

Will Christians go through the Great Tribulation? (Updated 5 July 2009)

Firstly, are the Great Tribulation and the Day Of The Lord (DOTL) the same event? From Matt. 24, shown in the table below, we can see that after the Great Tribulation, the sun is darkened and the moon is not giving its light. Then in Acts 2:20 we are told that *“The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.”* So, the sequence of events is firstly the Tribulation then the sun/moon sign and then the DOTL, making the Tribulation and the DOTL separate events. The table shows how the sequence of events and sun/moon sign of Matt. 24 parallel the sequence and sun/moon sign in Rev. 6, showing these passages to be parallel prophecy.

The DOTL is a period associated with God’s wrath. During this time God will deal with sinners as in Isa. 13:9, *“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 by being caught up (raptured) into the Lord’s presence. 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 DOTL and escape God’s wrath.

The following table compares Matthew 24 and Revelation 6 and a clear parallel can be seen.

Matt. 24:5, 24 False Christs. The Anti-Christ 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 Anti-Christ 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 Anti-Christ 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, beginning with the Trumpets of the 7th Seal. This same order of events is also in 2 Thess. 2:1-3 where it says that our gathering to Him (the Rapture) and the DOTL will not occur until after the rebellion (apostasy) occurs and the man of lawlessness (Anti-Christ) is revealed.

The passage in Luke 17:22-35 also shows that **on the day Jesus returns like lightning** (not seven years before this day - Luke 17:23-24), the righteous are raptured and the DOTL begins. This event is not a secret return but *“will be like the lightning which flashes and lights us the sky from one end to the other”* (Luke 17:24). If we first look at Luke 17:26-29 we see that, in the days of Noah and the days of Lot, when the righteous were removed destruction came immediately. Luke 17:30 says that it is going to be *“just like this on the day the Son of man is revealed.”* Now, if we look at Luke 17:31-35 we see that v.31 begins by saying *“on that day”*, indicating that the events in the next verses will occur on the same day. These verses say that on **that** day one will be taken and the other left - this is the Rapture! So, the removal of the righteous in vs.26-29 and the Rapture of vs.31-35 are the **same** event because they both happen *“on that day”*. (2 Thess. 1:6-10 shows this also). Clearly, the Rapture and

the beginning of God's wrath are on the same day and that day is after the Great Tribulation (see chart). So, Christians will endure the Great Tribulation until the Lord returns. This is why Rev. 13:10 calls for "*patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints*" (Rev. 14:12 also).

The parallel between Matt 24-25 & 1 Thess. 4-5.

Jesus' teaching of His physical return, in the Olivet Discourse, and the Rapture teachings of Paul are clearly parallel. In fact, no less than sixteen parallels occur between Matt. 24-25 and 1 Thess. 4-5.

Note the following:

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

(Taken from <http://www.scriptorium.org/products/newsletters.html>)

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.

Who is the Restrainer of 2 Thess. 2:7?

Matt. 24	Dan. 12:1	Rev. 12:7-13 & 13:1-2	2 Thess. 2:1-12
Anti-Christ 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 Anti-Christ, pursues Israel. Vs.12:12-13.	THEN a time of lawlessness. Vs. 9-12

There is good evidence to believe that Michael, Israel's protector (Dan 10:21 and 12:1), is the Restrainer. An obvious parallel exists between Michael arising, the Restrainer's removal and the Anti-Christ being revealed. Also, note Dan. 10:21 in which Michael "*holdeth with me*" (KJV) and compare this with the Restrainer in 2 Thess. 2:6-7.

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 Anti Christ.

Summing this up, there will be 1260 days which begin with the appearance of the abomination of desolation. 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).

Jesus' Second Coming - What two big events occur when Jesus visibly returns to the earth?

After the Great Tribulation, Jesus is going to physically return to earth to perform two great events. It is well known that one of these events is to pour out His wrath against God's enemies, ending with Armageddon. In Matt. 24:30 Jesus said, "*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*". We also know, from Rev. 1:7, that when He does return, "*he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him*". Jesus said, in Matt. 24:27, that no one will mistake His return because, "*as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man*". So, when Jesus visibly returns, we know that one event will be the eventual destruction of His enemies at Armageddon.

What is the second event?

In Matt. 24:27, Jesus said that the coming of the Son of Man will be seen like lightning. The word "*coming*" in this verse is the Greek word "parousia" and it refers to Jesus' physical return to the earth. The same Greek word for coming is used further on in Matt. 24:39-40. 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! As there is only one physical return of Jesus ('parousia' is always singular in reference to Jesus' return) we can see that on that day He will both rapture the church and pour out God's Wrath.

So, when Jesus raptures the church, it will not be a secret affair but will be seen by all, just like lightning is seen from the East to the West and it will not happen until after the Antichrist appears and the church has gone through the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:29-30). For this reason, we all need to prayerfully prepare for the possibility of great tribulation as Jesus said, "*At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other. See, I have told you ahead of time*" (Matt. 24:10, 25).

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 Peter had to die before Jesus returned so the Rapture was not imminent to them.

Paul's letters are said to support the doctrine of imminency but this is very illogical as he wrote most, maybe all, of his letters before Peter died. If Paul was unaware of Jesus' words to Peter then he was uninspired, making his letters worthless. However, we know that his work was inspired by the Holy Spirit and for this reason Paul could not have taught imminency in any of his letters - certainly not in 1 & 2 Thessalonians nor in 1 Corinthians, because they 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, He spoke about the Antichrist and the Great Tribulation and then in vs.33-37, He told the disciples 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 be alert and watch for Jesus' return? 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 endtimes 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. V.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 the UNSAVED who will be surprised by the Lord's return, not the Christians. Vs. 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 prospering and 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 to 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). 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).

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

Go to http://www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=486295FE924B9BFF for my short YouTube videos on end times:

- 1) Will the church go through the Great Tribulation?
- 2) The difference between God's Wrath and the Great Tribulation.
- 3) Who is the Restrainer?
- 4) "One will be taken and the other left". Is this the Rapture?
- 5) Jesus' Second Coming.
- 6) Is The Rapture Imminent?
- 7) Coming Like A Thief.

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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