

Pre-Tribulation Rapture

Jesus spoke of a time of "great tribulation":

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matthew 24:21,22)

We also know there will be a "rapture" of the church —the "house of God," the "saints." Those who died "in Christ" will be resurrected - from "sleep" in their graves - with immortal, spiritual bodies. At the same time those in Christ who have not died will also receive immortal, spiritual bodies. Then they, together with those who were resurrected, will rise to meet Christ "in the air." The apostle Paul described this:

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

Behold, I shew 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: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." (1 Corinthians 15:50–54)

Here is another description:

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

Can we determine if the rapture occurs before, or during, or after the "great tribulation"? Yes we can. We have clues in Matthew 24, 1 Corinthians 15 and Revelation that give a clear answer. Revelation is particularly helpful because it portrays end-time events in sequential order, written on a figurative rolled-up scroll. The contents of the scroll are divided into seven sequential groups. Those groups are separated by seals which must be broken or opened, one after another, for each of the seven groups to be unrolled and "read" —and occur. For example, the first seal must be broken before its events can take place . . . then the second seal must be opened for the second set of events to take place, etc.

The seventh, final seal is subdivided into seven figurative trumpet soundings (Revelation 8:1,2); as each trumpet sounding occurs, another set of events within the seventh seal begins to take place.

The seven trumpet soundings resemble the seven trumpet soundings just before the Old Testament city of Jericho fell. In Revelation they announce the fall of "that great city Babylon, that mighty city" (Revelation 18:10) —the religious, educational, commercial and governmental systems of our world. This figurative Babylon will be replaced by the Kingdom of God here on earth.

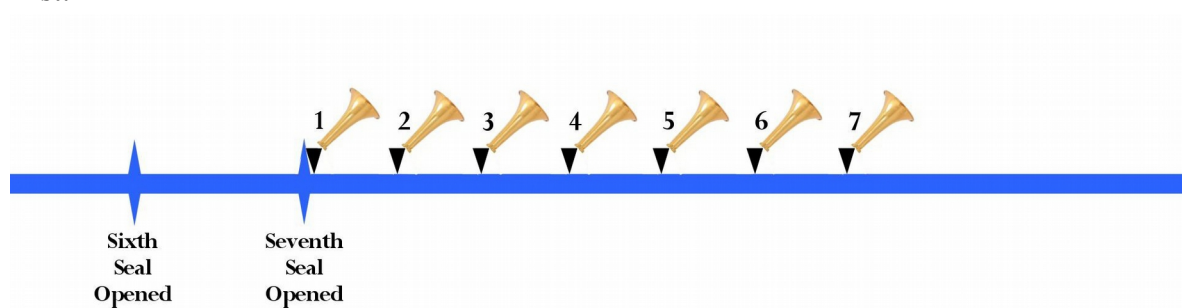
Okay, back to the rapture. In 1 Corinthians 15:50–54 (quoted earlier) we have one of the clues we need: the rapture occurs "at the last trump" —the seventh of the seven trumpet soundings that comprise the seventh seal. Here's that passage, again:

"Behold, I shew 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:
for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1 Cor 15:51,52)

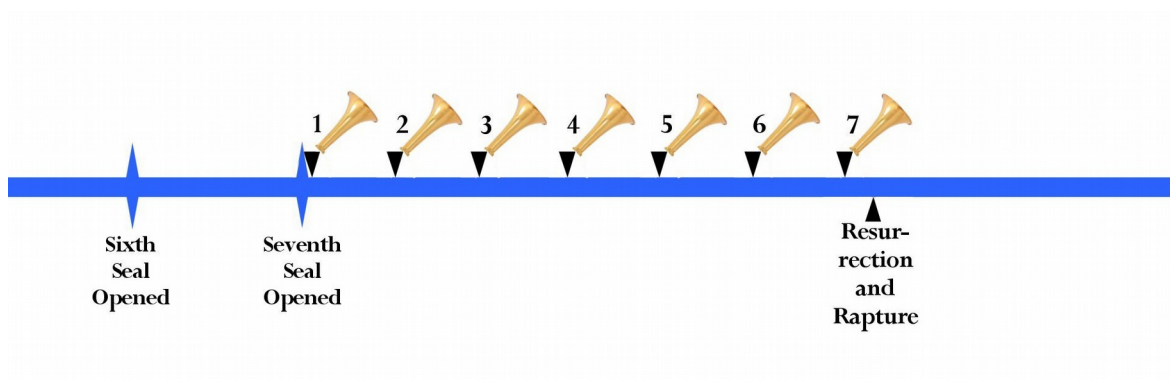
Let's do a timeline to show the order of events. Here we see the opening of the sixth seal, followed by the opening of the seventh seal:



At the opening of the seventh seal, the seven trumpets begin sounding, beginning with the first:



The rapture occurs "at the last trump" - so we'll put it here:



So when does the "last trump" occur? Is it before, or during, or after the "great tribulation"? Two clues found in Matthew 24 and Revelation 6 give us the answer.

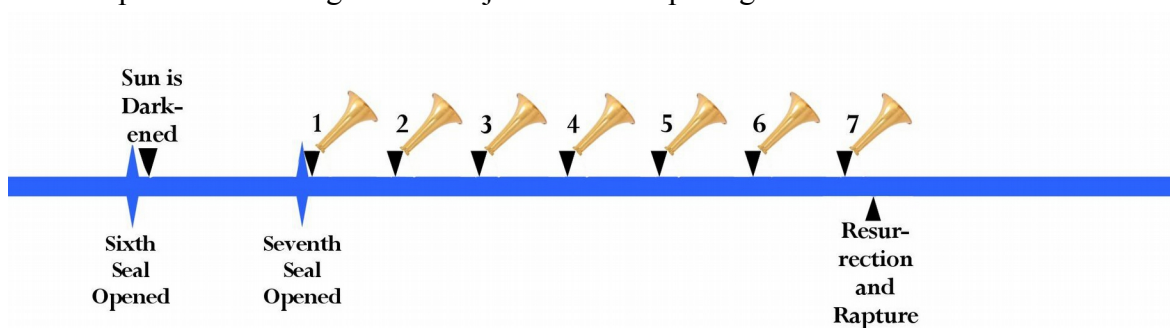
Let's go to Matthew 24:29; here we see that the sun is (temporarily) darkened "immediately after" the tribulation:

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken" (Matthew 24:29)

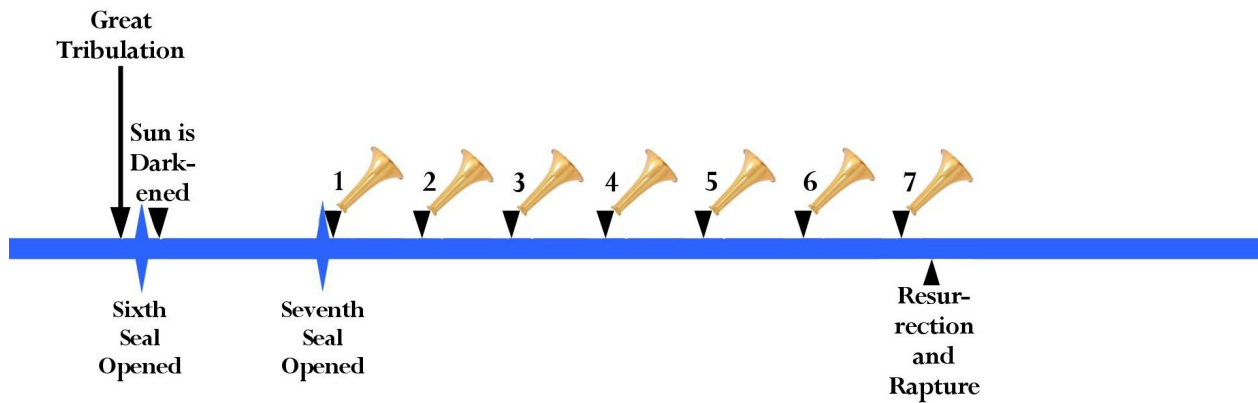
Now comes the piece that finishes the puzzle: the same darkening of the sun is mentioned here in Revelation:

"And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood" (Revelation 6:12)

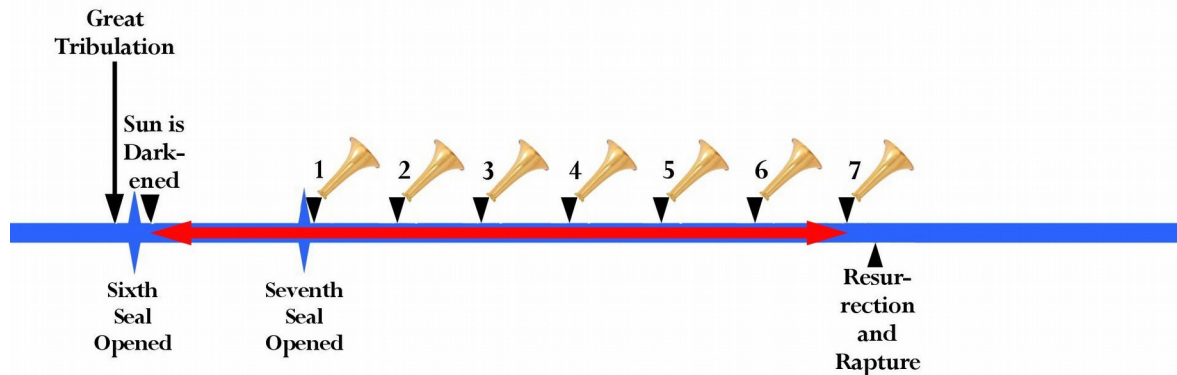
So we'll put the darkening of the sun just after the opening of the sixth seal:



The sun is darkened at the opening of the sixth seal. So we know that the tribulation is over, or ending, at the time the sixth seal is being opened. So we'll put the great tribulation here, immediately before the sixth seal is opened:



We know that the rapture occurs at the "last trump" of the seventh seal. Obviously then, then rapture occurs sometime after the tribulation has ended. All the events of the sixth seal - and the first six trumpets of the seventh seal - must occur after the tribulation but before the rapture at the "last trump." The rapture is clearly post-tribulation; not mid-tribulation, not pre-tribulation.



Some challenge this, saying the rapture takes place before the anti-Christ beast comes to power. That is obviously incorrect: The beast "makes war on the saints" . . . so the saints are still here:

"And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations." (Revelation 13:7)

The beast is called the "little horn" here in Daniel 7, and makes war with the saints:

"I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them" (Daniel 7:21)

"And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. (Daniel 7:25)

The "time and times and the dividing of time" is understood to be three and a half

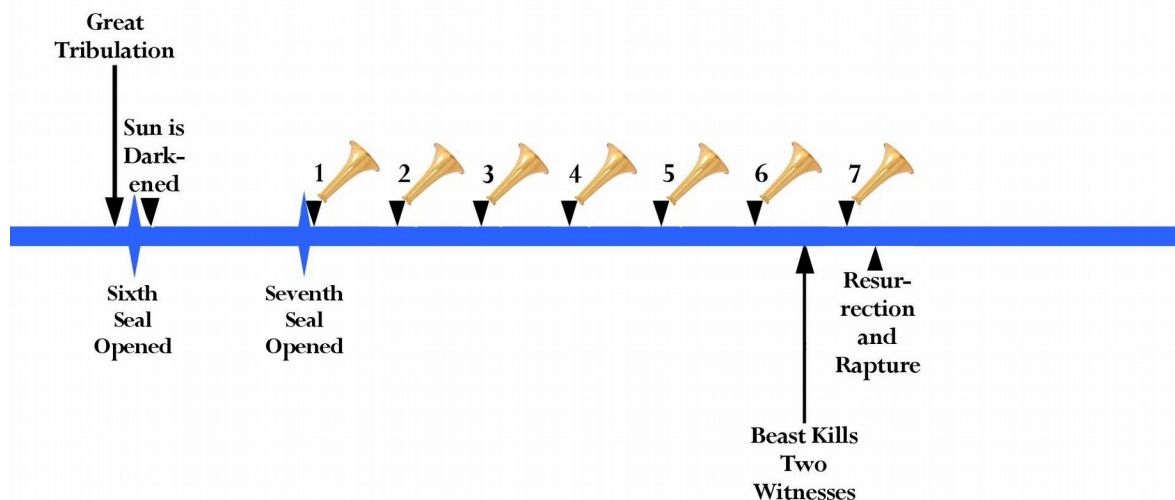
years. According to Revelation 13:5 the anti-Christ beast is in power 42 months —three and a half years.

We have more evidence that the beast is in power before the rapture. The first mention of the "beast" in Revelation is during the sixth trumpet of the seventh seal — before the rapture at the seventh trumpet.

In the sixth trumpet the beast kills the two "witnesses." The two witnesses' testimony - like fire proceeding from their mouths (Revelation 11:5) - had been devouring or destroying the credibility of those attempting to "hurt" or discredit their testimony.

"And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified" (Revelation 11:7,8).

We'll put "beast kills two witnesses" here in the sixth trumpet:



This time of the two witnesses and the beast is likely "the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth" (Revelation 3:10). Everyone will have to decide whether they will accept and follow the truth, or, swallow the sweet-tasting false narrative dictated by the beast (re Revelation 10). The battle for the mind will rage as it never has before.

Others challenge the post-tribulation rapture, saying "God will never let His people suffer His wrath, the tribulation."

The answer to that is simple: the tribulation is not God's wrath. The tribulation is over long before God's wrath comes. God's wrath falls on those who had "the mark of the beast" . . . after the tribulation has ended, after the beast has come to power and after the rapture has taken place.

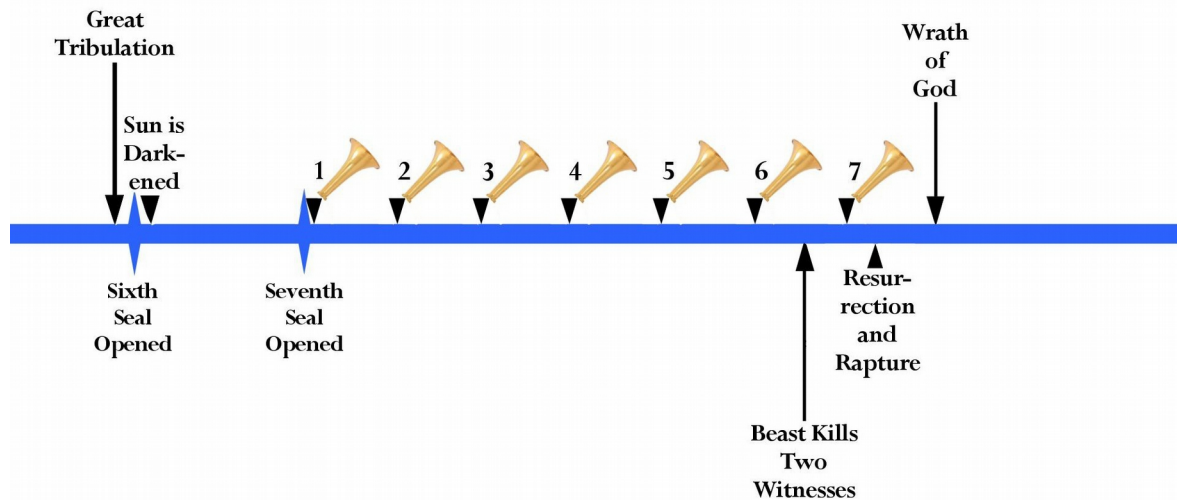
God will not let His people suffer His wrath. The saints *will* be raptured at the seventh trumpet, just before "the wrath of God" is poured "upon the the men which had the mark of the beast":

"And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the

seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

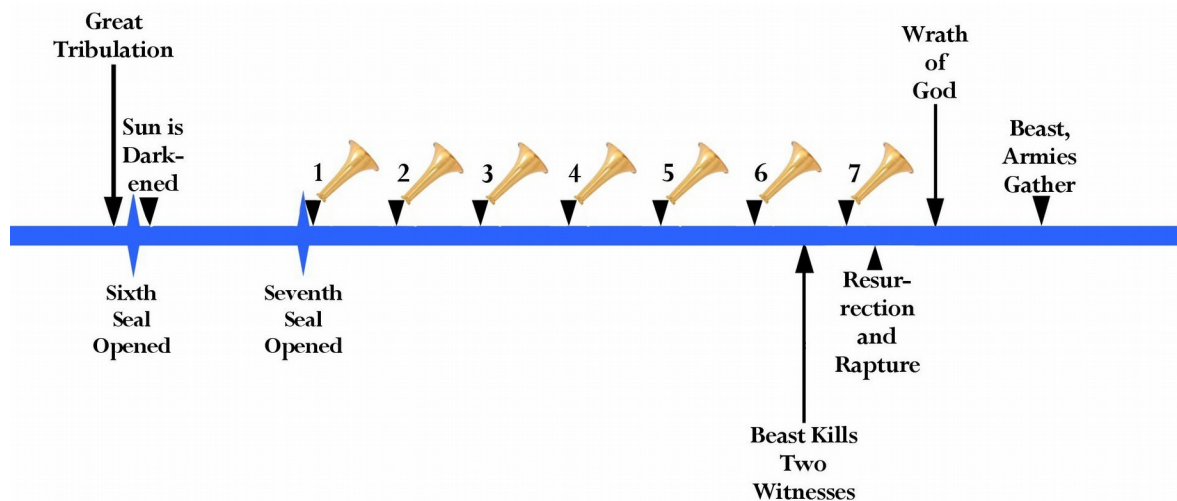
And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image" (Revelation 16:1,2)

On the timeline, we'll put the wrath of God after the beast has come to power - sixth trumpet - and after the church has been raptured, at the "last trump":

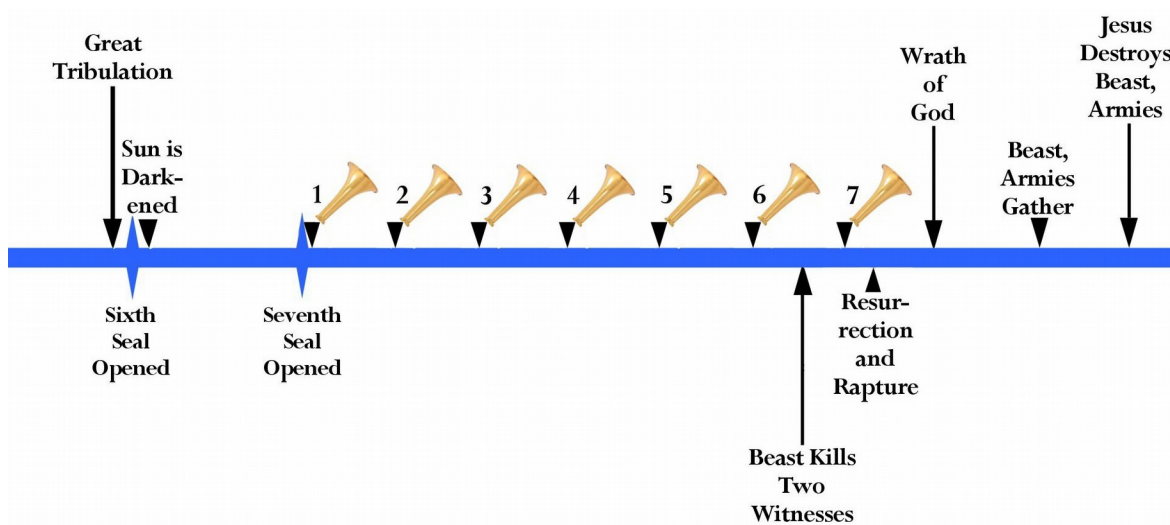


The beast will continue for some time after the rapture. After the rapture (and during the subsequent wrath of God) the beast and his armies gather at a place called Armageddon, in preparation for "the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Rev 16:12–16). They apparently gather in an attempt to prevent Jesus, with His resurrected, immortal saints, from arriving to take control at Jerusalem.

We'll add "beast and armies gather" to the timeline:



But Jesus - accompanied by His saints - will come and defeat the beast and his armies, apparently at Jerusalem. This is described in Revelation 19:11–21 and other passages.



We can be sure the saints will be with Jesus as He defeats the beast: they will always be with Him following their rapture:

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17)

". . . and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." (Zechariah 14:5)

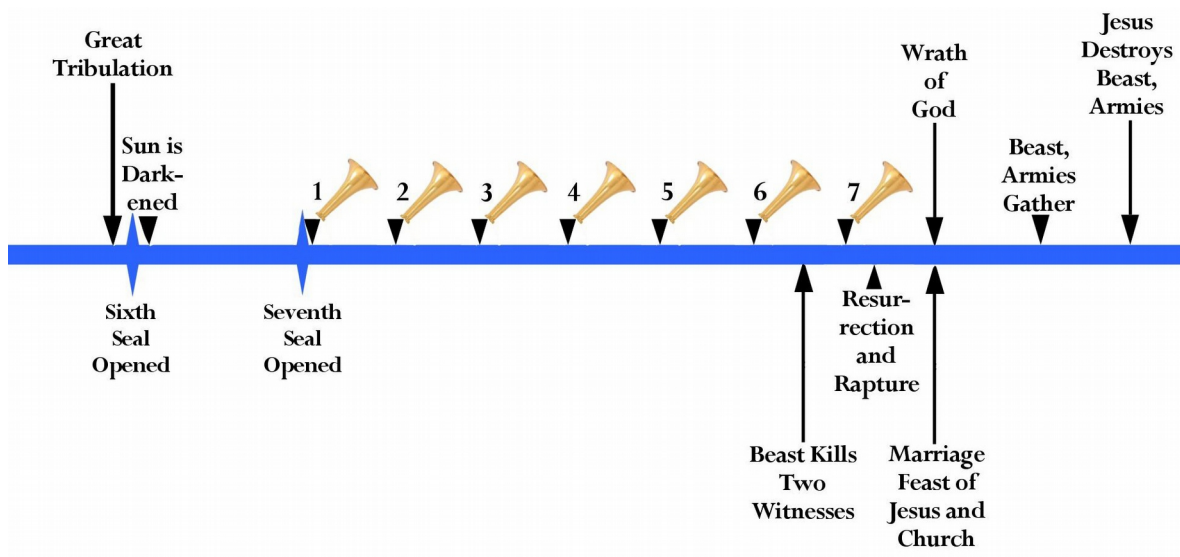
What will the saints be doing with Jesus after the rapture, before they accompany Him to Jerusalem? Apparently they will be enjoying "the marriage supper of the Lamb" while the wrath of God is being poured out on earth. Revelation mentions the marriage supper only once: just before Jesus comes with His saints to defeat the beast and its armies:

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God" (Revelation 19:7-9).

So we can add the marriage feast to the timeline:



After destroying the beast and its armies, Jesus will rule the Kingdom of God here on earth:

"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." (Daniel 2:44)

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Isaiah 2:2-4)

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10)

The resurrected, immortal saints will inherit the Kingdom of God and rule with Jesus:

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." (Revelation 20:6; also: Daniel 7:22,27; Luke 22:28-30; James 2:5; Matthew 25:34; 2 Peter 1:10,11; 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 15:50; Ephesians 5:5)

Post-Tribulation Rapture, In Four Easy Steps:

1. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened . . ." (Matthew 24:29).

2. Revelation 6:12 says that the sun is darkened at the opening of the sixth seal.

3. So we know that the tribulation is over when the sun is darkened at the opening of the sixth seal.

4. All the subsequent events of the sixth and seventh seals - *including the rapture "at the last trump" in the 7th seal* (1 Corinthians 15:52; Revelation 8:1,2) - must take place after the tribulation ends. The rapture, therefore, is post-tribulation, not pre-tribulation.

Note: The tribulation, the reign of the beast and the wrath of God are three different events, not to be confused. The rapture occurs well after the end of the tribulation, and also after three and a half years of the beast making "war" on the "saints" (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 13:7) . . . but before the wrath of God is poured out on those who had "the mark of the beast" (Revelation 16:1,2).

