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Christians Will Go Through Great Tribulation



By Steven J. Hogan

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My journey as a Christian takes me back to the early 1970's, a time when there was a lot of talk about the rapture. It was being taught that the church would not go through great tribulation, for that was God's wrath, and was reserved for the unbelievers. Fast forward to the early 1990's and, for the first time, I began to really study end-times' prophecy. I soon learned from God's word that great tribulation is not God's wrath.

Last week, I shared a number of verses illustrating how Christians go through tribulation. Paul summed it up by saying, *"Through many tribulations you will enter the kingdom of God"* (Acts 14:22). This word tribulation, from the Greek "*thlipsis*," is also translated as distress, affliction, trouble or pressure. Therefore, we could say that great tribulation is great distress, great affliction, great trouble or great

pressure. It's not Biblical or logical to say a Christian goes through tribulation, but won't go through great tribulation. Yes, a Christian is exempt from God's wrath, but not from tribulation or great tribulation.

What does Matthew 24 say about this? Verse 9 says, *"They will deliver you to tribulation and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name."* This is clearly referring to Christians being persecuted and martyred for their faith. Now the adjective *"great"* is not used in this verse to describe tribulation, but we have to admit that being hated and killed by all nations, **is** great tribulation. Therefore, we can conclude that the tribulation spoken of in verse 9, **is** actually great tribulation.

We read on and see that the focus of Matthew 24:9-14 is the Christian. Then we see that Matthew 24:15-26 is a parenthetical to verses 9-14, describing what is happening to the Jews during this time. First, there's verse 15, speaking of the abomination of desolation, a desecration of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, occurring at the midpoint of Daniel's 70th week, and instigated by the Antichrist (Daniel 9:27, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-5). Then the Jews are instructed to head for the hills (verses 16-20), for that murdering Antichrist and his forces are going after them. The Antichrist's pursuit and persecution of the Jews, and of the Christians, as we will soon see, is what Jesus calls great tribulation in verse 21.

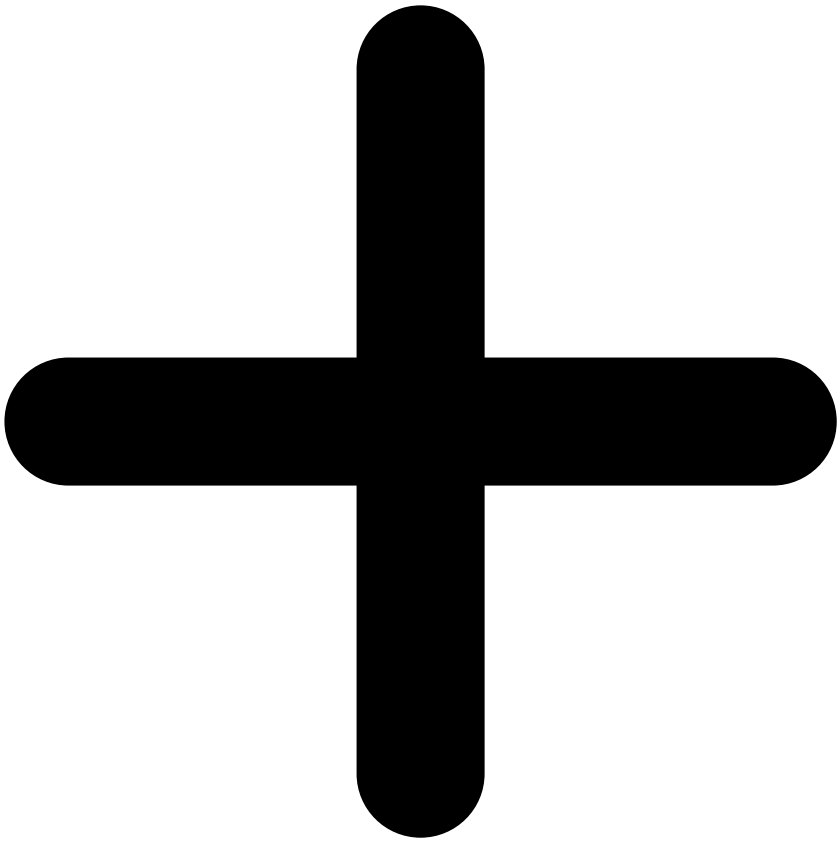
We discover Revelation 12:16-17 saying the same thing, *"The dragon* (working with the Antichrist) *was enraged with the woman* (Jews)*, and went off to make war with the rest of her children* (Christians) *who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus."* This passage describes this devilish Antichrist chasing after the Jews, and making war with the Christians. Isn't this what Matthew 24 said? Great tribulation starts out against Jews in Jerusalem, and then expands, being experienced by Christians all over the world. Great tribulation talked about in verses 15-21, leads to, and is directly related to great tribulation that is affecting the Christians, spoken of in verse 9.

Matthew 24:22 says this great tribulation is cut short for the sake of the elect. That is, only the elect are experiencing great tribulation. And who are the elect? They are the saved, and those who will be saved. The context of Matthew 24 makes it clear that great tribulation is what both Christians and Jews will experience. It's critical to see this, that great tribulation is not the Day of the Lord wrath being poured out upon unbelievers. These are two separate events occurring at two different times. If Jesus meant great tribulation (Greek *"thlipsis")* to be God's wrath, then why didn't He use the word wrath (Greek *"orge"* and *"thumos"*)? Because great tribulation isn't God's wrath, that's why.

Where's the rapture in Matthew 24? First we see it in verse 13, for those enduring to the end are believers who will be saved, that is, raptured. Then we see it in verse 31, for it says all believers, those on earth, and those already in heaven, will be gathered to Christ. Do you see that the rapture is spoken of in verses 13 and 31? Do you also see that the rapture occurs after great tribulation, spoken of in verses 9 and 21? This is exactly what Matthew 24:29-31 says, *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened… the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky… and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to another."* Do you see what God says, that first there's great tribulation and then the rapture? You can't miss it, Christians will go through great tribulation, then be raptured into heaven, and rescued from wrath.

All believers go through tribulation, and some will even go through great tribulation in that time just before Christ's return. Don't be surprised, dismayed or worried, but consider it a high honor and privilege to serve the Lord and suffer for Him, *"for you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example to follow in His steps."* 1 Peter 2:21, Mark 13:9-13, Luke 21:12-19, John 15:18-25

P.S. When we talk about the future and tough times that will be coming, we have to have hope. It is not an option – it is what God knows will strengthen and encourage you. A comprehensive article that I have written about hope will be of great benefit to you.





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