

When Is the Rapture?

Sane and Sensible Perspectives on the Last Days

Without a doubt the timing of Rapture in relation to the Great Tribulation is the most hotly debated piece of the Last Days' puzzle. Will the Church be raised to meet the Lord before, after, or at some time during the events of the Great Tribulation? Enquiring minds want to know! And so do frightened hearts. So much hangs in the balance. If we don't put this key piece in the right place, all the other pieces will be pushed out of proper order and thrown into confusion. We too will be thrown into confusion.

If the Lord is coming to take the Church out of harm's way, then no one needs to do anything to prepare. The Tribulation won't touch us! In that case, almost none of the events recorded in Biblical prophecy have anything to do with any of us. We won't be here to experience them. This turns the events of the Last Days into an object of intellectual curiosity—and a ghoulish curiosity at that—as we exempt ones peer into the anguish of other lives. A kind of spiritual voyeurism. We don't need to worry about taking the mark of the beast since we won't be here, so why try to understand what it is? No about-to-be-raptured believer needs to be concerned about surviving persecution, famine or other perils. That's for someone else to go through.



In addition, if the Rapture can happen “at any moment”, then we believers are just as in the dark as the unbelieving world. There is no way for us to know when such a pre-emptive strike can happen, because there are absolutely no Biblical signs to watch for. By definition, such a sudden and unheralded event will take us all by surprise, including the unbelievers who will know that it happened only after it happens. So, be ready by being in the faith, but that's about all anyone can do.

Fantasy or Reality?

But is this the reality that the New Testament describes? Or is it a fantasy—the product of wishful thinking? To be sure a lot of devout, sincere Christians believe that the Church will be raptured before the Tribulation heats up. They are vastly in the minority, but they are an ardent and vocal minority. For the first 1800 years of church history no one believed in this curiously modern idea. It wasn't the belief of the Early Church, or of the Catholic Church, or of the Protestant Reformers. Even today this belief in a pre-emptive rescue is limited to a handful of denominations. If you are curious about how this novel belief came about, see “[A History of the Rapture \(57 KB\)](#).”

What if the pre-Tribulation and mid-Tribulation theories are wrong? In that case, many will have based their hopes on a false hope—the hope of escape—rather than the hope of a God who can see them through this time of struggle. What if the same Lord who walks us into and



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through times of trial, temptation and peril now, is planning to lead His Bride through the greater trials that are coming? If that is what He plans to do, won't we be better off, if we start preparing for that now? Why would Jesus tell us to watch and pray, if preparation weren't a necessary part of the Last Days? See ["Preparing for the Last Days."](#)

Please, read these scriptures and the short explanations based upon them with an open mind and heart. Set fear and wishful thinking aside. They won't help anyone to discover the truth. Be willing to set the "traditions of your elders" aside. What others may believe and may have taught you, isn't the issue. The only thing that matters is what the Lord is saying to His Church through the scriptures. Remember, that when it comes to interpreting the scriptures, the plain thing is the main thing. God isn't speaking to us in secret codes that take master magicians to unlock. The Bible is an open letter to His friends.

List of Articles

[**The Harvest at the End of the Age**](#) (Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43) This parable is meant to be a soul-stirring encouragement to believers who want to see a lot of souls saved. And it is. But it also brings a sobering message of doom to two groups whose primary focus is not the salvation of the lost. First, doom is declared for all the lost who do not repent. They will be uprooted from the earth like weeds. The second doom comes through the destruction of any hope that the pre-trib theory is true. In effect, Jesus is saying here that if you want to be taken away first, then you would have to qualify as a weed. But, then, that would be to your doom...

[**See that No One Misleads You**](#) (Matthew 24:3-8) Anyone studying the Last Days has this warning to contend with. We are told in advance that all kinds of deceptive teachings and beliefs are going to gain wide circulation. In fact, some of the worst deceptions were already in place before we were born. How can you recognize the truth when so many voices are clamoring for your attention? We need two things: a desire to let the plain meaning of scripture be the main thing we listen to and a willingness to set aside our personal hope, fears and desires in order to hear what scripture is actually saying.

[**He Who Endures to the End**](#) (Matthew 24:8-14) This one stern statement of Jesus should end the debate about the timing of the Rapture. Listen to it in context of the teaching of Jesus on the Great Tribulation. A pre-Tribulation escape from danger and death is nothing anyone would have to "endure." Yet, Jesus warns us that we had better be prepared to hunker down and endure to the end—not to the beginning, or some supposed mid-point—but to the very end of the times He describes in order to be saved.

[**Then Many Will Fall Away**](#) (Matthew 24:9-14) Jesus prophesied that many believers would abandon the faith in the years leading up to His Return. Why would He say that? Why will so many fall away? Could it be that the pre-Tribulation Rapture expectation, so confidently proclaimed and so ardently, believed is setting Christians for a huge disappointment? This warning of Jesus comes right at the beginning of what He was saying that the Church needed to be prepared to endure. But suppose we aren't mentally and emotionally ready to endure the hardships He describes?



There Will Be a Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21, 27-31) This is the big kahuna of Rapture/Tribulation scriptures. What Jesus has to say about the timing of His Return should have settled the issue for all time. Nothing could be clearer than what our Lord has to say in this passage. The amazing thing about it is how it became so twisted in the minds of so many in our time. If you want to know the truth about the timing of the Rapture and the Great Tribulation, then please listen to the words of the One who is the Truth. Set your fears and wishes aside (if you can), and hear what Jesus is saying.

For the Sake of the Elect (Matthew 24:21-22, 29-31) Being the “elect” of God isn’t exactly what we might wish it to be. Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof, reflecting on the trials and troubles of his Jewish heritage, asked the Lord (hilariously), “I know we are your chosen people, but once in a while, can’t you choose someone else?” Well, if you have been chosen to be saved, if you are among the elect, get ready for the trials and troubles of the End Times. It looks like we have been chosen for a lot of things that we would never have signed up for—if that choice were ours to make.

At the Last Trumpet (Matthew 24:29-31) The “last trumpet” should be the last word on when the Rapture will take place. In the crazy mixed up world of Biblical interpretation, even this clear, seemingly unmistakable sign has been misunderstood. Fortunately, nothing clears confusion better than letting the words of scripture speak for themselves. This passage is a trumpet call to a sane and sensible interpretation of the timing of the Lord’s Return.

As in the Days of Noah (Matthew 24:37-44) Jesus gave us a massive clue to many things about the Last Days when He drew this comparison between the Days of Noah and that ones that would precede His Return. Ironically, the main thing He was seeking to tell us about the timing of His Return has been completely misunderstood by those who believe that this passage describes a pre-Tribulation “taking away” of the saints. Nothing could be further from the truth!

For You Do Not Know (Matthew 24:42-44) Can we take the blindfolds off? So many are proclaiming that Jesus might show up at any moment that we might as well not have any working eyes to see with. What is the point of watching and waiting, if there will be no sign of His coming? In fact, there will be plenty of signs leading up to that day. Jesus is One of many who gives us signs to watch for. Nevertheless, in this passage our Lord seems to be saying just this: that no of us will have a clue when He is about to return. But is that really what He is saying? And is that the true point of His warning? Let’s open our eyes and read the scripture with spiritual vision.

Will the Son of Man Find Faith? (Luke 18:1-8) Have you ever noticed that once something becomes important to you, you start seeing it everywhere? Some of us never knew that there were so many churches until we asked Jesus into our life. Once our eyes were opened to Him, we started noticing steeples everywhere! Something like that happens around End Times prophecy. The scriptural allusions to the Last Days are everywhere. Even here in this well-known passage about the reluctant judge, Jesus slipped in a little nugget about His Return. This particular nugget exposes the pre-trib rapture teaching as fool’s gold.

In the Twinkling of an Eye (1 Corinthians 15:52) This lovely phrase—“in the twinkling of an eye”—describes a moment in time that will be like no other. It will be well worth waiting for,



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because the Lord has positively crammed it full of abundant grace. The most astounding thing about it is how quickly and powerfully He will accomplish our entire transformation. This sometimes gets overlooked in the debate over the Rapture where the focus is on the when, not the amazing what. Even, so if you catch the wink, you'll get a clear picture of when it all happens: You're going to want to be "on the ground" for this.

We Who Who Are Left (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) The fascinating thing about this passage is the way Paul readily includes himself in the company of those who will go through all of the terrible things he expects to come upon the earth in the run up to the Lord's return. There is no thought here that the Church will be taken out of the way. He looks forward to being "left behind" and on the ground, still alive and waiting for Jesus to come down. In Paul's mind, the "tribulation saints" won't be some supposed second-string team, recruited in the last days of the campaign, but the most seasoned players the Lord has on the field. Why would we have ever imaged otherwise?

The Dead Will Rise First (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) They say that "dead men tell no tales." This is certainly true of the dead in this passage. Paul couldn't have made it clearer. The rising of the righteous dead is an unmistakable element of what will happen when Jesus returns to reign upon the earth. That's why what Paul put into this passage speaks so profoundly to us about the timing of the Rapture and the Tribulation. Like the last trumpet this is a marker that defines the order of events just as banners mark the companies in a parade. That makes it immeasurably easier to match other scriptures up to this one. The overlay gives us an undeniable answer to when the Rapture takes place.

Like a Thief in the Night (1 Thessalonians 5:1-6) There is an immense amount of confusion swirling around this passage, partly because of the mix of metaphors. The action of the Enemy is clearly described as that of a thief who comes to kill, steal and destroy, yet the action of Jesus is sometimes compared to that of a thief. Well, which is it. Will the real "thief" of this passage please stand up? And may the real victims of the "thievery" show yourselves! Here's a hint: read this rightly and you will WANT to be left behind.

That Day Shall Not Come Until (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4) Perhaps for such a time as ours this scripture was given. So many people in our day are running breathlessly around making wild predictions about the Rapture about to happen, and about Jesus ready to show up "at any moment." Just read this passage with faith-opened eyes and you will see that this kind of thinking is impossible. Neither one of those events can possibly happen yet. How can we know this? Because "that day shall not come until"—and that "until" hasn't happened yet!

The Restraint Removed (2 Thessalonians 2:5-8) If Jesus Christ is the One to watch for, the antichrist is the one to watch out for. We are told by Paul that he is going to be held back—restrained—until the proper time. Can any time be the right time for such a rascal to be given free reign? Notwithstanding our reason or desire, it's going to happen. So, we're told to keep our eyes open. But whatever Paul told the Thessalonians when he was with them, he left something out (it seems) in passing the message on to us through this letter. Among other things it leaves us wondering, "Who is the restrainer? How and why is it or he removed?" And that opened the door to some wild speculation.

[Be Patient Until the Lord's Coming](#) (James 5:7-8) This is perhaps “the least” of the New Testament passages concerning the Last Days. Despite its humble appearance, it still has some powerful things to say to us about the timing of the Rapture and of the Lord's Return. It is an agricultural image, especially suited to the Lord's teaching that we would know the “times and seasons” that would bring us to the final harvest of the Last Days.

[Him Who Overcomes](#) (Revelation 3:10-12) Jesus has a lot to say in the Book of Revelation about overcoming. John, who was with the Lord at Patmos, also included messages about overcoming in his gospel and his first letter. He had seen by prophetic vision exactly what the Lord wanted us to know about the Last Days. Apparently, John consider it critical for Christians to know that they needed to become overcomers. How can you be an overcomer, unless you have something tremendous to overcome? No medals are ever given out for those who flee from danger.

[The Mark of the Beast](#) (Revelation 13:15-17) The mark of the beast! We have heard about it all our lives. That dreaded mark. When it appears, we'll know that the choice is life or death in this life and eternal life or death in the next. If we choose to live by taking the mark, we will die forever in unending torment. If we refuse the mark, we'll be pursued by the beast system, seeking our death. A terrible choice. At least, by choosing to live for Jesus, He guarantees we'll live forever. Oh, but what an unwanted predicament! Is it any wonder that a theory emerged offering us the hope of a way out?

[Blessed Are the Dead](#) (Revelation 14:9-13) Can a passage from the middle of the Tribulation period give us insight into when the Rapture of believers takes place? Indeed, it can. The Lord is famous for writing His Book in such a way that a freshly discovered jewel in one passage shines a revealing light on other seemingly disconnected ones. In this case, a verse about the mark of the beast gives insight into the state of the Church during the Tribulation. Oops. Does that mean the Church will be going through the Tribulation, not floating above it? Could be it's time to come down from the clouds and see earth events by the light of scripture.

[Jesus' Own Timeline](#) (Matthew 24:1-31) Did Jesus give us a timeline for the major events of the End Times? Yes, He did! This wonderful timeline includes the birth pangs, the Great Tribulation, the rise of the antichrist and all the stunning elements of His Return. It functions like a skeleton, providing the structural element that supports living flesh and connects it the right way. The only thing left for us to do is to “put meat on these bones” by taking other End Times passages from elsewhere in the Bible and attach them at the right spot. Of course, if you take this skeleton apart and rearrange it (as some do), you don't get a lovely prophetic creation from Jesus, you get a monstrosity. But why would anyone want to do that?

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For over a decade Steve Evans and [Healing Streams](#) have been helping people recover inner peace and freedom through the free eCourse for healing, [Matters of the Heart](#). Through Forerunners4Him he has been showing how we can be saved for heaven and teaching the way to live a Spirit-filled life on earth. Go now to receive a completely free primer, [Getting to Heaven](#) and/or an introduction to [Living in the Spirit](#) at our website.



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