

GroupStudy #1 TRIBULATION

Tribulation Defined: Distress, suffering, persecution, oppression. All believers should expect some tribulation throughout their lives on account of taking the name of Jesus. Tribulation is normal.

The Great Tribulation Defined: A future period of time when God pours out His wrath, judgement, and discipline upon the world. It is a worldwide period of hardship, persecution, disaster, disease, war, suffering, and pain. The Great Tribulation takes place before the return of Jesus.

The Rapture Defined: The belief in the rapture is widely held among most evangelicals. The basis for the rapture is primarily 1 Thessalonians 4:17 and 1 Corinthians 15:52 (we will study both of these Scriptures) regarding the hope of believers for a future resurrection of their bodies. This resurrection will occur in the last days at or near the time when Jesus returns to earth. The question is whether or not the rapture is a separate and distinct event from the second coming of Christ, or if it occurs simultaneously when Christ returns to earth at the end of the tribulation. Those who affirm a pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, and pre-wrath view of the rapture see it as a separate or secret return of Christ for the Church occurring well before he actually returns to the earth publicly. Those who affirm a post-tribulation view see the rapture as occurring simultaneous with the return of Christ at the end of the Tribulation.¹

You Decide: Does Jesus come back secretly before His 2nd Coming and rapture the Church to heaven before the Great Tribulation? Or does the Bible teach that the Church will go through the Great Tribulation?

Read: Matthew 24. The Return of Jesus in His Own Words (Also found in Mark 13 and Luke 21)

1. Christians all AGREE that Jesus will return. Their disagreements are about the TIMING.

Jesus left the temple area and was going on His way when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. ² But He responded and said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down."³ And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

2. We can still love one another even though we disagree on the TIMING of the End Times.

¹ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-rapture-question/>

⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. ⁵ For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will mislead many people. ⁶ And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pains.

3. What does Jesus say here about the **TIMING** of the End?

⁹ "Then they will hand you over to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. ¹⁰ And at that time many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹ And many false prophets will rise up and mislead many people. ¹² And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will become cold. ¹³ But the one who endures to the end is the one who will be saved. ¹⁴ This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

- a. **Who is Jesus speaking to?** His 12 Disciples and future disciples (you).
- b. **What does Jesus say will happen?** Tribulation, Death, Hated by all nations, many will fall away. Christians will betray one another and hate one another. Christians will be misled by false prophets. Most people's (Mainly Non-Christians and so-called Christians) love will become cold. The one who endures to the end will be saved.
- c. **What must happen before Jesus returns and the end comes?** The gospel shall be preached to all the nations.

4. Has this event already occurred or is Jesus talking about a future event? (Answer: Probably both)

¹⁵ "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place—let the reader understand— ¹⁶ then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get things out of his house. ¹⁸ And whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. ¹⁹ But woe to those women who are pregnant, and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ²⁰ Moreover, pray that when you flee, it will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. ²¹ For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will again. ²² And if those days had not been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

- **Abomination of Desolation-** "In 167 BC Antiochus IV Epiphanes took Jerusalem by force, abolished temple sacrifices, erected an abominable altar to Zeus, outlawed Sabbath observance, sacrificed swine, spread the blood of swine in the temple and forced some Jewish people to eat pork." (Hanegraaff, *The Apocalypse Code*, p. 87). All the Jewish readers would have known about this Abomination of Desolation by Epiphanes when they read or heard Matthew 24.

- Daniel 11:31 Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation. (Past or Future Event?)
- Daniel 12:11 And from the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. (Past or Future Event?)

What about the Destruction of the Temple in 70 AD? The Romans utterly destroyed the Temple fulfilling Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 24:2. How does that event fit into Jesus' words in Matt. 24:15-22?

What about the Holocaust? 6 Million Jews killed. (1939- Jewish Pop. of 16.6 mil. Today, 15.2 million)

Who are they? "For the sake of the Elect?" - Answer: Faithful Israel and Christians. (Romans 8)

5. Jesus will visibly appear at His coming just like lightning flashes in the sky. (Not secretly).

²³ Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'He is over here,' do not believe him. ²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will arise and will provide great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ Behold, I have told you in advance. ²⁶ So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out; or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them. ²⁷ For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. ²⁸ Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

6. What do these verses teach us about the timing of the return of Jesus? It's visible!

²⁹ "But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. ³¹ And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET BLAST, and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

- What would the original hearers believe about going through the tribulation? (verse 9)
- Mark 13:26-27 (NASB) At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

7. Have these events already taken place or will these events happen in the future?

³² "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: as soon as its branch has become tender and sprouts its leaves, you know that summer is near; ³³ so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. ³⁴ Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

- Who is "This generation will not pass away..." Past, Present or Future?
- How would the original hearers understand? Answer: It's going to happen. Be ready!

8. Does this passage talk about the Rapture of the Church before the Great Tribulation?

³⁶ "But about that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. ³⁷ For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰ At that time there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.

- Is it better to be taken or left behind? According to the Bible, it's better to be left behind like Noah.
- THEY- Ungodly, Unrighteous people in Noah's day (eating, drinking, marrying)
- NOAH- Blameless, Righteous. He remained on earth. He was protected in the ark.
- THEY- All taken away by the judgement of the flood.
- COMING OF THE SON OF MAN- Jesus' return.
 - TAKEN- All the ungodly will be taken away by the judgment of God.
 - LEFT BEHIND- All the righteous will remain until the coming of Jesus.
- How would the original hearers have interpreted Jesus' words?
- Would they have used this passage as a main Scripture for Pre-Tribulation Rapture? No.
- Luke 17:26-37 also describes the same teaching with expanded teaching of Lot.

9. Be ready for Jesus to return. Be found faithfully working when He returns.

⁴² "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴ For this reason you must be ready as well; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will. ⁴⁵ "Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge

of his household slaves, to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. ⁴⁷ Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

10. Hell is a real place. A place described as “weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

⁴⁸ But if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is not coming for a long time,’ ⁴⁹ and he begins to beat his fellow slaves, and he eats and drinks with those habitually drunk; ⁵⁰ then the master of that slave will come on a day that he does not expect, and at an hour that he does not know, ⁵¹ and he will cut him in two and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Note:

- Jesus never spoke of the rapture of the church.
- Jesus always spoke of being ready and prepared for tribulation and persecution. (John 15:18-27)