

Will Christians go through the Great Tribulation? (Updated 12 June 2011)

Will Christians go through the Great Tribulation? Well firstly, are the Great Tribulation and the Day Of The Lord the same event? Everyone agrees that the Day Of The Lord (DOTL) will be a time of God's wrath but when will it occur? Is it at the same time as the Great Tribulation? The following verses show them to be separate events.

Matt. 24:21 tells us about.....**The Great Tribulation**
then AFTER the Great Tribulation

Matt. 24: 29 says that there will be a.....**Sign In The Heavens** (sun darkened, moon red etc)

Acts 2:20 also tells us about that Sign In The Heavens

and says that AFTER that sign will be.....**The Day Of The Lord.**

Clearly, the Great Tribulation and Day Of The Lord are different events separated by a Sign In The Heavens.

The Great Tribulation is not God's wrath but the Devil's wrath against believers, through the Antichrist, and it is BEFORE the Sign In The Heavens. Believers will go through the Great Tribulation because Jesus will not return until after the Sign In The Heavens (Matt. 24:30).

The Day Of The Lord, which is AFTER the Sign In The Heavens, is a period associated with God's wrath. During this time God will deal with sinners as Isa. 13:9 says, "*See, the day of the Lord is coming - a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger - to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it*". However, believers will escape this wrath by being gathered (raptured) into the Lord's presence (Matt. 24:30-31). 1 Thess 1:10 tells believers "*to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead - Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath*" and 1 Thess. 4:17 says that Christians "*who are still alive and are left will be caught up ... in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air*". So, it is clear that believers will be taken from the earth before the Day Of The Lord and escape God's wrath.

The following table compares Matt. 24 with Rev. 6-7. Both passages show the sequence of The Antichrist appearing then Great Tribulation then the Sign In The Heavens then Jesus returning to gather the elect and to destroy sinners in the DOTL.

Matt. 24:5, 24 False Christs. The Antichrist is peaceful at first.	Rev 6:2 - 1st Seal White horse and rider who is given a crown.
Matt. 24:6-7 Wars , nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom.	Rev. 6:3-4 - 2nd Seal Red horse to take peace from the earth.
Matt. 24:7 Famines and earthquakes.	Rev. 6:5-6 - 3rd Seal Black horse bringing famine.
Matt. 24:15 The Antichrist and the abomination that causes desolation.	Rev. 6:7-8 - 4th Seal Pale horse with Death and Hades. Power over 1/4 of the earth to kill by sword, famine, plague and wild beasts.
Matt. 24:9-13, 15-22 Great tribulation - many fall away from the faith.	Rev. 6:9-11 - 5th Seal Saints in heaven told that fellow servants are to be killed.
Matt. 24:29-31 Sun darkened and the moon not giving its light. Jesus returns and the DOTL begins - The nations mourn as the Son of Man appears with power and great glory. The Rapture - Angels gather the elect.	Rev. 6:12-17, Rev. 7:9-17 - 6th Seal The sun turned black and the moon turned red (Also Acts 2:20). The DOTL begins - People in caves and rocks hiding from the wrath of the Lamb because the great day of wrath has come. A great multitude from out of the Great Tribulation are in heaven.

From the above table we can see that after the Antichrist appears there will be great tribulation. During this time many will fall away from the faith. Then the sun/moon sign will appear and then Jesus will return to rapture the saints and pour out His wrath during the DOTL, beginning with the Trumpets of the 7th Seal. 2 Thess. 2:1-3 also state that our gathering to Him (as well as the rebellion) will not occur until after the man of lawlessness (Antichrist) is revealed.

The following chart and text examine the verses in Luke 17:24-36 which are entirely about the day Jesus returns like lightning. I start with Matt. 24 to show the timing of the verses in Luke 17:24-36.

Point 3 on the chart is Matt. 24:21, the Great Tribulation, and then after the tribulation ...

Point 5 (Matt. 24:27, 30) says that Jesus will appear like lightning - Luke 17:24 is the parallel verse.

Now let's follow the verses in Luke 17 which describe Jesus' return AFTER the Great Tribulation.

Points 6 and 7 (Luke 17:26-29) describe the sudden destruction of sinners in the days of Noah and Lot then ...

Point 8 (Luke 17:30) says that it (the destruction) will be just the same when Jesus returns. Also ...

Point 9 (Luke 17:31-33) says that "ON THAT DAY" no one should look to earthly things but to remember Lot's wife because ...

Points 10 and 11 (Luke 17:34-35) say that "one will be taken and the other left" and this is the Rapture.

So, AFTER the Great Tribulation, Jesus will return like lightning to rapture believers and to destroy sinners.

The Timing And Events Of Luke 17:24-36			
Point	Matt. 24-25	Event	Luke 17
1	Matt. 24:15	The Antichrist appears	
2	Matt. 24:16	Disciples told to flee Judea	
3	Matt. 24:21	The Great Tribulation	
4	Matt. 24:29	The sign in the sun, moon etc.	
5	Matt. 24:27, 30	Jesus appears like lightning	Luke 17:24
6		Destruction will come suddenly when Jesus returns, just as it did in the days of Noah.	Luke 17:26-27
7		When Lot left Sodom, destruction came on the same day.	Luke 17:28-29
8		<u>On the day</u> Jesus is revealed like lightning, sinners will be destroyed just like in the days of Noah and Lot ... AND ALSO	Luke 17:30
9		ON THAT DAY -	Luke 17:31-33
10		One is taken from their bed and one is left - THE RAPTURE.	Luke 17:34
11		One is taken from the field and one is left - THE RAPTURE.	Luke 17:35

Luke 17:24-36 start with Jesus appearing like lightning, AFTER the Great Tribulation

Sinners are destroyed ON THAT DAY and the elect are rescued, just as in the days of Noah and Lot.

This chart shows the flow of events as:

- 1) The Antichrist at Point 1.
- 2) The Great Tribulation at Point 3.
- 3) Jesus appears like lightning at Point 5.
- 4) The Rapture and the Day Of The Lord at Points 8 to 11.

Rescuing the righteous and then destroying the sinners was the pattern in the days of Noah and Lot and Jesus said, in Luke 17:30, that it would be the same when He returns.

The following chart shows that Jesus' return in Matthew 24 and the Rapture teachings of Paul in 1 Thess. are speaking of the same event - there are no less than sixteen similarities between Matt. 24-25 and 1 Thess. 4-5.

Comparing 1 Thessalonians 4-5 with Matthew 24-25

	Event	1 Thess. 4-5	Matt. 24-25
1	Christ Himself returns	1 Thess. 4:16	24:30
2	From heaven	1 Thess. 4:16	24:30
3	With a shout	1 Thess. 4:16	24:30 [in power]
4	Accompanied by angels	1 Thess. 4:16	24:31
5	With the trumpet of God	1 Thess. 4:16	24:31
6	Believers supernaturally gathered to Christ	1 Thess. 4:17	24:31, 40-41
7	Believers meet the Lord	1 Thess. 4:17	25:1, 6
8	In the clouds	1 Thess. 4:17	24:30
9	The time is unknown	1 Thess. 5:1-2	24:36
10	Will come as a thief	1 Thess. 5:2,4	24:43
11	Will come at night	1 Thess. 5:2	24:43
12	Unbelievers are unaware of impending judgment	1 Thess. 5:3	24:37-39
13	Judgment comes as travail upon an expectant mother	1 Thess. 5:3	24:8 [cf. RSV]
14	Believers not deceived	1 Thess. 5:6	24:4-5,25
15	Believers are to watch	1 Thess. 5:6	24:42,25
16	Warning against drunkenness	1 Thess 5:7	24:49

All these similarities take coincidence beyond its limits. Obviously Paul and Jesus are speaking of the same event - Jesus will return once, cutting the Great Tribulation short, to gather His people and then pour out His wrath on those left on the earth. Chart taken from <http://www.scriptorium.org>

Who is the Restrainer of 2 Thess. 2:7? There is good evidence to believe that Michael, Israel's protector (Dan 10:21 and 12:1), is the Restrainer as the following chart shows.

Download these charts from http://www.christianissues.biz/pdf-bin/endtimes/comparing_thess_matt_rev.pdf

Matt. 24	Dan. 12:1	Rev. 12:7-13 & 13:1-2	2 Thess. 2:1-12
Antichrist revealed, v.15.	Michael arises from protecting Israel.	Michael defeats Satan and hurls him to the earth. Vs.12:7-9.	The Restrainer, the one who holds back, is taken out of the way, v.7.
THEN a time of unequalled, worldwide distress, v.21.	THEN a time of worldwide distress as never before.	THEN the dragon, Satan, is furious and, through the Antichrist, pursues Israel. Vs.12:12-13.	THEN a time of lawlessness. Vs. 9-12

An obvious connection exists here between Michael arising, the Restrainer's removal and the Antichrist being revealed. Also, note Dan. 10:21 KJV in which Michael *"holdeth with me"* and compare with the Restrainer in 2 Thess. 2:6-7 KJV.

The day of the Lord's return is not known. All we know is that there are 1260 days between the appearance of the abomination in the Holy Place and Armageddon (perhaps 1290 or 1335 as in Dan 12:11-12). We are told that during this time Christians will suffer great tribulation which will be cut short at some point in time when Jesus returns (Matt. 24:15-22) and then God's wrath will be poured out. The length of the period of wrath is not known either. Rev 15:1 tells us that the Bowls are the seven last plagues which **complete** God's wrath so the Trumpets, which precede the Bowls, are also part of His wrath. How long the Bowls and Trumpets take is anyone's guess (the 5th trumpet alone is for 5 months). Some believe that the church will be taken away at the Last Trumpet of Rev 11:15 and that God's Wrath is only the seven Bowls which follow the seventh Trumpet. This may be so. Either way, the church will be going through a period of great tribulation and persecution from the Antichrist.

Summing this up, there will be 1260 days which begin with the appearance of the abomination of desolation (Matt. 24:15). These days include an unknown period of great tribulation which is cut short by Jesus' return and the Rapture of the church. Then God's wrath is poured out over the remaining days until Armageddon. Believers desperately need to prayerfully brace themselves to go through the Great Tribulation as Jesus said that *"many will turn away from the faith ... but he who stands firm to the end will be saved"* (Matt. 24:10, 13). We are without excuse and must prepare for this time as Jesus said, *"See, I have told you ahead of time"* (Matt. 24:25).

The 'coming' of the Son of Man.

In each of the following verses, regarding the return of Jesus, the word 'coming' comes from the Greek word 'parousia' and it is singular. In Matt. 24:27, Jesus said that no one will mistake His coming because, *"as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man"* and then in Matt. 24:30 He said that when He comes, *"all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory"*. These verses tell us that Jesus' coming will be visible to everyone, like lightning, and the nations will mourn because they know that He is about to pour out God's wrath.

The same word for 'coming' is also used in Matt. 24:39-40 and in these verses Jesus said, *"at the coming [parousia] of the Son of Man two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left"*. This is the Rapture!

Because the word for coming is singular, in each of these verses, it follows that Jesus is only going to come once, not twice as PreTrib doctrine states, and when He comes He will rapture believers and then pour out God's wrath on sinners.

Is The Rapture Imminent?

Many people believe that the Rapture can occur at any moment, that is, it is imminent. Imminent means that something can happen at any moment, without anything else having to occur beforehand. What did Jesus' disciples think about the timing of the Rapture?

Peter could not have believed in an imminent Rapture as, in John 21:18-19, Jesus told him that he would face death in his old age. The other apostles and all those familiar with Jesus' teachings would have been aware of this also. They knew that Jesus told Peter that he would die so they would not have believed in an imminent Rapture while Peter was alive.

Paul's letters are said to support the doctrine of immanency but this is very illogical as he wrote most, maybe all, of his letters before Peter died. Because the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write his letters we can be sure that Paul would not have written about an imminent Rapture while Peter was alive. 1 & 2 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians were written before Peter's death.

The word 'watch' has been taken to mean an 'any moment Rapture' but when Jesus spoke about His return, He didn't use the word in that context. In the Olivet Discourse, Mark 13:1-32, Jesus spoke about the Antichrist and the Great Tribulation and then in Mark 13:33-37 He told the disciples not to sleep but to be alert and watch for His coming. Note that Jesus said to watch for His return AFTER certain events, so the context of the word 'watch' is not of imminence. For this reason, the call for Christians to be watchful for the Lord's return in other parts of the Bible is not speaking of an imminent return of Jesus. The three points mentioned so far are clear evidence that the Bible does not teach an imminent return of Jesus.

What does it mean to not sleep but to be alert and watch for Jesus' return? Obviously we must sleep. Mark 13:36 says, *"if he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping"* and then in 1 Thess. 5:4 Paul said, *"you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief"*. Being in darkness means to be in sin and this will lead to 'sleeping' and being surprised like a thief. So, the call for Christians to be alert and watchful is a call to remain faithful, by abiding in Jesus, even through great tribulation. Timothy was told, *"Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers"*. (1 Tim. 4:16).

Is it possible to joyfully wait for our Blessed Hope if we know we are going to go through great tribulation? In Matt 24:8 Jesus said that the trials during the end times will be like the beginning of birth pains, so in the same way that a woman knows she is going to face pain before she sees her child, Christians can (and often do) face great tribulation with joy, knowing that they will soon see their Blessed Hope. Paul suffered greatly yet said, *"in all our troubles, my joy knows no bounds"* 2 Cor. 7:4. Because 2 Thess. 2:1-3 tell us that the Rapture is after the Antichrist's appearance, Christians must prayerfully prepare for the possibility of going through the Great Tribulation.

This is a brief discussion on imminency. For a better and deeper insight see Tim Warner's article at - <http://www.oasischristianchurch.org/air/017.pdf>

Coming Like A Thief

In 1 Thess. 5:2-3 we are told that *"the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying 'peace and safety', destruction will come on them suddenly"*. The popular interpretation of these verses is that Jesus can surprise the church at any moment by returning to secretly rapture them. This belief comes from neglecting to read the verses which follow on. 1 Thess 5:4 says, *"But you brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief"*. We can see from this verse that it is not Christians who will be surprised by the Lord's return but the UNSAVED. 1 Thess 5:5-8 continue on to say that believers are sons of light and do not belong to the darkness, which is sin. The brothers are told not to be like those who are asleep, in darkness, but to be alert and self-controlled ... that is, keeping from sin. Those who remain faithful in Christ will not be surprised by His return and Jesus' letter to the Sardis church confirms this.

Speaking to the Sardis church, in Rev. 3:1-3, Jesus said, *"you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead [in sin]. Wake up! ... But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief and you will not know at what time I will come"*. Clearly, this confirms that it is the unsaved who will be surprised by Jesus' return, while they are enjoying the darkness of their sin. They will not be raptured but left on the earth to endure God's wrath. Faithful believers will be raptured and escape this wrath as promised in 1 Thess 5:9 which says, *"God did not appoint us to wrath"*. Rev. 17:14 says that those with Jesus *"will be his called, chosen and FAITHFUL followers"*.

Regarding people saying 'peace and safety' (1 Th. 5:3), note that it is not Christians but the UNSAVED who are saying this and they will be destroyed. The present situation in China is an example of what it may be like at the end. In China, the vast majority are enjoying peace and safety while the Christian minority is being heavily persecuted. When the Antichrist rules, Christian and Jewish minorities will be persecuted worldwide while the world's majority won't care about their suffering, just as they don't care about the 500 or so Christians being killed daily at present, in 2009. Most people in China are enjoying a normal lifestyle and this type of scenario could well exist after the Antichrist breaks the peace treaty ... Christians will be suffering great tribulation under his rule while the world is saying 'peace and safety'. Also, the world cares very little about the Jews and are caring less each day as they blame Israel for the Middle East's problems and will be happy to see them destroyed in the hope that it would bring about peace and safety.

In Matt. 24:25, Jesus warned us about the time of the end. He said, *"See, I have told you ahead of time"* and in Matt. 24:22 He said that the days of the great tribulation would be cut short for the sake of the elect. This is when He raptures those eagerly waiting for Him and *"comes like a thief in the night"* to destroy those who oppose Him (Matt. 24:29-31).

So, the churches need to WAKE UP! and prepare for the possibility of facing great persecution. You and I may well live to see the Antichrist and I urge all believers to *"be strong in the Lord and his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes"* (Eph. 6:10-11). After the appearance of the Antichrist, Rev. 13:10 says, *"If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints"*. Only the Lord can keep us from falling and carry us through persecution and possible martyrdom so we have an enormous need to abide in Him and call upon Him for the strength to remain faithful.

May you draw close to God and be able to say, *"The Lord is my strength and my shield"* (Psa. 28:7).

For an article on hearing and following the Lord's voice go to -
<http://www.christianissues.biz/thewayofpeace.html>

For a short article on when Jesus will return, download The Return Of Jesus from - <http://www.christianissues.biz/pdf-bin/endtimes/thereturnofjesus.pdf>

The Rapture Question Answered, Plain & Simple, by Robert Van Kampen, covers the PreWrath position well.

Download the following PDF for a chart which shows the striking parallels between 1 Thess. 4-5, Matt. 24-25 and Rev. 6-8 - http://www.christianissues.biz/pdf-bin/endtimes/comparing_thess_matt_rev.pdf

For my short YouTube videos on end times, go to

http://www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=486295FE924B9BFF

The following links discuss a Post Tribulation, Pre Wrath Rapture -

Pre-Wrath Ministries - Elbert Charpie at <http://prewrathministries.org/index.html>

Last Days Ministry - Richard Perry at <http://www.lastdaysmystery.info/>

The Last Trumpet - Tim Warner at <http://www.geocities.com/~lasttrumpet>

For an article, by Tim Warner, showing that the early church was wholly Post Tribulational, download - <http://www.oasischristianchurch.org/air/018.pdf>

Newman's Pre-Wrath Rapture Links at <http://www.hello-newman.com/Times/prewrath.html>

Download Richard Perry's free book **Of The Last Days** from

<http://www.christianissues.biz/pdf-bin/endtimes/richardperry/ofthelastdays.pdf>

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