

The Use of Dispensational Characteristics as Evidence for a Pretribulation Rapture

We began this study by showing that God has had different expectations, requirements and benefits for His people at various times in the progression of history.

Having shown that life was much different under the Law of Moses than during the period of Grace and the Church Age, we have demonstrated that the Day of Pentecost was the moment of transition between the Law of Moses and the Church Age.

One of the important practical uses of this study is to show that each major "dispensation" or stage or age in God's program through the ages has its own distinct DNA or characteristics. If you can identify one of the characteristics distinct to a particular dispensation, then it is possible to identify the dispensation.

For example, we see a simple characteristic of the Law of Moses taught by Paul:

If You Are Under Even One Requirement of the Law, You Are Under the Whole Law ^{Ga5:3}

And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.

Of course another corollary to this would be:

If Even One Stipulation of the Law Is Not Binding, Then The Entire Law Has Been Set

Aside ^{Heb7:12} For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.

Therefore if Jesus says to a leper, "Go offer the sacrifice that Moses required...", it is evident that He was operating under the Law. However, when God tells Peter to "rise, kill and eat...", it is clear that Peter is not under the Law since eating those animals was forbidden under the Law.

That evidence showed us that the transition from Law to the Church Age happened sometime between those two incidents.

After the Church Age, it is clear that there will be a Tribulation Period as foretold by Jesus Christ and recorded by John in Revelation chapters 6-19. If the Tribulation Period follows the Church Age, when does this transition happen? What is the event that marks the end of the Church Age and the beginning of the Tribulation Period? Of course the view of this writer is that the event called the "Rapture" is that moment of transition because the Church will be taken from the world and the focus then becomes the nation of Israel and not the church. There are many who disagree with this time line. What I am going to do in this part of our study is to state the basic "proofs" of a pretribulation rapture. However, I believe it is possible to show that the church is not on the earth during the tribulation period by observing that some things that are uncharacteristic of the Church Age occur during the Tribulation. If there are things that happen during the Tribulation period that are not characteristic or even not characteristic of the Church Age, then a transition has been made, the Church Age is not in progress but the period of Tribulation.

When Does the Church Age End and the Next Successive Age of God's Eternal Plan Begin?

1. This question is aided by the answer to another question - "When do we see in scripture the characteristics distinct to the Church Age or the expectations of the Church Age change?"

- a. Review: Some of the primary distinctions of the Church Age are:
 - i. A removal of the distinction between Jews and Gentiles in the Body of Christ.
 - ii. The organization of the church involves pastors, deacons and people.
 - iii. People in the Body of Christ have been placed there by the baptism of the Holy Spirit and are now considered to be "in Christ" or "in the body."
- b. Additional Thoughts:
 - i. Not every distinction will change from one period of God's expectation for His

people to another. For example prayer is expected and encouraged in all dispensations. Faith in God is the means of salvation and pleasing God during all ages. However some distinctions are clearly specific to a certain age or stage or dispensation.

ii. Remember that with the Law, even changing one thing like the priesthood from Levi to Melchizedek meant that the entire law had been removed. With the Law it was either all or nothing.

iii. Before the Law there were sacrifices. However the sacrifices under the Law had very specific requirements that were not required before the Law.

Additionally when moving from the Law to Grace, all sacrifices were removed since Christ fulfilled all the Law and was the final sacrifice for sin. During the Millennium, sacrifices will be reestablished but probably with a completely new series of requirements and significance.

2. The Doctrine of the Church is a key to understanding future events because the Church age goes from its beginning at Pentecost to its removal at the rapture. Just as it is inaccurate to apply the law to the church age, so it will be wrong to apply church age truth to the period after the church is removed.

a. The rapture is for people "in Jesus" or "in Christ."

^{1 Th4:14} For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. ¹⁵For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead **†in Christ** will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

†This is a significant NT term , a doctrine.

b. It will be an instantaneous removal.

^{1 Co15:51} Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed- ⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

c. This truth is meant to be a comfort to people in the church age.

^{1 Th4:18} Therefore comfort one another with these words.

3. Basic Arguments that the Church is Removed Before the Tribulation Period Begins

a. **Argument from the Outline of Revelation.**

i. The outline of Revelation is given by John in Re 1:19 and divided the book into 3 simple sections: past, present, future.

^{Re1:19} Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

ii. Chapter 1 details what he had seen.

^{Re1:10} I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet,

^{Re1:12} Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,

^{Re1:11} And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.

iii. Chapters 2 & 3 give the details of what Christ told him to write to the 7 churches. Jesus gives an analysis of each of these churches, naming people, problems, circumstances and issues that were at that moment happening and needed fixing or encouragement. Clearly Chapters 2 & 3 detail things that Jesus said in 1:19 which are.

^{Re2: 1} "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: ²"I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;

^{Re2:9} "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

^{Re2:13} "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

- iv. Chapter 4 begins with the phrase, "after these things" and "Come up here and I will show you things which must take place after this ." This is exactly Christ's third point in the outline of 1:19.

Re4:1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must **take place after this.**"

Re 1:19 Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will **take place after this.**

- v. What did He mean, things that will "take place after this"? Would He be talking about the next year or twenty years or two hundred years? The answer involves two things:
- (1) The letters to the churches were meant for all churches to read each letter. Though they mention specific details involving these 7 churches, they involve timeless truths for all churches as long as churches last.
Re2:11 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death."
Re2:29 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."
Re3:6 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."
 - (2) The major part of what He will be revealing involves the tribulation period - chps 6 thru 19. This is clearly what He is referring to by the phrase, "must take place after this."
 - (3) The natural conclusion is that the tribulation is "after the church age."

b. Case of the missing church in Rev 6-19.

- i. The word church is used 20 times in the book of Revelation. However 19 of those times are in Rev 1-3 and one time in Re 22 referring for a final time back to the churches He addressed in Chapters 1-3.

Re 1:11 saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

Re3:22 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Re 22:16 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."

- ii. There are zero references to the church in Re 6 through 19. After 19 references in three chapters why are there no references to "church" or "churches" in the entire 14 chapter section detailing the tribulation period.

The natural question is why? The simple answer is that the church is not there. Some say this is an argument from silence and is not valid. In this case the burden of evidence is on those who deny the validity of this argument to explain why the dramatic shift of emphasis upon the church for both reproof and correction to no emphasis at all.

c. The parallel of Re 4:1-2 with the rapture.

- i. At the very point in the narrative where a the outline of Revelation leads the reader to think about the "things that are after this" – after the church age and before the tribulation - we encounter two astounding verses.

Re4:1 **After these things** I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things **which must take place after this.**"² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.

- ii. Notice the parallels:

(1) John is a church age saint who has written "the things which are" now writes, "After

these things".

(2) He hears a trumpet and sees a door standing open in heaven along with a voice saying, "come up here" perfectly corresponding to the rapture passage of 1 Th4:16,17

^{Re4:1} After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a **trumpet** speaking with me, saying, "**Come up here**, and I will show you things which must take place after this." ² **Immediately** I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.

^{1 Th4:16} For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the **trumpet** of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall **be caught up** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

(3) The next phrase we encounter in Re 4:2 are the words, "immediately I was in the Spirit". This is the exact sequence of events we would expect if this passage is portraying the rapture.

^{Re4:2} Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.

^{1Co 15:52} in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

^{1 Th4:1} Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

(4) Then following the "immediately I was in the Spirit" we read that He is ushered into the very presence of God. Compare this with 1 Th 4:17.

^{Re4:2} Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.

^{1 Th4:17} Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

(5) This is exactly what we would expect from Jn14 where Jesus tells His disciples that he was going to heaven to prepare a place for them and would come again and receive them to Himself that "where He is, they will be also."

^{Jn14:2} In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

(6) The rapture is portrayed in a symbolic manner [much as the rest of the book portrays truth in symbolic ways]: Satan in a symbolic manner, the churches in a symbolic manner, the antichrist in a symbolic manner, the false prophet in a symbolic manner.

^{Re12:3} And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.

^{Re12:9} So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

^{Re 1:12} Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,

^{Re 1:20} The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

^{Re13:1} Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.

^{Re13:11} Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.

Re16:13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

(7) But wouldn't this make the prophet a part of his own prophecy? This is one of the unique aspects of apocalyptic and some prophetic sections of the Bible. God often incorporates the experience of the prophet into a revelation of the prophecy.

(a) Here God is revealing truth through John both by the words that he writes and also by the drama that he lives. This happens in other places throughout the book where God uses John to reveal truth.

Re5:3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. ⁴ So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. ⁵ But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."

Re7:13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" ¹⁴ And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

(b) Other prophets are used to dramatize their prophecies.

Je18:3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something at the wheel. ⁴ And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make. ⁵ Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying:

Je13:1 Thus the Lord said to me: "Go and get yourself a linen sash, and put it around your waist, but do not put it in water."

Je13:6 it came to pass after many days that the Lord said to me, "Arise, go to the Euphrates, and take from there the sash which I commanded you to hide there." ⁷ Then I went to the Euphrates and dug, and I took the sash from the place where I had hidden it; and there was the sash, ruined. It was profitable for nothing.

Eze24:18 So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died; and the next morning I did as I was commanded. ¹⁹ And the people said to me, "Will you not tell us what these things signify to us, that you behave so?"

d. Argument from Re 3:10.

i. Re 3:10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

ii. As mentioned under the previous point, the admonitions from Christ to these churches are timeless and have application to all churches as long as churches are on the earth.

iii. Re 3:10 states the reason that God will be sending tribulation on the earth, "to test those who dwell on the earth." A study of the term "those who dwell on the earth" reveals that the "earth dwellers" are mentioned 12 times in the following verses: 3:10; 6:10; 11:10; 12:12; 13:8,12,14; 14:6; 17:8. It is a term of derision for those whose names are not written in the book of life and who are always following the wrong people, worshipping the wrong things, cheering about the wrong things and placing their trust in the wrong things.

Re 6:10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

Re 11:10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

Re 12:12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."

Re 13:8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Re 13:12 And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

Re13:14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.

Re14: 6 Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people

Re17:8 The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

- iv. The purpose of the tribulation is stated as a period of pressure to try or test or put pressure on "those who dwell on the earth". That period of pressure is designed to expose the foolishness of trusting anything but God. The earth dwellers will throw their idols to the bats and rocks but will still curse God and try to hide from Him who sits on the throne. God will use this period to bring terror to those who caused terror to His people. During this time multitudes will get saved Re 7 :9-17 by "washing their robes in the blood of the Lamb.
- v. The tribulation is not designed for the church, but for the earth dwellers and to bring many to salvation. The church will be kept ""from the hour of trial which shall come upon the earth to test those who dwell on the earth."

e. The Ignorance Argument.

Paul thought that *he* would be raptured.

^{1 Th 4:15-17} For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

*** Dispensational Truth That Reveals the Church is Removed Before the Tribulation Period Begins**

The next phase of God's program is the tribulation period. The primary question is whether the church will be removed from the world before, during or after the tribulation. The emphasis of this study will be to look at the biblical data to determine whether the characteristics of the people of God who are alive during the tribulation period match all the characteristics of the NT church. If one or more of those elements does not match the DNA of the NT church, then there is good reason to believe that the church is gone. The fact that some of the elements of the church might remain true for the tribulation saints, is not a proof that the church is on earth during the tribulation.

f. Argument from the 144,000.

i. The 144,000 mentioned in both Rev 7 and 14 is a group that is clearly "of God", clearly "operating during the tribulation", clearly "a group that has "special favor" with God, and a group composed completely of Jews. There are 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel.

^{Re7:3} saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." ⁴ And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed: of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed

ii. This group has no counterpart in the church age. There were Jews in the church

but they are clearly not given special status of any kind.

^{Ga3:28} There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

^{1 Col2:13} For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free-and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

^{Ro 1:12} For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.

^{Ro3:28} Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

²⁹Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also,

- iii. Any time we see a listing of people in the various churches, it is always an integrated list containing Jews and Gentiles, men and women, low and high.

^{Ro16:3} Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

⁵Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ.

^{Ro16:7} Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. ⁸Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord. ⁹Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys, my beloved. ¹⁰Greet Apelles, approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus. ¹¹Greet Herodion, my countryman. Greet those who are of the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.

- iv. The twelve apostles are all Jews and are considered a group, however they were called before the Church began and they are considered the foundation of the NT church. After the church began, there is never an emphasis on a special grouping of large numbers of Jewish men who are specially selected to follow Christ having a special mark on them who are called virgins.

^{Re14:1} Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. ² And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. ³They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; ⁴and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.

- v. A special emphasis is placed on the fact that they seemingly have not married or had relations with women. Although this is true of Paul, it is not the norm for the church age and such celibacy has led to many perversions among those that have attempted such an experiment. This group is clearly sovereignly chosen, called, preserved in their purity, selected by God for their purpose but are clearly not part of the NT church.

^{Re14:4} These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. ⁵And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

g. Argument from the two witnesses

- i. During the tribulation period, Jerusalem and the temple mount becomes a central focus of attention. This is clearly a return to a focus on the nation of Israel and their temple and holy city. After the early chapters of Acts, the focus of the church is to the ends of the earth. Even when Paul says to the Jew first and also to "the Greek," he is writing to the church at Rome. If the church is still the pillar and ground of the truth and God's program for evangelism in the world, why is the focus returning to the temple and Jerusalem?

^{Re 11:1} Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the

temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. ²But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.

Re 11:5 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

Re 11:13 In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.

ii. After the founding of the church in Acts 2, references to Gentiles are almost always positive or at least treated with some dignity.

Ro 11:13 For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,

Ro 15:16 That I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Pp 3:3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,

(1) Under the Law, Gentiles are considered unclean and are to be avoided.

^{1 Sa 17:36} your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this **uncircumcised Philistine** will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God."

(2) It is most often the Jews that Paul denigrates because of their opposition to the gospel.

^{1 Th 2:14} For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, ¹⁵Who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, ¹⁶forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.

Pp 3:2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!

(3) However in Re 6-19, we see a decidedly pro-Jewish point of view which is foreign during the church age but common to Israel.

Rev 11:2 But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.

iii. After the close of the apostolic age, the use of direct power by God's servants as a means of evangelism and resisting the enemies of God was replaced by love and truth and patience during persecution. The gospel of Christ during the church age has gone forth without calling down fire from heaven to kill the enemies of the gospel. Jesus' words to the church are to love our enemies. Be faithful unto death. But never does the church receive authority to kill their enemies. This is not the church operating in Re 11.

Re 11:3 And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

Re 11:5 And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. ⁶These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.

iv. The designation of the two witnesses as the two olive trees and two lamp stands standing before God would recall to any Bible scholar's mind the prophecies of Zechariah 4 where the same figures are used for the high priest and the ruler of

Judah obtaining power from God to rebuild the temple.
These symbols used together of two Jewish men are clearly related to Israel and not to the church.

Re11:4 These are the two olive trees and the two lamp stands standing before the God of the earth.

Zec 4:9 "The hands of Zerubbabel Have laid the foundation of this temple; His hands shall also finish it. Then you will know That the Lord of hosts has sent Me to you.

h. Argument from the familiar formula given 8 times in the book of Revelation encouraging those who have ears, let them hear...

i. Seven times this formula is given in Re 1-3 as follows:

Re2:7,11,17,29 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Re3:6,13,22 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

ii. It is given one other time in the and that is during the chapters detailing the tribulation period. Notice the distinct shift of emphasis.

Re13:9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear.

iii. All scripture is inspired. This change is not an accident or oversight. Why this distinct change? The simple answer is because the church has been removed and He is no longer addressing the church as He was in chapters 1 thru 3.

i. Argument from those who are the focus of Satan's attacks.

i. In Rev 1-3 Satan is seen attacking the church by using Jews to bring the persecution.

Re2:13 "I know where you are living, where Satan's throne is. Yet you are holding fast to my name, and you did not deny your faith in me even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan lives.

Re2:9 "I know your affliction and your poverty, even though you are rich. I know the slander on the part of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰ Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Beware, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison so that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have affliction. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

ii. In Re12, when Satan is angry, His primary target is the nation of Israel not the church as in Rev 1-3.

Re12:13 So when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. ¹⁴But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle, so that she could fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to her place where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time.

– By Bim Rowley, Pastor, Truth Baptist Church, South Windsor, CT.