

The Tribulation Question

1. Living In The Closing Moments

Two comings of the Lord were prophesied for the time and dispensation we are in right now. The first coming is *for* His saints —the rapture. The second coming, seven years later, will be *with* His saints — the Second Advent.

Daniel 9:2427

refers to seventy weeks, which are actually 490 years: seventy segments of the seven sabbatical years. Every seven years, the Jews were to let the land rest. These are Jewish time periods, and the Church is presently living between Daniel's sixtyninth week and seventieth week.

On the sixtyninth week, Jesus came into Jerusalem, riding on a donkey. Although the people shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord," Jesus knew that was the last day of Jewish time. When Jesus went into the synagogue and spoke to the Pharisees and scribes, He answered all their questions until they didn't dare ask anymore questions (Matthew 22:46). In Matthew 23, Jesus told the religious leaders exactly what they were: hypocrites, blind guides, blind fools, blind men, snakes, and brood of vipers. Their religion had them bound, just like religion does to people today. We can talk about sin: drinking, smoking, prostitution, murder, drugs, etc., but religion destroys people more than any of these sins.

Thank God Christianity is not a religion! Christianity is a relationship between you and the Lord Jesus Christ. We don't have to work to gain righteousness because He gave us righteousness through the Cross. The people were so furious with Jesus that they crucified Him. Religion put Jesus on the cross. Religion is the world's counterfeit for Christianity. Religion says there are many ways to get to heaven. Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by Me*" (John 14:6). Jesus is the *only* means of salvation.

Matthew 23:3739:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till he shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

This was the prophecy the temple would be destroyed, which literally occurred forty years later in 70 A.D. by the Romans, and the Jews were dispersed throughout the world. In the meantime, the time of the Gentiles is being fulfilled. We are living in the closing moments of the Gentiles' Age before Jesus comes back for us. We have seen the return of the Jews to their natural homeland and they are now in the city of Jerusalem. Jewish time did not end, it merely stopped.

2. Expectations of the Disciples

The rapture was not taught in the Old Testament or in the four Gospels. The rapture of the Church is a mystery, and is therefore part of the Church Age we live in today. Peter and the disciples did not understand the rapture until after the day of Pentecost. The Church was unknown in the Old Testament. Today's dispensation was unknown by Jeremiah, Isaiah, and even the disciples. The disciples thought Jesus came to usher in the millennial reign because they thought Daniel's seventy weeks would follow one after another. They thought they would go from the sixtyninth week into the seventieth week, so they concluded that the kingdom of God was close. They expected Jesus to point His finger and make the entire Roman Empire disappear. Jesus couldn't teach on the rapture of the Church because they didn't know what the Church was. They would not have understood what He was talking about.

Today, the earth is not waiting for the rapture of the Church; the earth is waiting for the restoration where we will live for one thousand years in peace as Jesus Christ rules and reigns over this planet.

Today, man is looking for someone who can make peace out of the chaos, but that will not happen until the Prince of Peace comes and establishes peace on this earth.

Matthew 24 tells the signs of Christ's return. According to verse 6, there will be wars and rumors of war, but He says we're not to be troubled. We are in the world, but we are not of the world.

People look at Christians today like we're nuts. Inflation is worse, the economy is worse, oil prices are through the roof, and Christians go around saying, "My God supplies all my needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." The world's economy might get worse, but my economy can only get better because I don't live off of the world's economy; I live off of heaven's economy. Heaven hasn't had any inflation or recession since time began and it never will.

Before Jesus rode into Jerusalem, he told his disciples a parable in Luke 19. After countless times of them asking when the kingdom was coming, Jesus simply told them it was not for them to know the times or the seasons. When the Holy Spirit descended on them on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit brought back all those things to their remembrance. They then realized they were in a new dispensation. It took the presence of the Holy Spirit to reveal to them the words Jesus had spoken.

3. Jesus' Description of the End Times

Matthew 24:1:

And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple.

Jesus not only went out of the Temple, He *departed*. The disciples were very impressed with the Temple because Pharaoh had rebuilt it and it was very expensive and very beautiful. However, Jesus, looking through the eye of faith, saw the Temple destroyed. He knew the time of the Jews would stop and the time of the Gentiles was about to come. Jesus saw a whole new dispensation coming.

Matthew 24:2:

And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. When Jesus said this, the disciples went crazy. They thought, Here it comes. Just what we've been waiting for. They must have had a million questions for Jesus, but they had to contain their excitement because the Romans were walking the streets of Jerusalem. Who wanted to tell the Romans their temple was going to be destroyed?

They wanted Jesus to keep quiet a little longer so as to not rouse the suspicions of the Romans, so they went up to the Mount of Olives so they could ask all their questions in private.

Matthew 24:3:

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

They didn't ask just one question; they asked three questions. **None of these questions pertained to the rapture** because they didn't know what the rapture was. They were asking about the Second Advent.

Jesus didn't describe the rapture in Matthew 24, He was describing the Second Advent which would take place *after* the tribulation.

In Matthew 24, the tribulation is described from verses 9 through 26. It is divided into two time periods — the first half and the second half, each three and one half years long.

Daniel 9:27:

And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he [the antichrist] shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Matthew 24:14

speaks of the first half of the tribulation and verses 15 through 26 is the second half of the tribulation. Verse 15 marks the middle of the tribulation when the antichrist sets up his rule from Jerusalem. Halfway through the tribulation he breaks the covenant he has established. Verses 27 through 51 discuss the Second Advent. Matthew 24 and 25 are in chronological order. Jesus isn't jumping from one time period to another. If you read it verse by verse, you'll see He begins with the tribulation, goes to the battle of Armageddon, then to the Second Advent and the judgments associated with that, and finally to the millennial reign.

Luke 21:12-19:

But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall

Answer For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.

And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not a hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls.

Jesus is describing the Book of Acts. He's telling the disciples they will be persecuted for His name's sake, but it will be a testimony for them. When the devil is putting persecution on you, tell the devil you're going to make a testimony out of whatever he throws your way and it will be thrown back into his face.

4. When Shall These Things Be?

Luke 21:20-24:

And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.

For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. [Daniel's prophecy] But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

This is describing the scene in Jerusalem in 70 A.D., not the battle of Armageddon. **This is Jesus' answer to question number one:** *When shall these things be?* In 70 A.D., Jesus did not rescue them, but at the battle of Armageddon, when it looks like the same thing is about to happen, Jesus will descend from heaven with all his saints and will fight for Jerusalem and save Jerusalem.

In verse 24, Jesus is telling them the time of the Jews is over and the time of the Gentiles is coming. However, the Jews will be brought up again when the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled. Today, we are seeing the time of the Gentiles nearing fulfillment. Jerusalem is no longer trodden down of all nations. She's back in her homeland as of 1948. I am convinced we are in the last few closing moments before Jesus Christ comes back for us and this whole earth will shift back to Jewish time for seven more years. The tribulation is about to come, but we have not been appointed unto wrath. The Church is going to be taken up into heaven where we will stand before the reward seat of Christ and be rewarded for our deeds done in the flesh.

5. The Signs of His Coming and the End of the World

What shall be the sign of thy coming and the end of the world? The Greek word for *world* actually means *age*. They were asking about the Jewish Age because they didn't understand the Church. What is the end of the Jewish Age? The tribulation is the end of Jewish time, but the tribulation is yet to come. Jewish time never ended; it only stopped when Jesus came into Jerusalem that day on a donkey. After the Messiah was cut off and the city was destroyed, we entered into the time of the Gentiles and we have seven years of Jewish time yet to be completed. The rapture of the Church will begin the seven year time of tribulation, which is Daniel's seventieth week.

Matthew 24:45:

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For man shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

How can we keep from being deceived? Know the Word. Those who don't know the Word are getting deceived by false Christ's and false religions. When error comes in, it always sweeps the immature Christians right off their feet and eventually causes them shipwreck and hurt. False teachers always start with truth, never with error. They get immature Christians to nod their head in agreement with them and when the false teachers get into error, the immature Christians are still nodding their head and still agreeing.

There is such a revival of the Word of God today because there is such an increase in deception today. Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. Satan will never outdo God. In the final end, Jesus will win.

Matthew 24:6:

And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

Wars are hot wars; rumors of wars are cold wars. We'll continue to hear about them, but Jesus says not to be troubled. Why? Because our confidence is not in the world; our confidence is in the Word of God.

Until Jesus comes back, we will have wars and rumors of wars and there is nothing we can do about it. Protesting won't work and declaring there won't be any war won't work because Satan is still the god of this Earth until Jesus Christ returns. However, in the midst of it all, we can walk without being troubled because we are not part of Satan's world. Our citizenship is in heaven.

Every time a war breaks out, many think we are in the tribulation. But Jesus says, "The end is not yet." The end, the tribulation, is not here because we (Christians) are still here. The end can't come until we are gone.

2 Thessalonians 2:3:

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.

Many try to pick out who they think the antichrist is, but he's not even going to be revealed until we're gone because the Church is keeping him from being revealed. That is how powerless the devil is against the powerful Church.

Matthew 24:7:

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences; and earthquakes, in divers places.

All of these are happening today. In fact, there seems to be more famine, pestilence, and earthquakes today than ever in recorded history. We had never seen so many people killed and so much devastation from one disaster before the tsunami hit at Christmas 2004. What are we supposed to do? *Don't be troubled.* Although horrible things have happened in the past, it will get worse before it gets better. The good news is that we will be gone before the worst happens.

Matthew 24:8:

All these are the beginning of sorrows.

The Greek word for sorrows is *birth pangs*. This verse is comparing the world's condition to a woman who is pregnant. Every woman who has had a child knows that the birth pangs begin before the baby comes. They start out mild but get more and more intense until the time for delivery comes. The world is experiencing labor pains and those labor pains are getting closer and closer together and more and more intense, but before delivery, we're going to be gone. The world is waiting for the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The earth is groaning and travailing, waiting for the release of this burdensome curse placed on this planet, and the author of this curse is going to be bound for

one thousand years. During that time, we will rule and reign in righteousness on this earth.

Matthew 24:9:

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

We are raptured out of here between verses 8 and 9. Verse 9 begins the tribulation. The Greek word for *afflicted* is *tribulation*. The events in verse 9 have not yet happened. The Jewish people and Israel have some friends around the world, but one day the salt of the earth will be removed and all nations will turn against Israel because the nations of the world will be under the complete control of Satan.

Matthew 24:10-12:

And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

Christians are the only ones who can really display *love*. There will be Christians in the tribulation, but they will be carnal Christians —those who are influenced by the lawlessness and the iniquity around them. The fact they will *wax cold* simply means they will turn cold.

They become cold because of all the lawlessness around them and they are not in the Word of God. The only thing that can keep our love from turning cold is the Word of God. The Word will preserve us and keep us going.

6. Enduring To The End

Matthew 24:13: *But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*

The *end* is the end of the tribulation. The person who endures to the end of the tribulation will be spared. They endure by standing on the Word. The Word of God will be used just as much during the tribulation as it is today, and if it works today, it will work then. God is going to give them instruction on how they can be spared.

Matthew 24:14: *And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*

The Gospel they are going to be preaching is the coming of the kingdom — the Second Advent and the millennial reign. Today, we preach of the rapture, but after we are gone, they're going to be preaching of the return of the Lord Jesus to establish His kingdom.

Today, the Gospel is being heard around the world, but it has taken over two thousand years to get to this point. During the tribulation, evangelism will go from zero to worldwide in only seven years. People will get saved during the tribulation; it will be the greatest time of evangelism the world has ever seen. I believe the greatest number of people will get saved about five minutes after the rapture of the Church. People all around the world will fall to their knees and accept Jesus because they have heard for years that Jesus is coming, but they laughed at us and rejected Him.

When they turn on the evening news and find out many people around the world are missing, they're going to call their Christian friends and hear nothing but the ringing of the phone and perhaps the answering machine. Then they will fall on their knees and accept Jesus. It's going to be up to them to get into the Word of God because the greatest time of pressure will take place at that time.

Why wait to see if the Word is right? The Bible says, "*God is not a man that He should lie.*" This world is on a predestined course by the Word of God and it's going to happen.