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The Rapture: Why It’s Pre-Wrath But Not Pre-Trib – Pt. 2

By Steven J. Hogan

~ A Saturday Morning Post #370 ~

Christ is coming again, and it’s soon, very soon. He’s coming to rapture the church, judge the world, save a remnant of Jews, and reign over this earth. He’s coming after the birth pains, after the revealing of the Antichrist, after the midpoint of Dan. 70th week, after great tribulation, just after the end of this age, and just before the day of the Lord, sometime during the last half of this week. Dan. 9:27, Matt. 24:4-31

What I focused on last week, and will continue to do today and next week is the timing of the rapture. I am not talking about the specific time, but the general time (Matt. 24:32-36). Now you would think with all the truth about eschatology, all the verses on this subject, that most believers would have clarity and convictions with regards to the timing of Christ’s coming. But that’s not the case!

Instead, there's confusion and error, a major one being the pre-tribulation rapture view (2 Th. 2:1-3). This incorrectly states that the entire 7 years of Dan. 70th week is tribulation and great tribulation, and that Christians are silently and secretly raptured at the beginning of this week. This is not true! Here is the Biblical position: there are birth pains (wars, earthquakes, plagues, etc.) during the 1st half of this week, great tribulation afflicting Jews and Christians after the 3½ year mark, and Christ returning to rapture the church during the 2nd half of this week. This is what Matt. 24, 2 Th. 1, and Rev. 6-9 clearly teach us.

Today, I will continue to explain why the rapture of the church is not pre-trib, but pre-wrath. My focus in this post is tribulation and great tribulation. Knowing what it means, how it is used in different verses, and how it is used in the context of Christ's coming, are critical keys to understanding the timing of the rapture. First, what does tribulation mean? From the Greek word, *"thlipsis"*, it is also defined as affliction, persecution, distress, pressure, trouble, or anguish.

Second, God gives many examples of believers experiencing tribulation: **John 16:33** – *"… so that in Me, you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation."* **Acts 14:22** – *"Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."* **Rom. 8:35** – *"Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword?"* **2 Cor. 4:17** – *"Momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory."* **1 Th. 3:4** – *"We kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction."* **Rev. 2:10** – *"The devil is about to cast some of you into prison… and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death."* **Ps. 34:19** – *"Many are the afflictions of the righteous."* (Greek Septuagint). Believers undergo affliction, persecution, tribulation, and at times, great tribulation – and they should expect to experience it during their short stay on earth. Never do we read that believers don't go through it, that they are exempt from it.

Third, a great multitude of Christians go through great tribulation in the

end-times. *"They will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name"* (Matt. 24:9). We could call this *"great"* tribulation, and that's because of its severity and scope – believers are being killed for Christ, and it's global in nature. Mark 13:19, 24; Rev. 7:9-14

Matt. 24:10-14 tells us what Christians must know and do during this tribulation: vs. 10 – there will be apostasy (so-called believers falling away from the faith) and betrayal; vs. 11 – there will be false prophets and deception; vs. 12 – there will be more sin, lawlessness, and a lack of love; vs. 13 – Christians are to persevere to the end of the age at which time they will be saved, be raptured; vs. 14 – Christians are to preach the gospel to the end of the age, again, at which time they will be raptured.

Matt. 24:15-21 explains how this great tribulation begins. The Antichrist, possessed by the devil, passionately hates God and His people. At the midpoint of Dan. 70th week, the Antichrist is in Jerusalem and he defiles, desolates, and desecrates the temple (2 Th. 2:3-5). Then he starts persecuting Jews. *"Those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains"* (vs. 16). Vs. 21 declares, *"Then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now"* (Mark 13:24). Rev. 12:12 calls this *"great tribulation" the "great wrath"* of the devil.

Rev. 12:13-17 gives added insight to what we read in Matt. 24:9-21. *"When the dragon* (devil) *saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman* (Jews) *who gave birth to the male child* (Jesus)." By God's power and mercy, many Jews miraculously escape. And what does the devil do? He is furious, mad as hell, and he goes after Christians – *"The dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children* (Christians), *who keep the commandments of God and hold on to the testimony of Jesus."* The persecution of the Jews we read about in Rev. 12:13-16 leads to the persecution of Christians in Rev. 12:17. Matt. 24 tells us the

same thing, that the persecution of the Jews spoken of in vss. 15-21 leads to the persecution of Christians in vs. 9.

Matt. 24:22-28 gives more information about this time of great tribulation. Vs. 22 says that for the sake of the elect, this tribulation is cut short, which means it does not last the entire 2nd half of Dan. 70th week. Vss. 23-24 warn us of false signs and wonders designed to deceive the elect (Rev. 13:12-14). Vss. 25-26 is Jesus telling us in advance that false teachers will try to lead us astray with regards to His coming, wrongly saying that He will first appear on land. Vs. 27 states that Christ's coming will brilliantly light up the sky, meaning He will first be seen returning in the air. Vs. 28 is a very sobering verse, which, I believe, is referring to those who die because of birth pains and tribulation, and to those who will die during the day of the Lord. Rev. 19:17-18

Matt. 24:29-31 is the culmination, the climax of what we have read so far in this all-important end-times' chapter. We find out the answers to the disciples' questions about the signs to the end of the age and Christ's coming – and they occur immediately after this tribulation is cut short by Christ. First, the sky-lights of the universe go out, and there's great darkness, signifying the end of this age. Second, the amazing, magnificent glory of Christ lights up the earth, signifying His coming. Then Christ comes in the clouds and all believers from all time, those who have died and are in heaven and those still on earth, are glorified and gathered to Christ. *"He will send forth the angels and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of earth to the farthest end of heaven."* Mark 13:27

From vss. 29-31, we understand that the rapture occurs after great tribulation. Vs. 13 concurs with this, for it instructs us to persevere to the end of the age, at which time this tribulation is cut short (vss. 21-22, 29) and Christians are saved from it and physically raptured and glorified. So vs. 13 and vss. 29-31 completely agree – the rapture of the church takes place after great tribulation and, as we will soon learn,

before God's wrath, before the day of the Lord. 1 Th. 1:10, 5:9; Rev. 6-9

2 Thess. 1:4-10 also communicates this essential end-times' truth, that the rapture is not pre-trib, but pre-wrath. We learn that the 1st century Thessalonian church was being afflicted, was experiencing tribulation (vss. 4-5). We also know, as Paul said in Acts 14:22 and Col. 1:24, that this tribulation, this persecution of believers, occurs throughout the church age. And we realize that this tribulation is great tribulation in those last few years before Christ's coming.

Then what? *"It is only just for God to repay with affliction* (wrath) *those who afflict* (persecute) *you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven..."* (2 Thess. 1:6-7). Christians are given relief from this affliction, this tribulation, when Jesus is revealed from heaven, when He comes in the clouds to save and rapture them. As vs. 10 states, this is *"when He comes to be glorified in His saints"*, when He physically transforms them. Phil. 3:20-21

2 Thess. 1:7b-9 speaks rightly and strongly about God punishing the sinners, which begins soon after Jesus is revealed. We already know the correct order, that saints are given relief from this tribulation, and then retribution is dealt out to sinners, *"to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction."* For these evil-doers, it is in three parts: the day of the Lord on earth, Hades for 1,000 years, and then the lake of fire for all eternity.

Revelation 6-9 spells out the same sequence of events, that Christians encounter great tribulation, are raptured, and then non-Christians experience God's wrath. I will summarize this now but explain it more fully next week. Rev. 6:9-11 (the breaking of the 5th seal) speaks of great tribulation believers are experiencing. Rev. 6:12-17 (the breaking

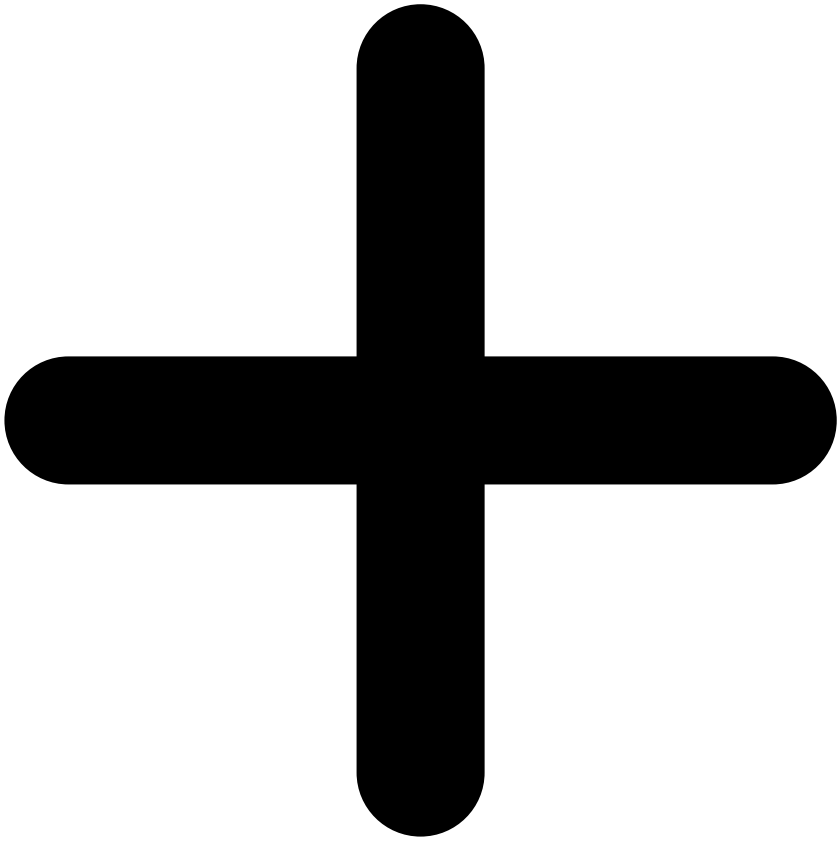
of the 6th seal) describes cosmic earth-darkening disturbances signaling the end of this age. Rev. 7:9-14 (between the 6th and 7th seals) tells us that the church is delivered from great tribulation and is gloriously and suddenly *"standing before the throne and before the Lamb"*. Rev. 8:1-2 (the breaking of the 7th seal) results in the scroll being opened. Rev. 8 and Rev. 9 describe the trumpet judgments, the day of the Lord, God's wrath being poured out upon the unbelievers still on earth. *"Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth..."* Rev. 8:13

Again, we see the Scriptural order of end-time events, that Christians go through great tribulation but are rescued from the day-of-the-Lord wrath during the 2nd half of Dan. 70th week. This agrees with what we learned last week, that the rapture, the 1st event at Christ's coming, occurs after the coming of the Antichrist, after the midpoint of Dan. 70th week, and during the 2nd half of Dan. 70th week. It also goes along with the fact that the rapture is not imminent, that it does not happen before the beginning of Dan. 70th week, but takes place after a number of signs that occur during the 1st half of Dan. 70th week and conclude during the 2nd half.

So the rapture of the church is pre-wrath, not pre-trib. Believers on earth in those last years before Christ's coming will go through great tribulation but then be rescued from God's wrath. These will be super-tough times, but for the Christian, what a blessing to live for the Lord and, maybe, die for Him. But take heart. Trust the Lord. Love the Lord. Be strong in the Lord. Wait for the Lord. And remember that most-important last verse of the book of Revelation, the final verse of God's word – *"The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen."* Revelation 22:21

P.S. I would encourage you to read my recent nine-part series on Matthew 24 if you have not yet done so. It starts with *"Matthew 24 – The Most Important Prophecy Passage."* You may have heard about the two recent earthquakes in Venezuela – here is a post that talks about

them and how they are one of the beginning birth pains – *“Earthquakes and the End-Times.”*



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