouring of His wrath.

> This argument totally ignores the distinction between God's active will and permissive will, both of which are equally under His sovereign control. (pp. 142-143)

What Rosenthal is struggling to prove (as his chart on page 141 shows), is this:

MAJOR PREMISE:	The Rapture takes place just before the Day of the Lord (which is the wrath of God).
MINOR PREMISE:	The Day of the Lord begins only at the last quarter or so of the seven years.
CONCLUSION:	The Rapture cannot take place at the beginning of the seven years, but only at the beginning of the fourth quarter.

As in any syllogism, the conclusion is only valid if the major premise is valid. But, as has been stated, there is nothing in Scripture that says the Rapture immediately precedes the Day of the Lord. Even if it is granted (and it is not) that the Day of the Lord begins in the middle, or in the last quarter, this does not rule out a Rapture some time before the seven years; especially if even the first half is referred to as "tribulation," as it is in Matthew 24:9.

Now, what about the first six seals? Rosenthal insists that they are not part of the wrath of God; nor are they part of the judgment of God, but only show what men do to men. It is hard to escape the conclusion that Rosenthal must do all kinds of exegetical gymnastics to skirt around the obvious fact that the seals are a divine judgment of God.

Rosenthal claims that right through the first five seals God is inactive, and that what happens only happens because of His permissive will, not His active will. One must ignore the obvious to come to this conclusion, but when the obvious becomes *too* obvious, Rosenthal tries to make a smoke-screen distinction between God's active and permissive will. The fact is that Christ has exactly the *same* relationship to the first five seals as He does to the last two. It is Christ who is opening all seven seals. To claim that Christ is passive in the first five and active in the last two is only to presuppose one's position in the text. It is not exegetically sound. Christ opens all seven seals and all have negative consequences on earth. They are all judgments. A more proper biblical distinction is to say that sometimes God judges directly (flood; overthrow of Sodom), and sometimes indirectly (Egypt; Babylonia), but is active in both types, and responsible for both types, and both types are the judgments of God and evidences of His wrath.

Rosenthal's evidence against the first five being judgments of God focuses on the first and fifth seals. The first seal, Rosenthal argues, represents the Antichrist. Then the author states: "To attribute the emergence of the Antichrist to God is obviously

preposterous." But, is it? Who is responsible for placing kings and rulers on earthly thrones? According to Daniel, it is God who rules over the kingdoms of men and appoints human rule "to whomever He will" (Dan. 4:25; 5:17, 21). Furthermore, it is God who raises up even "the basest of men" at times. It was God who appointed Nebuchadnezzar to punish Israel. Sennecherib the Assyrian was merely a tool in God's hand to punish Israel (Isa. 10:5). Jesus told Pilate that his authority was given to him "from above." Pilate used that authority to execute Jesus. Actually, Rosenthal's dilemma has already been settled by Habakkuk. After the prophet complains to God about Judah's sinfulness (1:2-4), God answered that He was doing a marvel, for He will raise up the Babylonians to punish Israel (1:5-11). This was not a passive work of God, or even merely something that happened by His permissive will. God is viewed as very active (1:5) in bringing about the Babylonian destruction of Judah. But now Habakkuk has a new problem (apparently the same as Rosenthal's): How could God use someone as sinful as the Babylonians to punish a less sinful people (1:12-2:1)? God's answer was that when Babylon has accomplished His will upon Israel, then He will punish Babylon (2:2-20). There is no theological or biblical problem with viewing the emergence of the Antichrist as a judgment of God. Once the Antichrist has accomplished God's purpose in relation to Israel and the Gentiles, the Antichrist will also be judged. All this shows that Rosenthal is merely assuming a problem that is not really there. God once even sent a demon to trouble Saul (I Sam. 16:14). Just as Sennecherib and Nebuchadnezzar were raised up by God to be instruments of divine judgment, so is the Antichrist.

As for Rosenthal's logical argument that if God is responsible for the emergence of the Antichrist, then "God alone must take direct responsibility for a counterfeit religious system," is very flawed logic. God created Satan, but cannot be held directly responsible for Satan's fall and his counterfeit system. Closer to the issue at hand is that even though God did bring the Assyrian and Babylonian monarchs to their positions, that does not make Him directly responsible for their idolatry.

As for the fifth seal which pictures martyred saints, Rosenthal insists that if the fifth seal is a judgment of God, then God "is responsible for the martyrdom of His own faithful children." Here, again, Rosenthal assumes a problem that is not there. Rosenthal is correct, that if all the other seals are divine judgments, so is the fifth one. But regarding how this is judgment, there are three possibilities. The first is that the saints themselves have suffered judgment through martyrdom. Rosenthal merely assumes that the fifth seal saints lost their lives because they refused to give allegiance to Antichrist. Rosenthal himself puts the first five seals in the first half of the seven years; but the Antichrist's self-declared deity only takes place in the middle! This is Rosenthal's own scheme. While these saints are clearly martyred on the earth, it is not because they refused to worship the Antichrist. That issue has not yet come up. If the judgment is directed at the fifth seal saints, then martyrdom might be their punishment for failing to believe prior to the Rapture, since for Pre-Tribulationism the fifth seal saints are post-Rapture saints. But

there is a second option as well, that does not avoid the obvious: that all the seals are divine judgments. When God judged Israel, the believers at that time also suffered from the judgment. When God judged Israel with the Babylonian Captivity, believers like Ezekiel and Daniel and his three friends also suffered captivity. So, when God releases the Antichrist on the world, some believers will also suffer. If the fifth seal is judgment on the saints, there are two ways of looking at it without trying to deny the obvious: that the rest are all divine judgments. But there is a third option. The fifth seal is indeed a judgment, but not directed against the fifth seal saints, only against their persecutors. Rosenthal himself observes that the prayer of the fifth seal saints is a prayer "for divine retribution against their persecutors" and that the judgment of the fifth seal is a judgment against the persecutors.

A simple, honest look at Revelation six, without preconceived notions, will clearly show that all the seals are divine judgments from God, and so the judgment of God is already present in the first half of the seven years—the place where Rosenthal himself puts the first five seals.

Later in the chapter, Rosenthal discussed his evidence for the Day of the Lord as starting with the seventh seal, and again brings up one of his "insurmountable" problems for Pre-Tribulationists:

> Not only does starting the Day of the Lord at the beginning of the Tribulation have its own insurmountable exegetical problems, it compounds its error by standing in opposition to the clear teaching that the Day of the Lord starts with the opening of the seventh seal.
>
> Evidence that the Day of the Lord starts with the opening of the seventh seal follows.
>
> The clear and repeated teaching of the Word of God is that there must be a *cosmic disturbance* of considerable magnitude before the Day of the Lord begins. The prophet Isaiah wrote, "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in its going forth, and the moon shall not cause its light to shine" (Isa. 13:9-10). Clearly, cosmic disturbances are associated with the Day of the Lord.
>
> The prophet Joel wrote, "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision; for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining" (Joel 3:14-15). Once again, cosmic disturbance is clearly associated with the Day of the Lord.

> But the prophet is not done; he has more to say: "For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible, and who can abide it? . . . And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood, and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come" (Joel 2:11, 30-31). Once again, cosmic disturbance is clearly associated with the Day of the Lord. But one must not allow the precision to go unnoticed. "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, *before* the great and terrible day of the Lord come." Not only will there be cosmic disturbance, but it will occur *before* the Day of the Lord begins.
>
> On this point there can be no question. If the Day of the Lord starts at the beginning of the seventieth week, as pretribulation rapturists normally insist, then the cosmic disturbance must precede the seventieth week, for it appears before the Day of the Lord begins. There is no legitimate biblical alternative. But that, once again, poses an insurmountable problem for pretribulation rapturism. A major facet of pretribulation rapturism is the concept of imminence. Imminence is the belief that no prophesied events must occur before the Rapture of the church.
>
> However, if the Day of the Lord starts at the beginning of the seventieth week, and the prophesied cosmic disturbance must come first, then the cosmic disturbance must occur before the seventieth week begins. *Pretribulation rapturism is, therefore, faced with the enigma that the doctrine of imminence, a major pillar of pretribulation rapturism, is untenable. That is a crucial, clear, unassailable truth that cannot be dismissed by those making careful inquiry.*
>
> A new question must now be raised. Is it possible to know when the cosmic disturbance—precursor to the Day of the Lord—will begin? The journey need not be long. Credulity need not be stretched. A container to fit need not be manufactured. (pp. 147-150)

The point Rosenthal is trying to make is that a major cosmic disturbance is predicted to take place *before* the Day of the Lord. If the Day of the Lord starts at the beginning of the seven years, then the cosmic disturbance must take place before the seven years and this, in turn, destroys the doctrine of imminency, and that, in turn, destroys Pre-Tribulationism. But this is all wishful thinking. Rosenthal makes several logical and exegetical mistakes.

First of all, as to his exegetical error, Rosenthal lumps all mentioned cosmic disturbances into one, ignoring the timing given in the text. For example, the Isaiah 13:9-10 and Joel 3:14-15 passages clearly take place *within* the Day of the Lord, as even a

casual reading of the text will show. Joel 2:30-31 describes cosmic disturbances *before* the Day of the Lord. In the prophetic scheme of things, there are several cosmic disturbances. Rosenthal cites one, Revelation 6:12-13, in connection with the seventh seal. But there are also cosmic disturbances in connection with the fourth trumpet (8:12), the fifth trumpet (8:10-11), the seventh bowl (16:17-21), etc. There are several cosmic disturbances throughout the end times, not just one. Yes, there is a cosmic disturbance before the Day of the Lord, and even during the Day of the Lord. A Pre-Tribulationist can start the Day of the Lord at the beginning of the seven years, and have a cosmic disturbance before, during and after. This reviewer, in his own work, deals with five cosmic disturbances: one before the seven years, three during, and one after. Rosenthal needs to reduce all prophesied cosmic disturbances into one for his view to hold. A Pre-Tribulationist does not.

Secondly, as to his logical error, Rosenthal insists that if a Pre-Tribulationist starts the Day of the Lord at the beginning of the seven years, then one cosmic disturbance must take place before the seven years; and just as soon as you have something before the seven years, you have destroyed imminency and, with it, Pre-Tribulationism. Hence, this whole argument rests on the erroneous assumption that Pre-Tribulationism requires the Rapture to occur just before, or right at the start of, the seven years. This, again, is a straw-man argument. As has been shown before, this is what Rosenthal wants all Pre-Tribulationists to believe, but it is patently untrue. This reviewer believes the following two points: the Rapture will occur before the seven years; and, a major cosmic disturbance will come before the seven years. However, it is impossible to know which will come first. Imminency is not destroyed and neither, for that matter, is Pre-Tribulationism. So much for Pre-Tribulationist's "insurmountable exegetical problems."

Rosenthal has not succeeded in showing that the Day of the Lord is limited to the last quarter by this argument. One can hold that all seven years are the Day of the Lord, but there will be a cosmic disturbance before and even during it. The sixth seal does portray a cosmic disturbance, but nowhere does it say that it is that cosmic disturbance which kicks off the Day of the Lord. It is Rosenthal's system that requires that identification and correlation, not exegesis.

For the same reasons, Rosenthal's conclusion is totally unwarranted:

> If the Bible is the verbal, plenary, inspired Word of God, if it is to be interpreted literally and normally, if men can comprehend it, then this is patently clear: cosmic disturbance precedes the Day of the Lord. And that cosmic disturbance occurs with the opening of the sixth seal. To deny or ignore that fact is to force the Scriptures to conform to a pre-conceived pretribulation rapture mold. (p. 152)

Yes, a cosmic disturbance does precede the Day of the Lord. Yes, cosmic disturbance comes with the sixth seal. It is a mere assumption on Rosenthal's part that this is all one and the same and only cosmic disturbance. This is trying to conform Scripture to a preconceived three-quarter Rapture mold.

In a chapter entitled "Elijah Must Appear First," Rosenthal starts off with another "braggamony" statement:

> Momentum will now accelerate. Biblical evidence that the Day of the Lord begins with the opening of the seventh seal will now increase. Arguments that converge at the seventh seal will each, on their own merit, be strong. Collectively I believe they will be impregnable. (p. 155)

Rosenthal should learn to simply present his case and let others determine its impregnability. So far, those arguments have not been so.

For Rosenthal's system to stand, it is crucial to begin the Day of the Lord with Revelation 8:1 and the seventh seal. However, *nothing* in the text states that that is when the Day of the Lord begins. With Old Testament predictions about the Day of the Lord already being found in chapter six, it is best to begin the Day of the Lord in 6:1.

In this chapter, Rosenthal tries to do two things. First, he tries to identify Elijah with one of the two witnesses of Revelation eleven. Secondly, he tries to use the timing of the coming of Elijah as an argument against God's imminency and Pre-Tribulationism.

On the first issue, Rosenthal uses basically the same argument as Pre-Tribulationists do for identifying Elijah with one of the two witnesses. Nothing really new here. However, it should be noted that not all Pre-Tribulationists believe Elijah is one of the two witnesses. (Dwight Pentecost and this reviewer do not.) Furthermore, such an identification is not crucial, or essential, or even remotely necessary for Pre-Tribulationism. It is rather obvious that it is very essential for Rosenthal's view, but there are good reasons not to make any such identification. Using the argument of similarity of miracles is not even remotely conclusive; and Elijah's appearance at the Transfiguration does not show a cause-and-effect relationship. Furthermore, Luke 9:31 points out that, at the time, Elijah appeared "in glory." This means he is no longer subject to death. While this reviewer believes that Elijah will return, he sees no evidence for making him one of the two witnesses.

It is when we come to Rosenthal's second issue that it becomes evident why this should even be raised in a book dealing with the timing of the Rapture:

> But how does all of this bear on the starting point of the Day of the Lord and the timing of the Rapture?

> The last writing prophet of the Old Testament is Malachi, and in the very last verses of his prophecy concerning end-time events, he penned these words: "Behold, I will send you Elijah, the prophet, *before* the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6) (p. 157)
>
> The prophet Joel declared that the cosmic disturbance is to occur *before* the Day of the Lord commences (Joel 2:31). Now the prophet Malachi proclaims that Elijah will appear *before* the Day of the Lord commences (Mal. 4:5). According to Mosaic law a matter was settled in the mouth of two witnesses (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15). Will not, then, the consistent witness of the inspired prophets Joel and Malachi do? Was not a prophet to be stoned to death if he erred in his prophetic utterance (Deut. 13:1-10)? (p. 158)

Here again is the old straw man. This would be a valid argument if Pre-Tribulationism required the Rapture to kick off the seven years, but it requires no such thing. The starting-point of the entire Tribulation, the seventieth week of Daniel, is the signing of a covenant between Israel and the Antichrist (Dan. 9:27). The Rapture comes sometime before that. In spite of Rosenthal's insistence to the contrary, the Rapture does not have to come right before, or at the start, in Pre-Tribulationism. The Rapture is not the only thing that has to come before the seven years. There must be a cosmic disturbance; there must be the return of Elijah. Because of the imminency of the Rapture, there is no way of knowing which comes first. Believing that Elijah will come before the seven years does not destroy imminency. Neither does it destroy Pre-Tribulationism. Rosenthal's arguments have been far from impregnable. Here they are, in his own words, and the straw-man argument he uses should not be missed.

> Once again, pretribulational rapturism has an unsolvable problem with imminence. They can resolve their problem only if they accept *all* of the following:
>
> - Elijah is not one of the two witnesses (Rev. 11:3)
> - There is not another who comes in the power and spirit of Elijah, if not Elijah himself.
> - Malachi was in error when he said that Elijah must come before the Day of the Lord commences.
> - Elijah appears before the seventieth week begins. In this case, if Elijah appears before the seventieth week begins, that becomes a

> prophesied event that must occur in this age, before the seventieth week commences, and the doctrine of imminence is once again destroyed. (p. 158)

One should not miss the shallowness of these "impregnable" arguments against imminence and Pre-Tribulationism. First, it is agreed that Elijah is not one of the two witnesses. This identification is made strictly on analogy, similarity and questionable reasoning, not on exegesis, since Revelation does not name the two witnesses, nor even hint that they are historical persons. Like others in Revelation, they are two people living in the future whom God will choose for this purpose. Again, such an identification is not crucial to Pre-Tribulationism. But Rosenthal desperately needs it. Second, yes, Elijah will indeed return. Third, no, Malachi was not in error when he wrote that Elijah must come before the Day of the Lord begins. It is Rosenthal who is in error when he says that the Day of the Lord begins only with the last quarter. Fourth, yes, Elijah will come before the seventieth week begins. However, to claim that this will destroy imminency is a leap of logic on Rosenthal's part, since saying that something comes before the seventieth week is *not* the same as saying it comes before the Rapture. In spite of Rosenthal's opening claim, this reviewer has no problem with imminency and did not need to solve any problems on the basis of accepting all of the four statements. So much for Pre-Tribulationism's "unsolvable problem."

Towards the end of the chapter, Rosenthal states:

> A final word in this chapter. Sensing the problem of precursors (like cosmic disturbance and Elijah) to the Day of the Lord for pretribulation rapturism, some have attempted to separate the Rapture of the church from the beginning of the seventieth week. The Rapture, they suggest, could occur sometime before the seventieth week begins. This would allow for the cosmic disturbance and the coming of Elijah before the Day of the Lord commences. But such attempts do not resolve the problem. First, there is absolutely no biblical evidence for separating the Rapture from the Day of the Lord. It is simply an assumption without any biblical evidence. Second, the cosmic disturbance is clearly revealed to begin with the sixth seal *inside* the seventieth week—not before it commences. Third, Elijah (or one like him) is to minister for precisely three and one-half years, which almost certainly relates to one-half of the seventieth week (Rev. 11:3). This negates any attempt to place Elijah's appearance between the Rapture and the making of a covenant with the Antichrist. Fourth, Scripture has been cited to demonstrate that the Rapture and the Day of the Lord are intimately connected, and no significant period of time between these two events can possibly be established. (p. 159)

Here, Rosenthal is trying to get around the possibility that the Rapture can occur long before the seven years, and thereby destroy his previous arguments against Pre-Tribulationism. His response again shows how strongly he presupposes his own view. His first argument actually says nothing. If the Rapture precedes the seven years it will automatically be separated. The real point is that no Rapture passage actually connects it with the Day of the Lord, and Rosenthal has not produced any that do. The second argument again presupposes only one cosmic disturbance, and it is the one with the seventh seal. As has been shown, this is not the only cosmic disturbance the Bible talks about. The third argument again presupposes that Elijah is one of the two witnesses; something impossible to prove exegetically. As to the fourth argument, it is merely restating the first and presents nothing new. The result remains the same.

Before moving on, at this point it should be noted how often Rosenthal's arguments are based on a presupposition being true. Much of what he said in this chapter is strictly based on Elijah being one of the two witnesses. If it was a given, some of his conclusions would be valid (e.g., the length of time Elijah will minister). But if it is not a given, then his conclusions are faulty and it is largely on these faulty conclusions that he negates imminence and Pre-Tribulationism.

In a chapter entitled "The Day of His Wrath," Rosenthal states:

> Once again, pretribulation rapturism has a big problem. In reality, it is larger than big—it is mountainous and unscalable. The clear teaching of Scripture is that God's wrath is about to begin following the opening of the sixth seal and in anticipation of the opening of the seventh. To attempt to negate this problematic obstacle to pretribulationism, which normally and historically places the Day of the Lord at the beginning of the seventieth week, some Bible teachers point out that the Greek verb translated *is come* in the phrase "For the great day of His wrath is come" is in the aorist tense. As such, they argue, it must be interpreted as referring to an event which has already occurred and which includes the five seals that preceded it. Thus, when it says, "his wrath is come" (Rev. 6:17), it is covering a period of substantially more than three and one-half years and includes all the events of the seventieth week to that point in time. . . . But such exegesis is strained and unjustified, It is true that the verb *is come* is in the aorist tense. It is *not* true that it must be made retroactive to include all six seal judgments and, therefore, the entire Tribulation period. . . .

> . . . In a discussion of the Greek verb translated *is come* in Revelation 6:17, John Sproule, former head of the Greek department at Grace Seminary and present dean of Capital Seminary, wrote, "If the verb is taken as a constative, then it speaks of past action and includes the preceding seals. If, however, it is a dramatic aorist, the tense of the verb is indecisive." In other words, it can refer to either a past action or an event still future. . . .
>
> All these men are clearly indicating that an aorist tense can be used to express either a past action or an event that is about to occur. (pp. 164-165)

There he goes again! One gets the impression that Rosenthal is trying to intimidate people into accepting his position. He now presents Pre-Tribulationists with a new problem that is "mountainous and unscalable."

Rosenthal again works on a presupposition, and that is, that the wrath of God and the Day of the Lord are synonymous terms. But they are not. There is already present a wrath of God revealed against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (Rom. 1:18), yet we are not in the Day of the Lord. The same thing could be true of God's future wrath: that it is not synonymous or contemporary with the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord could be taken as the entire seven-year period, with the wrath of God only a portion of it. Even if Rosenthal has proven (and he has not) that the wrath begins with the seventh seal, that is *not* the same as proving that the Day of the Lord begins with the seventh seal. That point should be kept in mind as we proceed in discussing this "wrath" chapter. To make the Day of the Lord and the wrath of God exactly the same is only a presupposition, not a clearly stated biblical fact.

Rosenthal then deals with the aorist tense and correctly states that it can be used either for a past or future event and, for that matter, a present event. Ultimately, context determines what the aorist tense means in a given place. Because many Pre-Tribulationists view the aorist of Revelation 6:17 as describing past events, relating to all the preceding seals—or, at least, concerning the events of the sixth seal—Rosenthal objects, since the aorist does not *have* to mean that. He is correct: it does not *have* to mean that. But, Rosenthal then insists that it should be taken as a future, in reference to the seventh seal, and all that it contains: the trumpets and the bowls. It could mean that. But, again, it does not *have* to. As Rosenthal admits, "it can refer to either a past action or an event still future." Rosenthal, grammatically speaking, has no more basis to take it as a future event than Pre-Tribulationists have to take it as a past event. What Rosenthal then does is cite examples from elsewhere, where it is found with the future meaning. All that proves is that in those passages it is to be understood as a future. This is not proof-positive that it has a future meaning here in Revelation 6:17. One could cite passages elsewhere, where it has a past meaning (Rev. 5:7; 7:13; 8:3; 11:18; 17:1, 10; 21:9), but that is not proof-positive of a past meaning in Revelation 6:17. It is best to go with the

context, especially the immediate context, and see if it indicates how best to take the aorist. In passing, it should be noted that the future use of the aorist is rare, and normally it refers to a past act. There is no grammatical or contextual reason to make the usage in Revelation 6:17 future. It is only a theological necessity for Rosenthal. The context does not favor a future meaning. Rosenthal insists that the wrath is a reference to the seventh seal, which does not come until Revelation 8:1, a distance away. Between 6:17 and 8:1, the seventeen verses of chapter seven intervene. The seventh seal is not in the immediate context. Those speaking the text of 6:17 are, in context, responding to the cosmic convulsions of verses 12-14; for it is the events of the sixth seal that cause the unbelieving world to flee to the mountains and cry that the wrath of God is come; and so the context favors a past and not a future reference. While the *wrath* of 6:17 may not refer to all the preceding seals (though it may), it at least refers to the events of the sixth seal. While grammatically the aorist tense is inconclusive for either view, context favors the past view and the Pre-Tribulational view. The context shows that while during the judgments of the first four seals humanity did not recognize it as coming from God, with the fifth seal they do recognize it as coming from God, and not just the first seal but all five seals so far.

How does Rosenthal get around the context? The following are his own words:

> Since the verb *is come* in Revelation 6:17 tells of the action but not the time of the action, the context must be appealed to for that determination. When that is done, the evidence that the phrase "the great day of his wrath is come" refers to an event which is about to occur is both substantial and compelling. Nonetheless, in an attempt to defend pretribulationism, some have vainly attempted to deny that compelling evidence. The reason for that attempt is clear: If, as the overwhelming majority of pretribulationists contend, the Day of the Lord commences with the seventieth week, how does one explain the fact that God's wrath does not begin until the seventh seal, a considerable period of time beyond the starting point of the seventieth week?
>
> It is important to now examine those contextual arguments which demonstrate that the phrase "the great day of his wrath is come" refers, not to a past event, but to an event about to occur, and that in concert with the opening of the seventh seal.
>
> First, Revelation 6 gives a clear, progressive, chronological sequence of events. The first seal is opened, and certain events are said to unfold (vv. 1-2). The second seal is opened, and more events unfold (vv. 3-4). The same thing is true for the third (vv. 5-6), fourth (vv. 7-8), and fifth (vv. 9-11) seals. Then it is recorded that the sixth seal is opened (vv. 12-17), and more events occur. Among them, John informs his readers that "the great

> day of his wrath is come" (v. 17). As has been demonstrated, the aorist tense gives no basis for making that statement refer to a past event. Neither does the context. A normative reading of Revelation 6 simply indicates a logical progression of events. Seals are opened and events occur. Only after the sixth seal is opened does John declare that "the great day of his wrath is come." There is no exegetical basis for making the sixth seal retroactive. (pp. 166-167)

Rosenthal again uses the intimidation factor by claiming that the context points to a future use, and that is "both substantial and compelling." As has just been shown, the context favors the opposite conclusion. The way Rosenthal handles the context is to give a quick over-view of the six seals and then dogmatically concludes that "there is no exegetical basis for making the sixth seal retroactive." Is this the "substantial and compelling" evidence that the aorist of Revelation 6:17 is future? It is correct that there is no *grammatical* reason to make the aorist tense of the sixth seal retroactive; but neither is there a *grammatical* reason to make it future. But there is another grammatical reason to make it past. In the Greek text, the word for "come" is not only an aorist, but it is in the indicative mood. According to Greek grammar, such as Dana and Mantey, this always refers to a past and not to a future event. Rosenthal would have done well to check all references where this word is found just in the Greek of Revelation. It is found a total of eleven other times: 5:7; 7:13; 8:3; 11:18; 14:7, 15; 17:1, 10; 18:10; 19:7; 21:9. In all these examples the word is used of a past event or a present event. Not once is it used of a future event. Rosenthal is forced to make the Greek of 6:17 the exception to the rule. But, this is *not* a result of exegesis. It is clearly a theological necessity for Rosenthal's view. This is interpreting a verse based on one's own preconceived theology.

Rosenthal presupposes problems Pre-Tribulationists are supposed to have. How do they explain that, if the Day of the Lord begins at the beginning of the seven years, why does the wrath only begin with the seventh seal? First of all, they do not have to, since the two do not have to be contemporary. All seven years are Tribulation and all seven years are divine judgment, while the wrath of God could refer to a very special period of judgment that is even more narrowed than Rosenthal makes it. More will be said on this later. Secondly, Rosenthal is again assuming his position. By resorting to pre-suppositionalism, he now assumes that the wrath begins with the seventh seal. As has been shown, he has failed to prove this. Context favors at least the sixth seal.

The weakness of Rosenthal's arguments about the wrath come out in the following:

> It is clear that men flee from God's wrath *after* the sixth seal is opened. If God's wrath begins with the first seal, as pretribulationism normally asserts, why do men not flee from God's wrath until after the sixth seal is opened—a considerable period of time after the wrath begins?

> The solution sometimes suggested is that God's wrath started years earlier but that men did not recognize it as God's wrath until after the sixth seal is opened. Such a strained, unsubstantiated view is not taken seriously by those who love and honor God's Word. Even a cursory look at the Day of the Lord texts indicates that when God's Day of the Lord wrath begins, the world will know it. There will be no question about it. His wrath will be awesome in its intensity. This planet will be shaken to its very foundations. (pp. 169-170)

One should not miss Rosenthal's self-contradiction here. Earlier he insisted that the wrath begins only with the seventh seal, while here he talks about men already under God's wrath after the sixth seal is opened; but, obviously, before the seventh seal is opened. Does this not imply that the wrath of 6:17 refers to the sixth seal? But, to answer Rosenthal's question: "If God's wrath begins with the first seal, as pretribulationism normally asserts, why do men not flee from God's wrath until after the sixth seal is opened . . .?," the answer is quite simple. While the first five seals are judgments of God, these judgments come through human agencies, and so the unbelieving world does not discern them to be from God. But the sixth seal results in cosmic convulsions, which will be obvious to everyone that no human agency is involved, and so they flee. This argument of Rosenthal's is easily answered.

Then, Rosenthal merely dismisses an argument used by some Pre-Tribulationists without trying to give a legitimate answer. They point out that the wrath begins with the first seal, but humanity only recognizes it with the sixth seal. Rosenthal tries the intimidation factor again and his response is that this view is "strained" and "unsubstantiated" and "not to be taken seriously by those who love and honor God's Word." Not only does it imply that those who disagree with Rosenthal do not love and honor God's Word, it is begging the question and avoiding the argument. It should be noted that Revelation 6:16-17 is quoting the response of *unbelievers* to the divine cosmic judgment of the sixth seal. To the unbeliever the first five seals do not indicate divine judgment in light of their human agency; just as many unbelievers in Jeremiah's day failed to recognize that the Babylonian invasion and deportation were divine judgments because of their human agency. But the judgment of the sixth seal is cosmic and divine, not indirect. Revelation 6:16-17 is saying that only with the sixth seal do unbelievers recognize that what has been happening is divine judgment; not that divine judgment only begins with the sixth seal. Being unbelievers, they cannot be prophesying about the seventh seal! This is a valid argument to raise and Rosenthal's refusal to answer only shows a weakness in his own argument, and to attack the questioner's love of God's Word is nothing but a spiritual cop-out on Rosenthal's part.

Later in the chapter, Rosenthal continues to strain himself.

> . . . in the phrase, "the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?," John is undeniably alluding to Malachi 3:2. The prophet Malachi wrote, "But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth?" In Revelation 6:17 what John calls "the great day of his wrath," Malachi calls the "day of his coming" and "when he appeareth." Therefore, the expressions *the day of the Lord, coming*, and *appearance* are tied together and used interchangeably in anticipation of the opening of the seventh seal. Since the "coming" is intimately associated with the Day of the Lord, it is impossible to have the Day of the Lord commence within the seventieth week and the Lord's coming for the church be pretribulational. (p. 170)

One should again note presuppositionalism in the word "undeniably." It is undeniable that Revelation 6:17 is an allusion to Malachi 3:2! But, is it? First of all, John is quoting what unbelievers will be saying, *the wrath of God is come*, and it stretches credulity that the unbelievers of Revelation 6:17, responding to the cosmic events of the sixth seal, are consciously alluding to Malachi 3:2. That assumes an awful lot of knowledge on the part of Gentile unbelievers! Secondly, there is little, if any, linguistic similarity between the two passages. Revelation is speaking of a process and a period of time in which divine judgments are poured out—whether the entire seven years or just the first 21 months. But Malachi is speaking of the actual day of the second coming. For Rosenthal to use this as an argument against Pre-Tribulationism is extremely weak.

Rosenthal next focuses on how the word *wrath* is used in Revelation:

> . . . the wrath of God is a major topic in the book of Revelation. No less than eight times the word *wrath* is used. The first occasions are in Revelation 6:16-17 in anticipation of the opening of the seventh seal. It is significant to note that not once is the word *wrath* used before Revelation 6:16-17 or in describing the six seals. Only with the opening of the seventh seal and beyond is the word *wrath* mentioned in the book of Revelation. It can rightly be insisted, therefore, that the use of the word wrath is restricted to the events of the trumpets and bowls, and therefore, exempts the first six seals. And since the seals constitute more than half of the seventieth week (the fifth seal begins the Great Tribulation), the divine wrath is restricted to the latter part of the seventieth week, specifically the Day of the Lord period. The wrath passages now follow in chronological sequence. (pp. 171-172)

Rosenthal then cites every usage of the term *wrath* in Revelation (6:16-17; 11:18; 14:10; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19) and then concludes:

> The use of the word *wrath* in Revelation does not occur until the Day of the Lord wrath begins (Rev. 6:17), not with the beginning of the seventieth week. The reason is clear: God's wrath does not start until the opening of the seventh seal. (p. 172)

Rosenthal again operates on the basis of assumptions, but also misses a very important observation as to what the *wrath* refers to. The presupposition is that the *wrath* of Revelation 6:16-17 is a reference to the seventh seal, when contextually it is best taken with the sixth seal, with a question-mark as to whether it also includes the first five seals. Another presupposition is that Day of the Lord wrath begins in Revelation 6:17; but that passage does not even mention the Day of the Lord, and Rosenthal only reads his theology into it.

So what has Rosenthal actually proved, and what has he failed to observe? First, he states that the word *wrath* is not found before Revelation 6:16-17. This is true. But, who in this passage is actually identifying the sixth (or, as Rosenthal prefers, the seventh) seal as being the wrath of God? It is not God, nor an angel, nor even John. It is the unbelievers, and John is quoting the conclusion of unbelievers, which may, or may not, be correct. But, much of Rosenthal's position is based on the words spoken by these unbelievers in Revelation 6:16-17. If what the unbelievers conclude here is truly the Word of God, then what about the conclusion of the unbelievers in Revelation 13:4? Secondly, when the wrath of God is identified by John, angels or God, it never identifies any of the seal judgments as wrath, nor even the first six trumpet judgments. As mentioned earlier, the usage of *wrath* in Revelation is far more limited then even Rosenthal makes it, for it is used *only* of the bowl judgments and the seventh trumpet, which contains the seven bowl judgments. Rosenthal's own listing of the passages on page 172 shows this to be true. Every usage of *wrath* in Revelation is in reference to the bowl judgments. The only exception is Revelation 6:16-17 which quotes the conclusion of unbelievers; but that conclusion is not affirmed by John, angels or God. When the three latter use the term *wrath*, it is only of the bowl judgments which Rosenthal, by a strained exegesis of Daniel 12:11, limits to the last thirty days.

While Scriptures outside the Revelation can be used to show that the wrath is more extensive than just the bowl judgments at the very end, and this reviewer believes that all seven years are both the Day of the Lord and a time of wrath, here we are concerned as to how Revelation alone used the term, since so much of Rosenthal's case is built on it. He

puts the Rapture with the seventh seal, since he insists that that is when the wrath of God begins; and this is based on the testimony of the unbelievers of Revelation 6:16-17. However, if he wishes to be consistent since, in Revelation, the wrath of God only begins with the seventh trumpet, he needs to put the Rapture there; which is what both Mid-Tribulationists and Post-Tribulationists have done. The following conclusion is unwarranted:

> . . . when the seventh seal is opened, God's wrath will begin. Each and every one of the trumpet and bowl judgments that follow will be executed through God's angelic servants. In marked contrast, none of the seals are angelically induced. The reason is clear: the seals are not God's wrath. (p. 173)

Here is yet another presupposition: the wrath of God must be "angelically induced." There is simply no such biblical statement. The wrath of God on Israel in Luke 21:23 was not angelically induced, but carried out by human agency: the Romans. Although Rosenthal claims here that "the seals are not God's wrath," he earlier claimed that the seventh seal is; and that seal, like the first six, is opened by Christ. Again, only the bowl judgments are actually called *wrath* in Revelation. The seals may not be angelically induced, but they are induced by Christ, which is far more direct.

The following is another example of how Rosenthal plays word-games with the text. Discussing the concept of "birth pangs" in Matthew 24:8 and I Thessalonians 5:3, he states:

> First, in Matthew 24:5-7 the Lord described the first three and one-half years of the seventieth week. That description parallels the four horses and riders of the Apocalypse (Rev. 6:1-8). He characterized that period of time with these words: "All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matt. 24:8). Literally, the Greek text says, "All these are the beginning of birth pangs." The Lord's description of the first half of the seventieth week, then, is of a woman in the early stages of labor ("the beginning of birth pangs"). In marked contrast, when Paul describe the period immediately prior to the Day of the Lord, he uses imagery of a woman, not in beginning birth pangs, but in hard labor, about to deliver (Paul's contrast is between "sudden destruction" and "travail upon a woman with child"). The apostle wrote, "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape (I Thess. 5:2-3). And the prophet Isaiah wrote, "Wail; for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. . . . And they shall be afraid. Pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain like a woman that travaileth" (Isa. 13:6, 8).

> What becomes abundantly clear is this: The time immediately prior to the Day of the Lord is likened to a woman in travail (hard labor), but the first part of the seventieth week is likened to a woman with beginning birth pangs. If the seventieth week of Daniel begins with the Day of the Lord, the indisputable fact is that the hard labor must precede the beginning birth pangs. That's impossible! And so, too, is the proposition that the Day of the Lord starts with the seventieth week. (pp. 173-174)

Rosenthal begins by stating that Matthew 24:5-7 is speaking of the first half of the seventieth week—a point he never actually conclusively proves—and then asserts, that when verse eight speaks of the beginning of birth pangs, it is speaking of the first half. This he defines as being only "the early stages of labor." The Thessalonians passage, he claims, is speaking of a woman "not in beginning birth pangs, but in hard labor, about to deliver." He then draws his conclusion: "If the seventieth week of Daniel begins with the Day of the Lord, the indisputable fact is that the hard labor must precede the beginning birth pangs. That's impossible! And so, too, is the proposition that the Day of the Lord starts with the seventieth week." Here is indeed a faulty conclusion drawn from a very faulty premise. On what basis does Rosenthal distinguish one birth pang as belonging to the first half, and the other about to deliver to the Day of the Lord late in the second half? It is *not* a conclusion based on the Greek word since both texts use exactly the same Greek word. Nothing in the meaning of the term suggests that one is just the beginning and the other is much further along and about to give birth. If the author has any basis at all, it would be on the ground that Matthew uses the word "beginning" while Paul does not. However, Paul speaks of the birth pangs as coming suddenly and unexpectedly. The "sudden destruction" of the Day of the Lord is as sudden as the birth pangs upon a woman. If these birth pangs in Paul's writing are the early ones, then they are sudden and unexpected. Once the birth pang process has begun, the subsequent birth pangs are to be expected. Rosenthal's whole argument collapses and the only reason he has to distinguish between Matthew and Paul is because he is trying desperately hard to keep the wrath of God away from most of the seven years. But again, this is interpretation of a passage with a preconceived bias. A point that Rosenthal does not even take into consideration is that both birth pangs come even before the seven years begin (the view of this reviewer). The options Rosenthal presents are not the only exegetical options.

One more point Rosenthal raises in this chapter must be dealt with. Discussing the "peace and safety" of I Thessalonians 5:3 he states:

> When does this call for peace and safety occur? If the peace and safety is placed inside the seventieth week, the Day of the Lord cannot begin at the beginning of the seventieth week. That statement is based on the fact that, according to Paul, the Day of the Lord follows the cry of peace

> and safety. If the call of peace and safety is placed before the seventieth week, then a prophesied event must precede the seventieth week, and the pretribulational pillar of imminence once again crumbles. Is there a solution—a proper time placement for the call of peace and safety? There certainly is. And once more, it fits perfectly and unstrained with a prewrath rapture of the church. (p. 174)

Rosenthal repeats his straw-man error committed earlier, with the cosmic disturbance and the return of Elijah in relationship to the Rapture. Again, saying that something precedes the seven years of Tribulation is not the same as saying that it precedes the Rapture. So, this reviewer has no problem at all in putting this event before the seven years and still holds to imminency, because it is unknown which will come first. So, in spite of Rosenthal's wishes, Pre-Tribulationism and imminence do not crumble. Rosenthal claims his own view of the passage fits in with his position, and that it is "unstrained." He then presents the following convoluted argument:

> At the middle of the seventieth week the Antichrist will make his capital the city of Jerusalem (Dan. 11:42-45). He will seek to become a world ruler, ruthlessly destroying men and nations as he moves to consolidate his power. His greatest fury will be unleashed against the Jewish nation. For that reason, this period of time is called "the time of Jacob's trouble." It will be a time of such severity that except those days were shortened, no flesh (in context, Jewish) would live. But for the elect's sake, those days will be shortened. At that moment cosmic disturbance will signal the approach of the Day of the Lord. Jews being persecuted by the Antichrist will view this as divine intervention on their behalf in the nick of time. They will proclaim "peace and safety," but their cry will be premature—an expression of short-lived duration: "For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them" (I Thess. 5:3). That destruction will be the Day of the Lord wrath unleashed with the opening of the seventh seal. What miscalculation! In that day the Jewish people will think that the Day of the Lord will bring deliverance and national atonement. . . .
>
> Israel's expectation of peace and safety (deliverance) will not occur during the Day of the Lord. That day will be a period for chastening and purifying. Her national Day of Atonement will await Christ's physical return to the earth. (pp. 174-175)

There is a lot of confusion here, not to mention presuppositionalism again, *e.g.*, that those saying *Peace and safety* in I Thessalonians 5:3 are Jews. Whatever the merits of the above quotation, it is hardly "unstrained." The Pre-Tribulationist view is certainly much simpler.

The author defines the Day of the Lord—which is the only time he allows for the wrath of God to be poured out—as Israel's "period for chastening and purifying," and in the next paragraph cites Luke 21:25. But Luke 21:23 already speaks of *wrath upon this people* and as a judgment of punishment, not a "purifying." According to Rosenthal, the Olivet Discourse is in chronological order (p. 150), and he parallels Luke 21:25 to the sixth seal (p. 152) which is all supposed to occur before any wrath. However, Luke 21:23 already mentions the wrath of God prior to verse 25, and therefore prior to the sixth seal. There is clear inconsistency here.

The following chapter is entitled, "The 144,000 And a Great Multitude No Man Could Number." By the time of this chapter, Rosenthal has built up and compounded a number of assumptions and presuppositions trying to hold his "unassailable" superstructure. This is apparent from his first paragraph:

> The sixth chapter of Revelation describes the seventieth week of Daniel from its inception until the Day of the Lord is about to begin. It chronicles the "beginning" birth pangs (the first three and one-half years) through the opening of the first four seals (Rev. 6:1-8). With the opening of the fifth seal, the Great Tribulation commences (Rev. 6:9-11). It is initiated in the middle of the seventieth week by what the Lord called "the abomination of desolation" (Matt. 24:15). It is in connection with that event that the faithful martyrs who were slain because they would not bow to the Antichrist are heard proclaiming, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Rev. 6:10). At the opening of the sixth seal, the cosmic disturbance, prelude to the Day of the Lord, occurs (Rev. 6:12-14). When that happens, men of every station of life will scurry to the caves and mountains to hide from the wrath of the Lamb (Rev. 6:15-16). The reason for their consternation is then given: "For the great day of his wrath is come [it will begin with the opening of the seventh seal out of which the seven trumpets emerge], and who shall be able to stand?" (Rev. 6:17) (p. 179)

The first assumption is that the first five seals cover the entire first half of the seven years. However, there is nothing in the text that even implies that. In fact, the Book of Revelation itself clearly indicates when the second half begins. As Rosenthal himself believes, it is the Abomination of Desolation that marks the middle of the seven years. This involves the Gentile takeover of the Temple Compound. That takeover is described in Revelation 11:1-2. The second half in Revelation begins only in chapter eleven, and Revelation chapters 11-14 describe mid-tribulational events, concluding with the bowl judgments (Rev. 15-16) in the second half. But because the middle point begins only with

Revelation 11:1, this puts not only the first four seals but all of the seal judgments and the first six trumpets into the first half.

The second assumption is that the Great Tribulation begins with the fifth seal. But there is nothing in the context of the fifth seal that indicates that this is the starting point of the Great Tribulation. For Rosenthal, the Great Tribulation is the first part of the second half. But, again, following Revelation's own chronology, the second half begins with chapter eleven. Rosenthal's basis is the usage of the term in Matthew 24:21, which follows the Abomination of Desolation in 24:15. However, Matthew 24:15 corresponds to Revelation 11:12, and both kick off the second three and one-half years. The persecution of Matthew 24 follows the Abomination, and the persecution of the fifth seal precedes it. The two passages do not speak of the same persecutions but two distinct ones. The persecution of Matthew 24 is against the Jews, something Rosenthal himself believes and teaches. The persecution of the fifth seal saints is that of believers in general, and nothing in the text or context of Revelation six implies that it is a persecution of Jews. Later, Revelation 12 does speak of persecution of Jews, and that persecution of Revelation 12 follows the Gentile takeover of Jerusalem and the Temple in chapter eleven, just as in Matthew 24. It is Revelation 11-12, then, that corresponds with Matthew 24:15-28, not Revelation six. The persecution of the fifth seal saints corresponds with the persecution of believers found in Matthew 24:9-10, which precedes the mid-point, which itself only begins in Matthew 24:15. This puts the fifth seal in the first half.

The third assumption is that the fifth seal saints are martyred because they would not bow to the Antichrist. But again, there is nothing in the context of the fifth seal to indicate this. To be sure, they are martyred for their faith. But it does not say that it was specifically for refusing to bow down to the Antichrist. The self-proclamation of deity by the Antichrist takes place at the time of the Abomination of Desolation (Matthew 24:15; II Thess. 2:4) which, as Rosenthal asserts, happens at the midpoint of the seven years. In Revelation, that midpoint begins with chapter eleven, when the Temple is taken over by Gentiles for 42 months (the second three and one-half years). The Antichrist then proceeds to remove all opposition by killing the two witnesses (chapter eleven) and persecuting the Jews (chapter twelve). He then proclaims himself to be God and sets up his image (chapter thirteen). Only those saints in and subsequent to chapter thirteen are being killed for refusing to accept the Antichrist. The saints of chapter six come well before this, for those saints are part of the fifth seal while those of chapter thirteen follow the second trumpet (chapter eleven). Rosenthal is doing exactly what he accuses Pre-Tribulationists of doing: trying to "grandfather clause" the events of Revelation 11-13 to come before the sixth seal of Revelation six, and this with a lot less exegetical validity. Is it possible to know who is killing the fifth seal saints if it is not the Antichrist? The Antichrist is not the only one persecuting the saints in the seven years. Revelation seventeen provides further details on how the Antichrist takes over world religion and political control. Using typical Old Testament imagery, John pictures a great harlot—in

the Old Testament, a symbol of a false religious system—who rules over the world, at least in a religious sense (17:1, 15). Verses 16-17 state two things: First, all other political rulers turn their authority over to the Antichrist. Secondly, the Antichrist and the other kings then destroy whatever system the harlot represents. In this way, the Antichrist destroys both political and religious opposition to himself. Now, the political and religious rule of the Antichrist takes place during the second half of the seven years (Revelation 13:5), as Rosenthal himself teaches. The harlot is destroyed in the middle of the seven years, and then the Antichrist rules for the second half. This also means that the world religious rule of the harlot must be during the first half of the seven years. The religious system of the first half is represented as the harlot. She is destroyed in the middle, and the religious system of the second half is the worship of the Antichrist. Not only does the Antichrist persecute believers (during the second half), this religious system of the harlot also persecutes the saints (17:6); so this persecution must be during the first half, which is when the fifth seal saints are martyred. Who killed the fifth seal saints, then, is not the Antichrist in the second half but the harlot in the first half. Here is a simple solution that is in keeping with the chronology of Revelation itself.

The fourth assumption is that the sixth seal announces the wrath of God which comes with the seventh seal. This point has already been discussed in detail.

It is important to emphasize how much of Rosenthal's view is based on assumption and presupposition, rather than on exegesis. Rosenthal insists that there is no other way to understand this if one is honest, and a lover of God's Word. But as this critique is trying to show, these are not the only ways, nor even the best ways of explaining these texts.

In the next paragraph, Rosenthal makes the following comments on the seventh seal:

> In Revelation 8 that seventh seal is opened: "And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stood before God, and to them were given seven trumpets" (Rev. 8:1-2). The reason for the "silence" in heaven at the opening of the seventh seal is most solemn. It signals the start of the Day of the Lord's wrath on the earth. It will be so awesome that heaven can only observe in silence. Again, hear the prophet Zephaniah speak to this point: . . . (Zeph. 1:7, 14-15)
>
> The prophet speaks of silence because the Day of the Lord is at hand and because He has prepared a sacrifice. Concerning what that sacrifice is, men are not left in doubt. The Word of God is precise. It is God's judgment of the nations. In a clear Day of the Lord text, the prophet Isaiah wrote, . . . (Isa. 34:1-2, 6, 8; cf. Rom. 2:3-10) (p. 179-180)

More assumptions come forth. There is actually no connection between Revelation 8:1 and Zephaniah 1:7. The only point of similarity is "silence," a very shallow basis to connect the two, because everything else is so different. John is describing a situation in heaven. Zephaniah is describing a situation on earth; more specifically, Jerusalem and Israel, as the geographical notations in verses 10-12 (not quoted by Rosenthal) clearly show. There is absolutely no correlation between Revelation eight and Zephaniah one. The only reason Rosenthal wants to make that correlation is that he wishes to begin the Day of the Lord with the seventh seal. Revelation eight does not mention the Day of the Lord; Zephaniah does. So Rosenthal desperately needs Zephaniah to correlate with Revelation eight. This is truly strained. An honest reading of both texts will show a total lack of similarity.

As for Isaiah 34, this Rosenthal calls a "clear Day of the Lord" text. It should be noted that nowhere is that term used in Isaiah 34. The mention of wrath against all nations, especially against all of their armies, points to Armageddon and the second coming at the end of the Day of the Lord, and which Revelation 16:12-21 connects with the sixth and seventh bowl judgments; and which Revelation 19:11-21 connects with the second coming. Nothing here indicates that the Day of the Lord only begins with the seventh seal and what Isaiah describes takes place with the last two bowl judgments only.

In spite of Rosenthal's claim that what he set forth here is "irrefutable," one must begin with an unproven presupposition to get to this point.

Rosenthal then turns to the issue of the 144,000:

> Following the opening of the six seals and the impending outpouring of divine wrath, the scene dramatically changes. What the apostle John beholds is important for an understanding of prophetic events and the timing of the Rapture. He sees four angels standing on the four corners of the earth empowered to hold back the wind on the earth, "that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree" (Rev. 7:1). Angels are God's servants. Since it is God's wrath which is about to be poured out, angels will be employed (2 Thess. 1:7-8). Again, the first five seals represent the ultimate rebellion of man under the Antichrist, who is empowered by Satan. Thus, no angelic beings were involved. Now John beholds another angel ascending from the East. He probably is to be identified as the archangel Michael, who has a specific guardian relationship to Israel (Dan. 12:1), and the 144,000 are Jews: "And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads" (Rev. 7:2-3).

> The message is clear, urgent, precise, and given as a command: *Do not begin pouring out God's wrath until the remnant of 144,000 Jews are first sealed for protection from that wrath.* It cannot be demonstrated that this is a parenthesis looking back to an earlier event for it is not the seals which hurt the earth, sea, and trees, but the trumpet judgments which follow (Rev. 8:7-11). . . . They are "not defiled with women; for they are virgins" (Rev. 14:4). This reference to their being virgins may mean that they never married or perhaps that they purposely remained celibate in their separation unto God (2 Cor. 11:2). Perhaps, however, it reflects the fact that they did not submit to spiritual seduction of the Antichrist and his enticements (Rev. 13:15; cf. Isa. 57:3, 4, 8) . . . And whether they are regenerated (saved) at the time of their sealing (Rev. 7:4) or sealed for physical protection and later regenerated (Rev. 14:4) is a matter of speculation. What is abundantly clear and was obviously important to the angel is the fact that 144,000 Jews must be sealed before the Day of the Lord wrath begins. Details may be debated; but that central fact cannot be. (pp. 181-182)

More presuppositions: Rosenthal again insists that angels must be involved in the wrath of God. Since the first five seals did not involve angels, they would not be part of the wrath of God. Therefore, the wrath can only begin with the sixth seal. There is simply no basis for such a presupposition. The simple use of a concordance will show that when God poured out His wrath in history, angels were not always involved. The citing of II Thessalonians 1:7-8 proves nothing, as it is speaking of the second coming when He will come with His angels. That angels have been, and will be used to pour out God's judgment, is not the issue. The issue is: are angels *always* involved in the wrath of God? The answer is a simple *no*!

He again asserts that the first five seals "represent the ultimate rebellion of man under the Antichrist, who is empowered by Satan. Thus, no angelic beings were involved." His point is that God could not be responsible for the Antichrist, so the first five seals cannot be the wrath of God. But Rosenthal does make the trumpets the wrath of God, and both the fifth and sixth trumpet judgments cover an invasion of demons out of the abyss. Here one sees the wrath of God and "angelic inducement," yet resulting in demonic oppression; here God is obviously responsible by Rosenthal's own criteria. All this presuppositionalism, just to avoid putting the Rapture before the fifth seal!

As to the issue of the timing of the Rapture, Rosenthal insists that the 144,000 must be sealed before God can pour out His wrath. Since the wrath of God begins with the seventh seal, the 144,000 are sealed between the sixth and seventh seals. One cannot be sure exactly how this relates to the timing of the Rapture. If the Rapture takes place with the seventh seal - and if the 144,000 are sealed between the sixth and seventh seals - then the 144,000 would leave the earth in the Rapture. But Rosenthal has them on earth throughout the wrath of God, for they are "sealed for protection from that wrath." This is

just one of several inconsistencies and contradictions. Further, Rosenthal states: "And whether they are regenerated (saved) at the time of their sealing . . . or sealed for physical protection and later regenerated . . . is a matter of speculation. What is abundantly clear, and was obviously important to the angel, is the fact that 144,00 Jews must be sealed because the Day of the Lord wrath begins." Let it first be noted that Rosenthal works on the assumption that the wrath of God begins only with the seventh seal, and that is based on the testimony of unregenerated men. Again, when it is God Himself who identifies *wrath* in Revelation, it is only of the bowl judgments contained in the seventh trumpet. Secondly, the question as to just when are the 144,000 saved is brushed off by Rosenthal as not being a key issue. But it *is* an important key issue. Related passages on sealing show that it is a work of the Holy Spirit which takes place at salvation (II Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30). If this sealing takes place between the sixth and seventh seals, and if the Rapture takes place with the seventh seal, then the 144,000 would be raptured and not left behind. Thus, he must innovate a theory that the 144,000 are sealed before the Rapture but saved afterwards. This is simply not the way sealing by God is defined by Scripture itself. Thirdly, Rosenthal states that the 144,000 are sealed for protection from the wrath of God. The simple truth is that all believers are exempt from the wrath of God (John 3:36; Romans 5:9). The 144,000 are not just protected from the wrath of God; they are protected from being harmed by the Tribulation judgments which include the demonic invasion of Revelation 9:4. That is not true of other believers who do suffer martyrdom and death in the Tribulation (Revelation 13:3). Again, all believers are exempt from the wrath of God. The sealing of the 144,000 protects them from death during the entire seven years of Tribulation.

Again, it is not clear from Rosenthal's arguments just how they relate to the timing of the Rapture. It appears to be in the statement that the angels cannot hurt the earth, sea, or any tree until the 144,000 are sealed, which are only hurt by the wrath of God with the seventh seal and not by the first five seals. So what? All this could be true even with the Rapture before the seven years. The reviewer fails to see the logic in Rosenthal's argument here. Whether the 144,000 are sealed before the first seal or after the fifth seal says nothing about the timing of the Rapture, for Rosenthal, like Pre-Tribulationists, leaves them on the earth; and they are here after the Rapture of the seventh seal (very inconsistent for Rosenthal, as they are sealed before the seventh seal, but consistent with the Pre-Tribulational view).

Rosenthal also insists that one cannot make chapter seven retroactive to chapter six. The reason: "it is not the seals which hurt the earth, sea, and trees, but the trumpet judgments which follow." Three things should be noted here. Whether or not chapter seven is retroactive to chapter six is not relevant to the issue of the timing of the Rapture, and one could hold to either view and believe in Pre-Tribulationism. Secondly, the presupposition in Rosenthal's argument is that because the angels are instructed not to

hurt the earth, sea and trees, this means then that no harm could have come to them before this event. However, the earth, sea and trees could have been hurt by the previous judgments, and then the instructions to the angels only mean to do no *further* harm until the 144,000 are sealed. The Book of Revelation itself indicates that this is the best view, for the very same instructions are given to the demons in 9:7, which is the fifth trumpet; and by then, the land, sea and trees have been hurt by the first four trumpets. Although this hurt is done by demons, it is part of the fifth trumpet and Rosenthal sees all the trumpets as being part of the wrath of God. Thirdly, is it true that "it is not the seals which hurt the earth, sea, and trees . . ."? The first, second and fourth seals all mention war. Is it possible to have war without the earth being hurt? The third and fourth seals both mention famine. Is it possible to have a famine without food and all vegetation, in fact, not being hurt? Certainly famine includes scarcity of food, including sea-food. So, is not the sea hurt? What about the sixth seal? This is the "cosmic disturbance" which Rosenthal himself ascribes to God. Is it possible that these cosmic cataclysms will not hurt the earth, sea and trees? The great earthquake of 6:12 would obviously affect both the land and the sea. The cosmic convulsions in the sun, moon and stars (6:12-13) would obviously affect the trees. If "every mountain and island is moved out of their places" (6:14), the land and sea are obviously affected and the trees could hardly escape being hurt. Rosenthal's way out of this dilemma is again to distinguish between the acts of man and the acts of God. But the sixth seal is an act of God, not man. The only way out for Rosenthal is to make chapter seven retroactive to the sixth seal of chapter six. If, however, it is possible to make chapter seven retroactive to the sixth seal, it is also possible to make it retroactive to the first seal. In the end, making chapter seven retroactive to chapter six is not crucial to Pre-Tribulationism, but it is crucial to Rosenthal's view. That issue is actually determined by several other issues, one of which is the difference between the phrase *after this* (7:1) as over against *after these things*; but that question is not relevant to the issue of the timing of the Rapture or Rosenthal's view, and so it need not detain us here.

Also not really relevant to the issue of the timing of the Rapture - but at least raising questions concerning how carefully Rosenthal handles the text - is the fact that he quotes Revelation 17:1-2, 3-4. Though this describes the great harlot, the author identifies this as the kingdom over which the Antichrist rules. That is contextually impossible. In 17:16-17, the Antichrist himself will destroy the harlot, and he would obviously not destroy his own kingdom! The harlot and the beast are clearly distinguished throughout this chapter. Again, this is not germane to the issue of the timing of the Rapture, but does show that sometimes Rosenthal can be quite careless with the text and context.

Rosenthal next goes on to deal with the great multitude of Revelation seven:

. . . The identification of this great multitude in heaven is of importance.

One well-known expositor reflects the traditional view of pretribulationism with these words: "Chapter 7 does not advance the narrative but directs attention to two major groups of saints in the tribulation. The opening portion of the chapter pictures the 144,000 representative of the godly remnant of Israel on earth in the great tribulation. The latter part of the chapter describes a great multitude of martyred dead in heaven, those who died as a testimony to their faith from every kindred, tongue and nation." This commentator, along with many others, is anxious to get this great multitude "dead"—through martyrdom. However, nowhere in the considerable description of this group (Rev. 7:9-17) is it ever said they are martyred. In the previous chapter, a group of martyrs is seen. Their martyrdom occurred with the opening of the fifth seal, at the beginning of the Great Tribulation . . .

This great multitude in chapter 7 is clearly a different group from those described in chapter 6. The contrasting and additional truth is significant. . . .

If these are martyrs, how does such a multitude (from every kindred, tongue and tribe) get saved so quickly, particularly during a time pretribulationists say God is dealing primarily with Israel? . . .

The former group are *souls*—the latter group have *bodies*. . .

. . . in Revelation 6 John immediately recognizes the martyrs as those who "were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held" (v. 9). In Revelation 7 it is clear that John does not recognize who this great multitude is. To the question directly proposed to John, "Who are these . . .?" (v. 13), he gives this response: "Sir, thou knowest" (v. 14), a clear admission that he did not recognize them.

If this great multitude—which suddenly appears in heaven, which no man can number, and which has universal representation—are not martyrs, who are they?

This great multitude, innumerable, universal, and suddenly appearing in heaven with white robes (purified) and palm branches (triumphant), is the raptured church. This event occurs immediately prior to the opening of the seventh seal and the outpouring of the Day of the Lord wrath (Rev. 8:1): . . .

> . . . The small struggling church of his day had now become an innumerable host—the triumphant body of Christ. . . .
>
> . . . A host of different groups are present to greet this great multitude. This host does not include the church, which is conspicuous by its absence. It is reasonable to expect that the church would have been present if it already had been raptured pretribulationally.
>
> This great multitude represents the true church which goes into the seventieth week of Daniel. They are raptured at the end of the Great Tribulation but before the Day of the Lord begins. They are raptured before God's wrath is poured out but are not exempt from the ultimate rebellion of unregenerate men.
>
> The symmetry, balance, and timing of Revelation 7 should not be missed. With chapter 8, the Day of the Lord will begin. Therefore, in chapter 7 the church is raptured. But immediately prior to the Rapture of the church, the 144,000 Jews are sealed. It is almost like a baton being passed between runners. The 144,000 must be sealed for protection to go through the Day of the Lord before the church can be caught up to the throne in heaven. God will not leave Himself without a people on the earth. (pp. 183-185)

Rosenthal's opening statement is that the "identification of this great multitude in heaven is of importance," because, for Rosenthal, this great multitude is the church; and if this could be substantiated, he has proved his point. In fact, within the Book of Revelation, this would be the only place where the Church is seen in heaven, following Rosenthal's short Great Tribulation, which these saints have "come out from." If it can be clearly shown that these are Church saints, his point is largely proven. If not, then Rosenthal has lost his best evidence. He seems to sense the weakness of his position in a footnote. After admitting that the identification of the great multitude is important, his later footnote seems to deny it:

> The identity of the "great multitude" of Revelation 7 is not crucial to the prewrath rapture. The biblical evidence, however, strongly favors identifying them as the raptured church in heaven before the Day of the Lord commences. (p. 304)

But, the fact is, that the identity of the "great multitude" *is* crucial to his argument. Within the Book of Revelation, this is pretty much all he has!

Rosenthal begins by trying to make a sharp distinction between the fifth seal saints and the great multitude. Such a distinction is crucial to his view; thus, he argues against

the Pre-Tribulationists who view the great multitude as martyrs, though this factor alone is not crucial to Pre-Tribulationism as Rosenthal implies. Rosenthal points out that the text does not actually say that they are martyrs, and this is true. But has Rosenthal proven that they are *not* martyrs? And has he proven that the fifth seal saints and the great multitude are two totally and exclusively different groups? As Rosenthal claims: "This great multitude in chapter 7 is clearly a different group from those described in chapter 6." But are they exclusively different? Are the contrasts really "significant"?

Actually, the evidence implies that they do belong to the same body of saints, with those of chapter seven being an extension of those in chapter six. First, both groups are dressed the same - in white robes (Rev. 6:11; 7:9, 13-14). Secondly, the fifth seal saints cry out to God to avenge their martyrdom (6:10); but they are told they must wait "until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, who should be killed even as they were, should have fulfilled *their course*" (6:11). Clearly, other saints were to be martyred following those of the fifth seal. So, where are there other saints in the Book of Revelation? Within the context of Revelation, the great multitude of chapter seven fulfills the prophecy of 6:11. Thirdly, that these cannot be Church saints in general is seen by the fact that these saints suffered deprivation of food and shelter (7:16), which will be true of Tribulation saints in general but not of Church saints in general, as Church history clearly shows. So, exegetically, it is more fitting to make the "great multitude" a continuation of the persecuted saints of the fifth seal, for such a continued martyrdom was promised in 6:11 and fulfilled by 7:9-17.

Rosenthal needs this body to be Church saints so badly that he resorts to some of his most shallow arguments in the book. One is by asking a question that really has no force: "If these are martyrs, how does such a multitude (from every kindred, tongue, and tribe) get saved so quickly, particularly during a time pretribulationists say God is dealing primarily with Israel?" No serious Bible student, and no one with a knowledge of Pre-Tribulationism should take this seriously. First, the time is not necessarily short - as Rosenthal wants Pre-Tribulationists to believe - as many of us have always believed that the Rapture can take place many years before the Tribulation starts. Secondly, even if the Rapture does take place just before the Tribulation, the grace of God can save many people in a short period of time, as revivals and great awakenings in Church history have clearly shown. There were times in the Book of Acts when thousands were saved in one day through only one Gospel message. Thirdly, Pre-Tribulationists concur that while God deals primarily with Israel, He will also do a great work among Gentiles (something Rosenthal clearly knows, but he tried to pull out every stop because his own argument here is so weak).

A second shallow argument Rosenthal resorts to is to say that the saints of Revelation six are "souls," while the saints of Revelation seven have "bodies." But, nowhere in chapter seven are they actually said to have "bodies;" Rosenthal is reading this into the text.

Rosenthal then makes the point that John does not recognize who the great multitude is. The argument works against Rosenthal here rather than for him. If these are Church saints, how can it be that John, himself a Church saint, an Apostle and one of the foundation-stones of the Church, did not recognize the Church? If these are Church saints, he would have recognized them. If these are Tribulation saints, however, it is easy to see how he would not recognize them. Rosenthal's way out of this dilemma is to state: "The small struggling church of his day has now become an innumerable host." But by the time John wrote Revelation, the Church was no longer all that small even though it was struggling. It had become a major force - both inside and outside the Roman Empire - with churches established everywhere; governments were needing to take the Church seriously. Even if Rosenthal's point was valid, the size of the Church alone should not have caused John's inability to identify them.

The shallowness continues: Rosenthal states that the host of different groups coming to greet the great multitude "does not include the Church, which is conspicuous by its absence." He reasons that because the Church is not mentioned, the great multitude therefore must be the Church. However, two things can be said in response. Rosenthal's argument - that the Church cannot be among the greeters because it is not mentioned - is a two-edged sword. It should also be pointed out that this great multitude is never called the Church, and the absence of the term identifying this group is what is "conspicuous by its absence." Secondly, Rosenthal's argument merely presupposes his position. The 24 elders *are* there to greet the great multitude. Rosenthal denies that these represent the Church. But the point is this: if they do represent the Church, as many Pre-Tribulationists affirm, then the Church is not absent from among the greeters.

Rosenthal then insists several times that the great multitude is the Church raptured into heaven. He says the great multitude "suddenly appears in heaven." However, nothing in the texts indicates a "sudden" appearance. Their appearance in heaven is no more sudden than the fifth seal saints; and John uses the same wording for both: ". . . I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain" (6:9); and: ". . . I saw, and behold, a great multitude . . ." (7:9). In each case, John was merely shown a group of saints in heaven without saying anything about their arrival, either suddenly or gradually. Furthermore, 7:14 uses the Greek present tense, which carries the concept of "continually coming" out of the Great Tribulation, and not suddenly coming; they do not go up as one single group but as they are martyred, one by one. Rosenthal wants it to be sudden, because this is the Rapture for him. But all of his assertions in the above quotation that the great multitude is the Church are based on presupposing his position to be already true. The identification of the great multitude with the Church is purely the result of dogmatism - and assuming certain presuppositions to be true - rather than exegesis. Yet this identification is absolutely crucial to his position because it is the only place in Revelation that he can use to try to prove the Rapture occurs between the sixth and seventh seals. But, again, I think Rosenthal realizes the weakness of his exegesis; and, so,

with a footnote at the end of the book, he wishes to disclaim how crucial the identification of the great multitude with the Church is to his whole position.

Another point is ignored by Rosenthal: If this great multitude is the Church, then, of necessity, this is only a partial-Rapture - something Rosenthal himself does not espouse. Verses 13-17 state that these saints came out of the Great Tribulation. This would exclude all Church saints who have died since Acts two, or who will die before his Great Tribulation. This clearly shows that the great multitude simply cannot be the Church, the whole Body of Christ. Rosenthal simply ignores such details in the text.

Finally, what about Rosenthal's "symmetry" between the 144,000 Jews and the great multitude? According to Rosenthal, the 144,000 Jews are sealed before the Church is raptured. Obviously, if the sealing takes place before the Rapture, it is not a sealing of salvation; for if these were saved before the Rapture, they would also go up in the Rapture. So, Rosenthal is forced to give a strange interpretation to divine sealing, a divine sealing that is not connected with salvation. This goes contrary to the way the Bible itself interprets divine sealing which is the sealing of salvation, guaranteeing eternal security (II Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30). There is symmetry in Revelation seven but not in the way Rosenthal interprets it. The Church is raptured sometime prior to chapter six. In Revelation 7:1-8, God saves the 144,000 Jews; and so, in that sense, it is "like a baton being passed between runners." The 144,000 take on the task of spreading the Gospel. Then, in 7:9-18, comes the vision of the great multitude. The vision is introduced by the phrase "after these things," a chronological phrase meaning that the events of 7:9-17 follow the events of 7:1-8. They explain the result of the ministry of the 144,000 Jews: the salvation of myriads of Gentiles during the Tribulation. This allows the symmetry to stand without forcing the term "Church" onto the great multitude, and without a strained, unnatural exegesis to the meaning of divine sealing.

Rosenthal next goes on to deal with the "last trump":

> Pretribulation rapturists do not make strong appeal to Paul's statement that the Rapture will occur before the last trump to support their position. Generally speaking, if they mention 1 Corinthians 15 in a Rapture discussion, it is brief and without determinative significance. The reason is obvious: If the Rapture occurs before the last trump, pretribulation rapturism has no way, exegetically, to associate a pre-seventieth week Rapture with the last trump of God. . . .
>
> At this point another major obstacle develops for both post- and mid-tribulation rapturists. First Corinthians was one of Paul's earlier epistles. It was written in approximately A.D. 55 or 56. By contrast, the apostle John penned the book of Revelation, the last-written document of the New Testament, sometime after A.D. 85. Those dates are not significantly

disputed by conservative, Bible-believing scholars. That means that Paul's epistle to the Corinthians was written at least twenty-nine years before the book of Revelation was written. Paul, in unveiling a mystery, was revealing truth to the Corinthians that they could comprehend. Since that truth revolved around the fact that one generation would receive glorified bodies through rapture at the last trump, the Corinthians had to understand the significance of the phrase *at the last trump* without any knowledge of the book of Revelation, which had not yet been written. This clearly means that, in the first instance, the significance of the phrase *at the last trump* must have been understood apart from the book of Revelation if the Corinthians were able to comprehend Paul's teaching. That conclusion cannot be escaped. . . .

The last trump will be nothing more, nothing less, and nothing different than the final, climactic, eschatological outpouring of the wrath of God. The central theme of the prophet Joel is the Day of the Lord. In the clearest possible terms, he teaches that the Day of the Lord will commence with the blowing of a trumpet. "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand" (Joel 2:1). The prophets repeatedly called that final judgment the Day of the Lord.

The Corinthians to whom Paul wrote could reasonably be expected to have understood that truth after eighteen months under the ministry of Paul. . . .

Now, back to the trumpet judgments of the book of Revelation. God's Day of the Lord wrath is to be meted out with the opening of the seventh seal (Rev. 6:17). The seventh seal involves no direct judgment of its own, as do the previous six seals. It does, however, contain the seven trumpet judgments, and the seventh trumpet contains the seven bowls. If one were to outline the seals, trumpets, and bowls of the book of Revelation, the trumpets would be indented under the seventh seal, and the bowls would be indented under the seventh trumpet. The seventh seal alone literally contains the trumpet and bowl judgments.

Therefore, as the seventh seal is opened, the seven trumpet and bowl judgments progressively unfold. They are part of a comprehensive whole. Collectively, they are God's Day of the Lord wrath, His final eschatological judgment—the last trump. Since the last trump arises out of the seventh seal, and the Rapture, according to Paul, occurs at the last trump: "We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" (1 Cor. 15:51-52), the Rapture must occur at the opening of the seventh seal

> and immediately prior to the beginning of God's wrath. That interpretation is unstrained and biblically accurate. . . (pp. 189-191, 193-194)

Rosenthal's sweeping statement that "Pretribulation rapturists do not make strong appeal to Paul's statement that the Rapture will occur before the last trump to support their position," should not be taken seriously, for anyone well-versed in Pre-Tribulationism knows that the statement is both untrue and unfair. Having made such an untrue and unfair statement about Pre-Tribulationists, he then goes on to give the reason: "If the Rapture occurs before the last trump, pretribulation rapturism has no way, exegetically, to associate a pre-seventieth week Rapture with the last trump of God." But this is wishful thinking on Rosenthal's part, because Pre-Tribulationism has no problem whatsoever with "the last trump," as will be shown shortly. First, however, it should be pointed out how Rosenthal misreads the text. He keeps citing Paul as saying that the "Rapture occurs before the last trump." Actually Paul says "*at* the last trump," not *before* the last trump, as Rosenthal would have it.

Rosenthal avoids the trap that both Mid-Tribulationists and Post-Tribulationalists fall into, by being careful not to connect "the last trump" with the seventh trumpet of Revelation; the Corinthians, after all, would have no knowledge of the Book of Revelation. As he correctly observes, "The Corinthians had to understand the significance of the phrase *at the last trump* without any knowledge of the book of Revelation, which had not yet been written." Rosenthal's identification is not of a specific trumpet sound, but to a more general trumpet sounding that includes all seven trumpets and seven bowls; but he must of necessity prove it from a passage outside of Revelation. His definition of the last trump is: "*The last trump will be nothing more, nothing less, and nothing different than the final, climactic, eschatological outpouring of the wrath of God.*" He cites Joel 2:1, and states that in "the clearest possible terms" Joel is teaching that "the Day of the Lord will commence with the blowing of a trumpet." A more careful reading of the verse shows that Joel is not saying that the sound of a trumpet begins the Day of the Lord; it only announces that the Day of the Lord is coming, or approaching, but is not here yet. So if the Rapture is pre-tribulational, the sound of a trumpet brings on the Rapture which, in turn, announces that the Tribulation is coming or approaching; it is here yet, however, as the Tribulation itself begins only with the signing of the seven-year covenant.

Rosenthal, again, does not identify the last trump with the seventh trumpet, but generalizes it as a collective of all the seven trumpets and bowls combined in the seventh seal. His "last trump" is really a period of 21 months, rather than a specific point of time which signals the Rapture. To reach this conclusion, Rosenthal makes the trumpet of Joel 2:1, I Corinthians 15:52, I Thessalonians 4:16, and the seven trumpets of Revelation 8-9 all the same "last trump." Would anyone arrive at such a conclusion if he did not approach all these texts with a preconceived theology? This is an impossible conclusion purely on exegetical grounds. The trumpet of I Corinthians and I Thessalonians are obviously the same, for both result in the resurrection of the dead and the translation of

the living, thus, resulting in blessing. The trumpet of Joel two is a trumpet blown by men as a warning to Israel of impending judgment. The trumpets in Revelation are blown by angels, resulting only in judgment upon all humanity without any blessing associated with any of them. But Paul was very specific about his last trump, preceding it with a definite article: *the* last trump. It is a singular and cannot refer to all seven trumpets. He is referring to a special trumpet sound, with which he expected the Corinthians to be familiar. Rosenthal is right that this could not be the seventh trumpet of Revelation, for that would present a chronological problem. Rosenthal's solution is the trumpet of Joel. Even within the Book of Joel, there is more than one trumpet (2:1, 15); and neither one is specifically called the "last trump." The reason is closer to Paul's time, and indeed, it was something about which he would have taught them. Several times in First Corinthians, Paul has been showing the connection between New Testament truth and the seven holy seasons of Israel as outlined in Leviticus 23. He dealt with Passover and Unleavened Bread in 5:6-8, connecting it with Messiah's death and the sinlessness of His blood offering. Earlier in this chapter (15:20-24), he spoke of the Feast of Firstfruits, connecting it with the Messiah's resurrection. Now, in 15:50-58, he connects the Rapture of the Church with the Feast of Trumpets. While the Corinthians would have no knowledge of the trumpets of Revelation, they would know of the Feast of Trumpets just as they knew about the feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, etc. The "last trump" refers to the Feast of Trumpets and the Jewish practice of blowing trumpets at this feast each year. During the ceremony, there is a series of short trumpet blasts of various lengths, concluding with the longest blast of all; this is called the *tekiah gedolah*, the great or "last trump." Judaism connected this last trump with the resurrection of the dead, and so does Paul. Paul's point here is that the Rapture will be the fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets. As such, it says nothing about the timing of the Rapture. However, this is an indication of the timing of the Rapture. The seven holy seasons of Leviticus 23 are fulfilled in the order in which they fall. What follows the Feast of Trumpets is the Day of Atonement, which was a day of Israel's national atonement coupled with the affliction of the soul. The Day of Atonement is to be fulfilled by the seven years of Tribulation, during which Israel will suffer affliction leading to her national repentance and restoration. And just as the Feast of Trumpets precedes the Day of Atonement, so will the Rapture precede the seven years of Tribulation. So in spite of Rosenthal's wishes, the last trump presents no problem for Pre-Tribulationism.

Another point that should not be missed is that the author insists that the Rapture takes place with the breaking of the seventh seal. If so, why then is the Rapture not mentioned here?

Later, Rosenthal again resorts to a straw-man argument:

> . . . In clear, unmistakable, nondebatable terms, the apostle Paul identified two events which *must* precede the Day of the Lord. First, the great apostasy (the falling away) must occur. And second, the man of sin

> (the Antichrist) must be revealed. *If, as pretribulation rapturism maintains, the Day of the Lord starts at the beginning of the seventieth week and if, as they normally teach, the Rapture begins the seventieth week, then it must be concluded that these two events (the apostasy and the revealing of the man of sin) occur* before *the Rapture of the church. That reality simply cannot be denied.*
>
> Some interpreters, sensing the enormity of the problem, have attempted a solution by again suggesting that perhaps a period of time exists between the Rapture and the starting of the seventieth week—allowing for the apostasy and revealing of the man of sin. However, that suggestion goes against the historic pretribulation view . . . Further, the Lord teaches that on the very day that Noah entered the ark, God's judgment fell. In other words, there was deliverance for Noah and his family and judgment on the unregenerate world on the same day. Then the Lord makes this point: "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." That is, deliverance of the righteous will be immediately followed by God's Day of the Lord wrath on the wicked. *Biblically, no extended period of time can separate the two events of rapture and wrath.*
>
> One of two things should be conceded: either the doctrine of imminency, which maintains that no prophesied events can precede the Rapture, is valid; or the proposition that the Day of the Lord starts at the beginning of the seventieth week must be rescinded. There is no legitimate escape from either conclusion. (pp. 196-197)

Here again, Rosenthal argues that if the Rapture starts the Day of the Lord (the seven years of Tribulation) - and the Bible teaches that some things come before the Tribulation - then these events must come before the Rapture; therefore, the Rapture cannot be imminent. If that was the kind of Pre-Tribulationism Rosenthal believed in, then no wonder he had his problems. Yet he admits that is not the position of all Pre-Tribulationists (including this reviewer). Scholarly Pre-Tribulationism has clearly stated that Pre-Tribulationism only means that the Rapture must come some time before the Tribulation; indeed, it can come well before, as the starting-point of the Tribulation is *not* the Rapture but the signing of the seven-year covenant. To say then that some things must come before the Tribulation is not the same as saying they come before the Rapture. Rosenthal wishes to force all Pre-Tribulationists into this mold so that he can strengthen his own case; but only those unversed in Pre-Tribulationism will be fooled or deceived by Rosenthal's logic. The truth is that no Pre-Tribulationist needs to concede either of the two points that Rosenthal insists they must. First, a Pre-Tribulationist need not concede the doctrine of imminency. Rosenthal again gives a false impression of the position. He defines imminency as meaning "that no prophesied events can precede the Rapture." But that is not what it means; for those who hold to imminency do believe that prophesied

events - such as the rebirth of Israel - can and have been fulfilled before the Rapture. What imminency teaches is that no prophecy *has to be* fulfilled before the Rapture can take place, rather than the idea that it cannot be. Nor does a Pre-Tribulationist need to rescind the second point: that the Day of the Lord starts at the beginning of the seventieth week. That would only be necessary if one accepts Rosenthal's caricature of Pre-Tribulationism as opposed to the view held and taught by many of us long before Rosenthal's work.

Finally, Rosenthal insists that "*Biblically, no extended period of time can separate the two events of rapture and wrath.*" His basis is to use the analogy of Noah, claiming that "on the very day that Noah entered the ark, God's judgment fell." But in fact, Matthew 24:36-39 makes no such statement. It is a fact that seven days intervened between Noah entering the ark and the beginning of the forty days of rain, so there can be a period of time between the Rapture and the beginning of the seven years of Tribulation as well.

In a chapter entitled "The Coming and the End," Rosenthal makes the following comments:

> From these observations some clear conclusions can be drawn.
>
> In the first place, *the Lord's coming* (parousia) *is a comprehensive whole*. There is only *one* Second Coming. It includes the Rapture of the church, the outpouring of God's wrath during the Day of the Lord, and Christ's physical return in glory. The meaning of the word *coming* (*parousia*) demonstrates that fact. It means a coming and continuing presence. That would be contradicted by the concept of a coming at the beginning of the seventieth week and another at its end, as pretribulationism has often taught.
>
> The Lord's coming is consistently portrayed as a singular event. . . .
>
> There is not even a hint—anywhere—of two separate comings. That is simple, unadorned, biblical fact. . . . Some texts which speak of Christ's coming are emphasizing the Rapture and the Day of the Lord; others His return in power and glory. But these events are part of one composite whole—the Second Coming.
>
> There is clear evidence that there is a coming (*parousia*) of Christ some time after the middle of the seventieth week (cf. Matt. 24:3, 15, 27). For pretribulation rapturism to stand, among other things, two points must be demonstrated: First, that there are two comings; and second, that one of them occurs before the seventieth week begins. . . .

> In addition, *no one can know the day or the hour of Christ's coming* (parousia). That is clearly taught by the Lord Himself (Matt. 24:36-37). However, men are to know the *general* time period of Christ's coming. That is also taught by the Lord (Matt. 24:32-33). The apostle Paul warned the Thessalonians that the Lord's coming (*parousia*) would be as "a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:2). Then he explained the response of both the saved and the unsaved to the Lord's coming. Concerning the unsaved he wrote, "For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape" (1 Thess. 5:3). The picture Paul portrayed is of an unsaved world caught completely off guard and unprepared for Christ's return. But of the saved he wrote regarding Christ's' coming (*parousia*), "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be soberminded" (1 Thess. 5:4-6; see also 2 Pet. 3:12).
>
> No amount of rationalizing can explain away the fact that if the coming of the Lord is imminent and pretribulational, He will, of an absolute necessity, return as "a thief in the night" even for the believers. (pp. 221-224)

Here is an example of Rosenthal merely playing word games. His point is that the second coming is only "one composite whole," and that this composite whole includes "the Rapture of the Church, the outpouring of God's wrath during the Day of the Lord, and Christ's physical return . . ." He says that Pre-Tribulation Rapture requires two comings, while his own view requires only one. This is pure foolishness and completely illogical. What Rosenthal says about his own view can be claimed by both Mid-Tribulationists and Pre-Tribulationists: If the Rapture takes place at the three-quarter point, and this Rapture is followed by a period of time (Rosenthal's Day of the Lord), and this period of time is followed by "Christ's physical return" to the earth, then this view has the same number of appearances of Christ as the Mid- and Pre-Tribulationist views. The only difference is the actual amount of time between "the Rapture of the Church" and "Christ's physical return in glory." If Rosenthal wants to say that all three chronological events (the Rapture, the Day of the Lord and the physical return of Christ to the earth) are all one comprehensive whole of the second coming, then Mid- and Pre-Tribulationists can picture their view all in the same way. The Mid-Tribulationist can claim that the Rapture in the middle of the Tribulation, the Day of the Lord during the second half, and the physical return of Christ is all part of the comprehensive second coming. The Pre-Tribulationist can say (and some have) that the Rapture of the Church takes place before the seventieth week of Daniel, followed by the seven years of the Day of the Lord, which in turn is followed by the physical return of Christ to the earth - and it is all the

comprehensive whole of the second coming. Other Pre-Tribulationists do not view Christ's appearance in the air for the Rapture as the second coming any more than Christ's appearance to Paul on the Damascus Road or Christ's appearance to John on the Isle of Patmos, is the second coming. At any rate, there is nothing about Rosenthal's view on this which is unique to his own view, and the same could be claimed by both Mid- and Pre-Tribulationists. In fact, the very criticism leveled by Rosenthal against Pre-Tribulationists can be leveled against his view by Post-Tribulationists.

Another point of confusion is to try to determine exactly where the Church is at after the Rapture, and before the actual return. Obviously, having been raptured, the Church is not on earth. In his discussion on the great multitude in Revelation seven, Rosenthal implied they are in heaven. Here he implies that the Church is not raptured into heaven because that would imply two comings. Does the Church merely float in the air, as Christ in His "continuing presence" does at the wrath of God? So, where is the Church between Rapture and return? The book is unclear.

So, Rosenthal's conclusions about Pre-Tribulationism do not follow from his premise. First, he claims that for Pre-Tribulationism to stand it "must be demonstrated . . . that there are two comings . . ." In response, it should be noted that his own view also requires a demonstration of two comings: the Rapture before his Day of the Lord; and the return after the Day of the Lord. Furthermore, since the Rapture is a meeting in the air and not a return to the earth, there is no need to postulate two comings, but only one. Secondly, he claims that it must be demonstrated "that one of the comings comes before the seventieth week begins." But he has the same burden of proof, and he must demonstrate that the Rapture takes place between the sixth and seventh seals, something he has consistently failed to do. Nothing in Revelation 6-8 describes a Rapture. Rosenthal's strongest case: the great multitude in heaven, for it to stand, must presuppose his position, as the text nowhere says they were suddenly raptured into heaven; it states only that they happen to be in heaven, and there is no more an indication of a rapture of the great multitude of chapter seven than there is of a rapture of the fifth seal saints in chapter six. Nor is this great multitude ever called the Church. So, the Pre-Tribulationists have argued their case better than Rosenthal has argued his case. Furthermore, the Pre-Tribulationist argument is a lot less convoluted than that presented by Rosenthal.

Rosenthal continues with more word-games when he says that his view allows for the believer not knowing the exact day of Christ's coming, but they will know "the *general* time period of Christ's coming." Actually, if the Rapture and second coming are all one event as Rosenthal claims, (though, as shown above, he does not really believe it) then that one event *is* datable to the exact day. It will come exactly seven years after the signing of the seven-year covenant. More specifically, it will come exactly 1,260 days following the Abomination of Desolation. So, once the seventieth week of Daniel begins, the second coming is a datable event. Only the Pre-Tribulational view can honestly deal with the apparent contradiction. If the Rapture precedes the seven years by an unknown

period of time, and since no event has to precede the Rapture, then, indeed, the Rapture will never be a datable event; and, so, no one can ever know the year, month, day or hour when that event will happen. This will not be true of the second coming once the seven years actually begin.

Rosenthal's following argument is a product of shallow exegesis, and again requires a presupposition of the position to be true in order to hold. In reference to I Thessalonians 5:2, Rosenthal states: "The apostle Paul warned . . . that the Lord's coming (*parousia*) would be as `a thief in the night'." From this statement, Rosenthal goes on to claim that while Paul teaches that the *parousia* (the second coming) will catch the unbelievers by surprise, it will not catch the believers by surprise. He then gives what he thinks is a blow to Pre-Tribulationism. If the Rapture is both pre-tribulational and imminent, then this *parousia* "will, of an absolute necessity, return as `a thief in the night' even for the believers." It is difficult to be kind to Rosenthal here, because his treatment and exegesis of the text borders on sloppiness, reading into it words and concepts which are not there and ignoring the actual wording that is there. To begin with, it must be pointed out that nowhere in I Thessalonians 5:2 does Paul mention the *parousia*, although a reader would think otherwise based on Rosenthal's wording. Paul is not saying that the *parousia* will overtake the unbeliever as a thief in the night, but that the Day of the Lord will overtake them like that. Paul dealt with the Rapture in 4:13-18, and introduced a new subject in 5:1, as the Greek *peri de* construction shows. That new subject is the Day of the Lord, or the Tribulation, and that day will overtake the unbeliever. But as Rosenthal gets it right, the passage then states that it will not overtake the believers, though Rosenthal ignores the reason why. The reason is given in 5:9: God appointed the believer "not unto wrath." In the context, the "wrath" of 5:9 is the Day of the Lord in 5:2. Because the wrath of God is not for the believer, the believer is removed before the Day of the Lord occurs. The means of the believer's removal is by the Rapture of 4:13-18. This fits quite well with Pre-Tribulationism. This is still in keeping with what the subject of 5:1-11 actually is: not the *parousia*, but the Day of the Lord.

One more point should be made. How is the Day of the Lord to come unexpectedly on the unbelievers if the seal judgments of chapter six precede the Day of the Lord? By then there will have been massive disturbances and cataclysms, with death, famine, disease, wild animals everywhere—not to mention earthquakes and celestial cataclysms. So, in terms of Rosenthal's timing, the Day of the Lord would hardly come upon the world unsuspectingly; and by then they would have had many forewarnings. Furthermore, in the midst of the wars and convulsions of the fifth and sixth seals, how could people go around crying "Peace and safety"? Only if the Day of the Lord is the entire seven years, coming some time after the Rapture, can it overtake the world by surprise. This is exactly the order found in I Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 5:1-11.

Another argument in this chapter presented by Rosenthal is:

> The *spiritual truth* of the parable is equally clear. Righteous and unrighteous men are to coexist in the world. That at "the harvest [which] is the end of the age" (Matt. 13:39), separation will occur. The wicked will be cast into hell (Matt. 13:41-42), and "the righteous [shall] shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43).
>
> The Lord taught, in the clearest possible way, that the final harvest is the separation of the righteous and unrighteous, and that the final harvest is the end of the age. That absolute identification is made: "the harvest *is* the end of the age" (Matt. 13:39). . . .
>
> For the Rapture to be pretribulational, "the end" (or the harvest which occurs at Christ's coming) must begin at the beginning of the seventieth week. But once again, the clear, irrefutable fact is "the end of the age" *does not begin* at the beginning of the seventieth week. The evidence for that fact is substantial and convincing. (p. 226)

His argument rests on the fact that a harvest of separation takes place at the end of the age, i.e., with the *parousia*. As Rosenthal continues his argument, he correlates Matthew 13 with Matthew 24-25. His point is that if a Rapture takes place before the seven years, then the harvest must take place before "the end of the age." But it is true as well that if a Rapture takes place at the three-quarter point, the harvest also takes place before "the end of the age;" and so the same argument can be used against him. The solution is not all that difficult. The harvest spoken of is the separation of living believers and unbelievers at the time of the second coming. It clearly does not include believers and unbelievers already dead, for these are viewed as still living. Nor does it need to include those raptured, because like the dead they are no longer on the earth. Since there will be salvation following the Rapture, it means that at the second coming there will be both believers and unbelievers present who will need to be separated. Does the Bible anywhere describe such a judgment of separation at "the end of the age"? Yes, in the Gospel of Matthew itself (25:31-46). The judgment of the sheep and goats, where the goats are sent to hell while the sheep enter the kingdom, is that harvest at the end of the age; and the text makes it clear that these are living people, and that the judgment comes after the second coming to the earth. So, this simply does not present the problem for Pre-Tribulationism that Rosenthal wants it to present.

In a chapter entitled "Kept From The Hour," Rosenthal states why people of all Rapture-views have been wrong until he came along:

> . . . However, because commentators have not generally understood that there are *three* sections to the seventieth week—the beginning birth pangs, the Great Tribulation, and the Day of the Lord—they have, in the view of this author, made a fundamental error. (p. 233)

For Rosenthal, the "fundamental error" is the failure to recognize the fact that the seventieth week of Daniel has three, and not two divisions. It is assumed that *all* leading biblical, theological and Greek scholars from *all* other Rapture-views have missed something so simple! Yet there is a good reason why all three schools of thought have missed it: it is simply not there! Whenever the timing of the Rapture is spoken of, it is always in two parts, not three. Either the whole seven years is spoken of or only a half of the period is spoken of, but never a quarter. The very first reference - Daniel 9:27 - speaks of all seven years, and itself divides it into two equal parts rather than three. All other time-references are always of the first or second half. Daniel and Revelation use phrases such as : "Time, times and half a time;" "42 months;" and "1,260 days." These are all equivalent to 3 1/2 years, either the first half or the second half. There is never any reference to 21 months or 630 days. The point is that there is no exegetical validation for dividing the seventieth week into three parts. This is not required by exegesis, only by Rosenthal's view.

On the subject of the seventieth week of Daniel, it should be noted that Daniel 9:27 clearly states that the "seventy sevens" or "weeks" concern Daniel's people (Israel), and Daniel's city (Jerusalem). That alone clearly indicates that the program of the last seven years is God's program for Israel, and not the Church. Rosenthal himself agrees that the Church was not present in the first 69 weeks, and there is no textual statement or exegetical basis for saying that the Church is in any part—half, three-quarters or all - of the last week. The greatest exposition of the seventieth week is Revelation 6-18, which does not even mention the Church once. This is striking, as the Church is mentioned 19 times in the preceding chapters and six times in the chapters following. This is rather consistent throughout Scripture, in that the Church is mentioned in events that both precede and follow the seven years of the Tribulation but is never mentioned as actually being in it. Rosenthal has the same problem that both Mid- and Post-Tribulationists have: no passage clearly puts the Church in any Tribulation context. This helps to explain the need for Rosenthal's rather convoluted arguments.

A comparison of the Scriptures on the "Great Tribulation" and the "Day of Jehovah" shows that these are not separate time-zones, but all refer to the same thing. The key is to compare the Scriptures which describe a period of time which is unparalleled and worse than any other time in human history - past or future. The first passage is Jeremiah 30:7:

> *Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; . . .*

Jeremiah's *time of Jacob's trouble* is a day so *great, so that none is like it*. The second passage is Daniel 12:1:

> *And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: . . .*

Daniel is speaking of the *time of trouble* that is to fall upon the Jewish people; and concerning this time of trouble, he states *such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time* . . . The third passage is Joel 2:1-2:

> *Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of Jehovah cometh, for it is nigh at hand; a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, as the dawn spread upon the mountains; a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after them, even to the years of many generations.*

Here, Joel is describing the "Day of Jehovah" (v. 1), and in verse two he describes it as, *there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after them, even to the years of many generations*. The fourth passage is Matthew 24:21:

> *. . . for then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be.*

Jesus is clearly speaking of the "Great Tribulation," of which He says, *such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be*. All four spoke of a day, or period which is unparalleled and unique in all of time, both past and future. It is obvious that there can only be one worst and unparalleled time, and so all four men were speaking of the same time. Joel called this time "the Day of Jehovah;" Jesus called it the "Great Tribulation"; Jeremiah called it "the time of Jacob's trouble"; and the Hebrew word for "trouble" was translated by the Septuagint (LXX) with the Greek word used by the New Testament for "tribulation." Daniel called it "a time of trouble"; which is also translated by the LXX by the same Greek word. Furthermore, Daniel, in context, is detailing further the seventieth week of Daniel, especially the second half (12:5-7). All of this shows that the terms "Day of the Lord," "Great Tribulation," "time of trouble" and "time of Jacob's trouble," all refer to the same period of time, and are not distinctive time-zones in that span of time. What Joel says about the Day of the Lord, Jesus says about the Great Tribulation. There is no exegetical justification for distinguishing the Great Tribulation from the Day of Jehovah, and even less so to make the seventieth week of Daniel three different periods rather than the obvious two periods found in the Scriptures.

Rosenthal then goes on to deal with the crucial verse of Revelation 3:10, but interprets it entirely on the presupposition that his view is already assumed to be true. In doing so, he accuses others of failing to use the literal hermeneutic, even as he does exactly what he accuses others of doing:

A number of salient points must be made. First, God has promised *the church of Philadelphia* that those who keep the word of His patience He will keep from the hour of temptation. (To apply the promise given to the church of Philadelphia to all of Christendom is to interpret the Scriptures nonliterally. It is only the church of Philadelphia which is promised exemption from "the hour of temptation") . . .

But there is no known or prophesied adversity for the days immediately prior to the seventieth week of Daniel, and if there is, the Rapture cannot be imminent. If the Rapture occurs pretribulationally, there is no sense in which believers can be said to be keeping the word of His patience, to be enduring in the midst of the adversity. There is no reason or logic for that concept.

If, on the other hand, Revelation 3:10 describes an event in the *middle* of the seventieth week, it makes perfect sense. During the first three and one-half years, false Christs and false prophets will emerge; they will do false signs and wonders to seemingly authenticate their false message. Believers will be seduced, hated, and betrayed (Matt. 24:9-10). The love of many for God will grow cold (Matt. 24:12). In that environment, the faith that exhibits patience—that endures in the midst of adversity, that does not reject the true Christ for a false Christ—will be rewarded: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation." . . . (p. 237)

Now, back to Revelation 3:10. . . . Those who keep the word of His patience are those who, under the stress and pressure of the first three and one-half years of the seventieth week, stay steadfast and true in the face of adversity. They will be the overcomers. As a result, they will be kept "from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." The "hour of temptation" (a specifically appointed time) is the Great Tribulation. It begins in the middle of the seventieth week but will be "cut short" before the end of the seventieth week. Some men will be kept from that hour in two ways. They will be kept "from the hour" by physical removal (perhaps men of faith and patience who are watchful will flee Jerusalem, as history records a believing remnant did before the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70), and others will be kept "through the hour of temptation" by direct, divine protection. Both concepts, *removal from* and *protection from* the hour of testing, are correct. . . .

. . . The promise of exemption from the hour of testing is given by the Lord only to those who, in His words, have "kept the word of my

> patience" (that is, who have faithfully endured during the adversity of the first three and one-half years). They are exemplified by the church of Philadelphia . . . No such exemption is promised to the other six churches . . .
>
> The phrase "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation" in Revelation 3:10 is *not* a watershed verse to determine the timing of the Rapture. It has nothing whatever to do with the timing of the Rapture. It deals with the Great Tribulation and holds out the promise—the glorious promise—that a remnant who have stayed true to the Lord during the first three and one-half years will be kept from the temptation of the Great Tribulation which will try the souls of men under the barbaric reign of the Antichrist. It is following the Great Tribulation that the Rapture and the Day of the Lord will occur. . . (pp. 239-241)

In the opening paragraph, Rosenthal accuses all those who make the promise of Revelation 3:10 a general promise of being guilty of interpreting "the Scriptures nonliterally." Yet Rosenthal himself ignores a strict literal interpretation. He insists that the promise of 3:10 is made only to the Church of Philadelphia and declares that "No such exemption is promised to the other six churches." But what is the Church of Philadelphia? If Rosenthal follows a strictly literal approach, he would have to limit the promise to the believers living in the city of Philadelphia in then Asia Minor, or modern-day Turkey. That church has long since disappeared; and a visitor would be hard pressed to find an evangelical church in Philadelphia today. Revelation 3:10 can no longer be fulfilled to the Church of Philadelphia, for it is no longer there. But Rosenthal does not follow literal interpretation. He interprets the promise of 3:10 to those believers who "faithfully endured during the adversity of the first three and one-half years)." This, of course, hardly limits the promise to the Church of Philadelphia and would easily include members of the other six churches that have faithfully endured adversity. Those believers in this definition, Rosenthal states, "are exemplified by the church of Philadelphia." However, this, too, is taking the passage "nonliterally," and one must be absolutely blind not to notice the self-contradiction within such few paragraphs.

Can the promise to the Church of Philadelphia be limited only to that church (as Rosenthal claims but then immediately teaches otherwise)? Besides the promise of 3:10, there are several other promises such as: a place in God's temple, and a new name (3:12). Can these be limited only to members of the Church of Philadelphia? If the promises to the Church of Philadelphia are limited to that church, then, obviously, the promises made to other churches must also be limited to those other churches. But can they be? To the overcomers of Ephesus, Jesus promised the eating of the tree of life in the Paradise of God (2:7). To Smyrna, He promised the crown of life and exemption from the second death (2:10-11). To Pergamum, He promised hidden manna, a white stone and a new name (2:17). To Thyatira, He promised authority over the nations and the morning star

(2:26-28). To Sardis, He promised white garments and exemption from being blotted out of the book of life (3:5). To Laodicea, He promised fellowship and authority (3:20-21). Are these promises limited to believers only of those particular churches, which today are virtually non-existent? Obviously not. Regardless of one's view of the seven churches, all have agreed that these promises are extended to all believers; or, at least, they apply to all overcomers, regardless of which church they belong to or when they lived during Church history. Even Rosenthal himself generalizes the promise of 3:10 beyond the Church of Philadelphia only. The point of this tedious discussion is to show how careless Rosenthal can be with theology and with the text, straining to prove a point and ignoring all the obvious implications of that very point.

What Rosenthal is trying very hard to do is to avoid the obvious implication of 3:10—that the Church is somehow exempt from "the hour of trial" that is about to fall upon the whole earth, and detailed in chapters 6-18 of Revelation - a section where the Church is not mentioned even once in spite of its frequent mention in the first three chapters. One such attempt is his statement that "there is no known or prophesied adversity . . . immediately prior" to the seventieth week. On the contrary, the Church is promised persecution and adversity throughout its history; such adversity is seen as early in Church history as the Book of Acts and is frequently referred to in the Epistles. Since somewhere in the world the Church is suffering adversity, there is no need to believe that the days preceding the seven years will be any different.

Another way Rosenthal is trying to get around 3:10 is by claiming that the adversity being described is that of the believers during the first half of the seven years. Obviously, Rosenthal has thrown away literal interpretation, for what he is now saying about 3:10 is not limited to the Church of Philadelphia. And Rosenthal does even worse. He violates the simple chronology of the Book of Revelation and inserts the events of 3:10 to cover the first half of the seven years, with the exemption coming in the middle of the seven years. There are simply no exegetical grounds for such a transportation of 3:10, to fit it in somewhere around 8:1. Only by presupposing one's position is such a transport necessary. It is anything but a natural interpretation of the text. Kept where it is, the promise of 3:10 is fulfilled by the Rapture before that hour of trial falls upon the whole earth, as of chapter six.

Again, Rosenthal puts the exemption of 3:10 in the middle of the seven years, but he is not sure as to just how this occurs. So, some are physically delivered by a "physical removal" by fleeing Jerusalem. Others are physically delivered by "direct, divine protection" within the period. In these two ways, the promise of 3:10 is kept. Of course, only those who have kept the faith are exempt from this hour of testing. Not only is this a shallow exegesis of 3:10, but it also implies that all believers who do die and are not kept physically safe in at least the second half of the seven years are those who failed to keep the faith. This simply is not upheld by Scripture. Skipping the saints of Revelation five and six - as Rosenthal puts these prior to the Great Tribulation - what about those after

8:1? The physical destruction of saints is mentioned in 11:7; 13:7; 14:13; 16:6 and 17:6. Contextually, it is impossible to make all these martyrs those who failed to keep faith in adversity. If those who die include those who kept faith in adversity, then the promise of 3:10 becomes meaningless. Only by separating Church saints (chapters 2-3) from Tribulation saints (chapters 6-18) does the promise of 3:10 make sense. By a pre-Tribulation Rapture, the Church saints become exempt from the hour of trial that is to fall upon the whole world. Believers after the Rapture have no such promise. This keeps the verses in their chronological order as found in Revelation and avoids the unnecessary transposition of a verse into a section found five chapters later.

Thus, in spite of Rosenthal's claim, 3:10 *is* "a watershed verse to determine the timing of the Rapture." It is not the only one, but it is a key verse; this is why Rosenthal tries so hard to get around it, resorting to an extremely unnatural exegesis and an unnecessary transportation of the passage.

In a chapter entitled "Are Pretribulation Rapture Arguments Really Unanswerable?" Rosenthal refers to the one that points out that the church is not mentioned in Revelation 4-21:

> In response to this argument, the following observations are made. First, for posttribulation rapturism, the conspicuous absence of the church from chapters 4 through 21 creates a significant problem. This is a seven-year period of time during which, according to the posttribulation scenario, the church is being supernaturally protected. Yet in the book of Revelation, which presents the fullest description of that seven-year period, the church is not even mentioned in that description. Posttribulationism has yet to give a satisfactory response to the dilemma which that fact creates for their position. . . .
>
> Third, the pretribulation argument being challenged in this rebuttal not only does not create a problem for the prewrath position espoused in this book, but helps sustain it. In Revelation 1 to 3 the church is repeatedly mentioned (nineteen times). In chapter 4, John was called up to heaven (Rev. 4:1). Chapters 4 and 5 describe a heavenly scene depicting God seated upon His throne. In this heavenly scene, the church would not be expected to be in view. Chapter 6 describes the opening of the first six seals and concludes with the statement that God's wrath "is come" (i.e., is about to occur). It is precisely at this point of time, before the opening of the seventh seal and the commencement of God's wrath, that the church is raptured in chapter 7. Therefore, the fact that the Church is not mentioned in chapters 8 through 21 not only is compatible with a prewrath Rapture but gives it essential support. (pp. 244-245)

Rosenthal likes this position because it is a good argument against Post-Tribulationism, which he also opposes (though not as violently as he opposes Pre-Tribulationism in this work). He then asserts that his new argument "helps sustain" and "gives . . . essential support" to his view. For him, the fact that the church is not mentioned in chapters 4-21 "not only is compatible with a prewrath Rapture but gives it essential support." That is because, for him, the Rapture occurs around 8:1. However, the church is not mentioned in chapters 4-7 either, where Rosenthal sees the church still on earth. The very argument that militates against Post-Tribulationism (which he likes), is also an argument against his own position. There is *no* "essential support" for his view in this argument.

On pages 250-255, Rosenthal devotes a lot of time to the 24 elders, trying to avoid the possibility that they represent the Church saints. This is for obvious reasons. If these 24 elders represent the Church saints, it means the Church is already in heaven before the seven years begin. This he must avoid at all costs, and so he concludes that they represent the redeemed of Israel from the previous economy. To arrive at that conclusion, he again avoids definitions provided by the Revelation itself. For example, the 24 elders are dressed in white raiment of which Rosenthal writes:

> These elders are said to be "clothed in white raiment" (Rev. 4:4). Again, a Jewish contemporary of John would have immediately understood the significance of the white robes. When the ancient high priest of Israel on Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) prepared to enter the Holy of Holies and the presence of God, he discarded his magnificent priestly robes and put on in their place "the holy linen coat" (Lev. 16:4). When he withdrew from the tabernacle, he again put on his traditional priestly garments. . . .
>
> In the presence of the people, the magnificent priestly garments were to be worn; in the presence of a holy God who is a consuming fire, a linen robe was deemed more fitting. The "white raiment" in which the elders were clothed speaks elegantly of their entrance "within the veil" in the presence of their God. . . . That is, overcomers will enjoy the divine presence forever. (pp. 252-253)

All this gallantly ignores how the Book of Revelation itself defines the meaning of "white garments." Throughout the book, white garments are a symbol of salvation, which clearly rules out the 24 elders as being angels. In 3:4, these garments are on people considered worthy. In 3:5, white garments are coupled with not being blotted out of the book of life—a clear statement of salvation. In 6:11, they are seen as the garments of the saints in heaven. Furthermore, the reason these garments are white is because they have

been washed in the blood of the Lamb (7:9, 13-14). These are saints that have trusted in Jesus as the Messiah, and in blood atonement; and this rules out the 24 elders being representative of the Jewish saints of the Old Testament. Many more arguments could be marshalled to show that these 24 elders represent the Church saints, but that is not the purpose of this review. The point was to show how Rosenthal will ignore Revelation's own definition of a symbol if it does not fit his view. One more observation, however, is worth noting: whether or not these 24 elders represent the Church saints is not at all crucial to Pre-Tribulationism; and, in fact, many Pre-Tribulationists have taken the view that they are celestial beings. If these 24 elders are not the Church, then Pre-Tribulationism is not damaged. Their identity is not crucial to the system. But things are different for Rosenthal, who must not allow the elders to be the Church, for that would destroy his system. Rosenthal obviously has problems with them representing angelic beings, and so opts for the view that they represent Israel. But if the only true options are Old Testament saints and Church saints, the evidence of the white garments, among other things, clearly favors the view that they represent Church saints.

On pages 255-261, Rosenthal deals with the restrainer of II Thessalonians two, which many but not all Pre-Tribulationists interpret as the Holy Spirit. (This reviewer does not). If the restrainer is the Holy Spirit, it provides another evidence for Pre-Tribulationism. For that very reason, Rosenthal argues against this position for reasons similar to his arguments about the 24 elders. Whether the restrainer is the Holy Spirit or not is not crucial to Pre-Tribulationism; this reviewer has never held that view but favors the view of human government. It is different for Rosenthal because the possibility that the restrainer could be the Holy Spirit damages his position. Thus, Rosenthal resorts to a rather farfetched interpretation: the restrainer is Michael the Archangel! It would be unnecessarily tedious to deal with all five of his rather strained arguments to support this view, because the identity is not crucial for Pre-Tribulationism; in fact, a Pre-Tribulationist could accept that view and still be Pre-Tribulational, as whether Michael is or is not the restrainer neither argues for or against Pre-Tribulationism. Nor does it really support Rosenthal's view that well. Rosenthal needs only to avoid the restrainer being the Holy Spirit. But the straining at the gnat is seen in the following statement:

> . . . The identification of Michael as the restrainer is by no means a new and novel idea. Michael is mentioned as the restrainer of Satan and the forces of evil as early as the first or second century A.D. in Greek magical papyri. (p. 260-261)

For historical validity, all Rosenthal can do is cite Greek magical papyri, hardly a great source for sound theology! One is tempted to jump off the stage of scholarship and scream: "Oh come on, Marvin, is this the best you could do!?!" Rosenthal also resorts to a non-lexical meaning for a Hebrew word to try to prove his point, and quotes a rabbi who

frequently played with the Hebrew text for his own ends. This was the same rabbi who interpreted Isaiah 53 as speaking of the nation of Israel and not the Messiah! He is hardly a trustworthy exegete. Rosenthal resorts to this, because the lexicons do not support him.

In a chapter entitled, "The Prewrath Rapture: Why This View Now?", Rosenthal basically answers by viewing himself as being part of the fulfillment of the Daniel 12:4 prophecy that knowledge will be increased in the last days. He forwards his view as a fulfillment of that prophecy (pp. 276-278). This is sheer arrogance and just one more example of the "braggamony" aspect of the work.

In this same chapter (pp. 267-268), he tries to argue his view of the Rapture from Daniel 12:1-3. But there is no Rapture here; furthermore, Daniel is clearly speaking of Israel and not the Church. The resurrection is, in fact, of the Old Testament saints and not the Church saints.

Before leaving this chapter, it should be noted how Rosenthal twice labels or describes his view of the Rapture:

> . . . Once again, the Rapture, as the first aspect of the Second Coming, is seen to occur after the Great Tribulation and before the Day of the Lord. (p. 276)

> The Rapture of the church cannot stand alone as an event which precedes the seventieth week of Daniel, a period of time so graphically portrayed in Daniel 11-12. Rather, the Rapture is but one glorious facet in the incomparable gem of the second coming of Christ and the final harvest. The righteous will be raptured; the unrighteous will experience the Day of the Lord wrath. (p. 278)

Rosenthal refers to the Rapture as both "the first aspect of the Second Coming," and as "one glorious facet . . . of the second coming of Christ." This is exactly the same way many Pre-Tribulationists have described their view. Even Rosenthal's claim of only one coming has at least two distinct parts to it, of which the Rapture is the first "aspect" or "facet."

The final chapter is entitled, "The Prewrath Rapture: Catalyst for Holy Living." Here, Rosenthal tries to show that his view will produce holy living and spiritual maturity for future adversity in a way superior to that of Pre-Tribulationism. Such an assertion is yet to be proven, and is purely subjective. This reviewer's observations of Pre-Tribulationists and their holy living and their spiritual maturity in the face of adversity has been, for him, unmatched by others; they have greatly influenced his own spiritual growth, and also stirred deep interest in him for greater knowledge of God's Word. This chapter should not be taken seriously, for it is a purely subjective final attempt to show a

superiority of a viewpoint. It could also be argued that an expectation that the Rapture could come today is a far greater catalyst for holy living than a view which always puts the Rapture at least 63 months away, or more.

In this chapter, Rosenthal again uses a straw-man argument by a false definition of imminency:

> Perhaps here is the ultimate error of pretribulation rapturism. It holds out the false hope of *imminent* rapture, . . . A careful appeal to verses said to teach imminency (no prophesied events must occur before the Rapture) . . . (p. 282)

Again, imminency does *not* mean that "no prophesied events must occur before the Rapture." Imminency means that no prophesied event *must* be fulfilled before the Rapture, although the possibility does exist. The re-establishment of Israel in 1948 was a prophesied event; imminency means that this event did not have to come before the Rapture, although nothing ruled out the possibility. Imminency means that the Rapture could have come either before or after 1948. There may even be other pre-tribulational prophesies that will be fulfilled before the Rapture. On the other hand, they may not. That is the meaning of imminency, rather than what Rosenthal wants to make it.

Later in the chapter, Rosenthal returns to the issue of the seven churches:

> Since the book of Revelation is a book of eschatology (the doctrine of last things), the letters to the seven churches must have prophetic significance. Otherwise, it would be out of keeping with the rest of the book and its expressed purpose to unveil the Lord Jesus Christ in His coming glory. (p. 286)

> The seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 were chosen from among many churches which then existed to receive letters for two reasons. First, seven is the number of completion and perfection, and, whereas in Genesis God's program is beginning and widening, in Revelation it is narrowing and moving toward consummation. Second, those seven churches perfectly illustrated the full-orbed strengths and weaknesses of Christendom during the seventieth week of Daniel. This commonality allowed the seven churches to be the springboard to give warning to Christendom at the end of the age. . . . Only this view gives logical justification for the inclusion of letters to seven first-century churches in a book that is otherwise wholly prophetic. (p. 288)

> . . . The entire context of the seven churches is set in the arena of the seventieth week and the activity of Satan and the Antichrist. Of those who are truly triumphant, John wrote, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev. 12:11); that is, they were willing to be martyrs, if being an overcomer required it. (p. 290)

Earlier Rosenthal accused Pre-Tribulationists of not taking the seven churches literally; here, he again does the same thing himself. The seven literal churches are spiritualized or allegorized to represent "the full-orbed strengths and weaknesses of Christendom during the seventieth week of Daniel." He also insists that the "entire context of the seven churches is set in the arena of the seventieth week and the activity of Satan and the Antichrist." There is simply no exegetical validity for such a conclusion. The context of Revelation 2-3 nowhere indicates that John is describing a situation inside the seventieth week, which does not even begin until chapter six. While the activity of Satan is mentioned, that is not surprising as Satan is active in all periods of human history. As for the Antichrist, he is not mentioned anywhere in these two chapters. To make these seven churches fit into the latter chapters of Revelation violates John's own three-fold division of the book, outlined in 1:19. First, John is to write about the things he saw, which was the glorified Son of Man in chapter one. Secondly, he is to write about "the things which are;" in John's day, "the things which are" were the seven churches of chapters 2-3. Thirdly, John was to write about "the things which will come to pass hereafter;", that is, the things that follow the seven churches and that comprise chapters 4-22. The events of chapters 2-3 occur at a different period of time to chapters 4-22. This is confirmed by 4:1, where after recording the account of the seven churches (chapters 2-3), John is invited to come up to heaven so that he can be shown "the things which must come to pass hereafter;" (using exactly the same phraseology as the third division of 1:19). Exegetically, the events of chapters 2-3 precede the events of chapters 4-22 and cannot be placed somewhere later in the Revelation just to fit a preconceived view. In other words, Rosenthal again does exactly what he accused Pre-Tribulationists of doing:

> *It is highly doubtful that anyone who rightly viewed the book of Revelation as futurist would ever have suggested that the letters to the seven churches were not warnings to Christendom inside the seventieth week—were it not an absolute essential to have the churches removed from that period to sustain pretribulation rapturism. (p. 292)*

The fact is that a pre-tribulational approach to the Book of Revelation is far more natural than Rosenthal's view. Pre-Tribulationism takes the three-fold division of 1:19 literally and seriously; and separating chapters 2-3 from chapters 4-22 is simple exegesis followed by many who are not Pre-Tribulationists. The fact is that it is highly doubtful that anyone would have tried to put chapters 2-3 inside the seventieth week and, therefore, later in the Book of Revelation if it was not an "absolute essential" to have the

Church go through three-quarters of the seven years. Then who is really straining the text? Furthermore, Mid- and Post-Tribulationists have no "absolute essential to have the churches removed" from that seven years, and yet, they also have basically missed the connection. There is a *sound* reason why all the other views have missed the connection: it is simply not there! There is a lot less confusion if one recognizes that terms such as "Tribulation;" "Great Tribulation;" "seventieth week of Daniel;" "Day of the Lord" are all interchangeable terms and are concerned with the context of divine judgment rather than each marking off a specific time-period.

The Rapture is indeed pre-wrath, but in order to be pre-wrath, it must also be pre-tribulational.

Towards the end, Rosenthal again resorts to self-aggrandizing:

> Men will scrutinize this book. They will search its pages, probing for weakness and vulnerability. That is appropriate, for all commentary must be measured by the Word of God. No inspiration is claimed by the author. Flaws may be found. Some i's may not have been dotted, some t's not crossed; some arguments may appear stronger than others, some flaws detected, and some important areas left untouched. That will be left for other Bible teachers to correct. But I am convinced that the basic tenets found within these pages will not be successfully assaulted. Its gates will not be breached. The prewrath Rapture is not built upon sand. It has the Word of God to sustain it. Winds may blow, rains may descend, and storms may arise—it will not fall. Within two years many men will be teaching the prewrath Rapture. Within five years it will be a recognized position. And, if God pleases, within fifteen years it will become a major position of the believing church—if God gives that many years. (pp. 292-293)

Such a self-serving prophecy is best made by others than by its inventor. But for now, this reviewer will venture a prophecy of his own. This work will have its day for a short season, and it will attract many if only because it is novel; novel ideas, no matter how wild, always attract a following initially. Others will be snared because of the vastness and volume of information given, and will not sit down and carefully weed out and investigate the information. They will assume it is true because of the multitude of words rather than its factual accuracy. Others will follow it because they already have a bias against Pre-Tribulationism, and they will accept without a critical eye this book's phony portrait of Pre-Tribulationism.

But it will not become the major view of the Church, because the arguments are too convoluted for the average person to follow; the other tribulation views - be they Pre-, Mid- and/or Post-Tribulation - are easier to understand and to defend. Those who are scholarly will easily see through all this snow. As one scholar has already noted, "On

balance, however, the book is a serious disappointment. The author's confidence in his new position is not matched by an adequate finesse in exegesis or argumentation." (Zane Hodges, in "Book Review," *Journal of Grace Evangelical Society*. Spring 1991, p. 84). Those who are not scholarly and are impressed will not be able to defend this position without re-reading the book. On several occasions, this reviewer has had some of the latter approach him to try to defend this view. He asked them to close Rosenthal's book and clearly present this view and the evidences for it. Thus far, none could do so; the best they could do is to tell the reviewer to read the book, which he had already done twice. As he questioned them on certain passages, they gave him post-tribulational answers rather than Rosenthal's view. He found that these adherents frequently confused Rosenthal's view with Post-Tribulationism.

This review has not dealt with every issue raised by Rosenthal. As it is, certainly, this review is long enough. Still, it has dealt with all the major arguments he presents. For them to stand, many of the others merely presuppose that the view is true. Rosenthal has labeled Pre-Tribulationism as "wrong or inconsistent" (p. 33); "facing impossible-to-resolve problems" (p. 197); having "insurmountable exegetical" difficulties (p. 147); not to mention being "calamitous," and that it could cause "a spiritual catastrophe" and "a satanically planned sneak attack" (pp. 281-282). This review has attempted to show that such descriptive epitaphs are far from true. Rosenthal has also described his own view as being one of "simplicity, clarity, logic" and "the fruit of an unstrained, clear, unified, and normative interpretation of the Word of God" (p. 31). Its evidence is "strong and compelling, the reason clear and logical" (p. 67); and as "unstrained and biblically accurate" (p. 194). As this reviewer has shown, merely saying so does not make it so, and Rosenthal's work is not as intimidating as he seems to think.

This is the latest in a long line of attacks by various sources on Pre-Tribulationism. As Pre-Tribulationism survived all the others, it will be much easier to survive this one. It is Pre-Tribulationism that is "not built upon sand" and "has the Word of God to sustain it." That is why it has survived all previous attacks, and will have no trouble surviving this one.