

Sequencing the Rapture

© Copyright By Ed Stevens – Sept 18, 2010 -- Garrettsville Ohio
All Rights Reserved by Ed Stevens

INTRODUCTION

Futurists who believe in a **Pre-Trib** rapture teach two separate returns of Christ, the first is a **secret coming** to rapture his saints before the seven-year tribulation, the next one after the tribulation is the Second Coming. They believe Christ comes secretly before the Tribulation to snatch away his saints so that they do not have to go through the Tribulation.

But this contradicts many clear passages which teach that the saints have to go through the Tribulation and that the rapture does not take place until after the Tribulation upon the Church.

It also contradicts the usage of the word Parousia which is found in both [Matt 24:3, 27, 37, 39] and [1 Thess 4:15]. Pre-tribbers believe the coming mentioned in Matthew 24 is the Second Coming, while the one mentioned in 1 Thess. 4 is the secret coming for the rapture. But there are so many similarities between Matthew 24 and 1 Thess 4, which prove beyond a shadow of doubt that the rapture text (1 Thess 4) is the same event and same coming of Christ mentioned in Matthew 24. The Pre-trib view is totally flawed in its secret coming idea.

There is also a lot of confusion in both Futurism and Preterism over how we define the **Tribulation** in relationship to the **Wrath** Outpouring. Almost all of the problems relating to sequencing the rapture come from a failure to determine when the tribulation and wrath outpouring occurred in relation to the Parousia.

Where we place the Tribulation and Wrath will determine whether we take a Pre-Trib, Mid-Trib, Post-Trib, or Pre-Wrath position. I take a **POST-TRIB PRE-WRATH** position in regard to the sequencing of the rapture.

Tribulation (incl. the Great Tribulation) ---> Parousia ---> Rapture ---> Wrath

This means that I define the Tribulation as being upon the Church only, and the Wrath upon the Jews only. I include the Great Tribulation with the general persecution and tribulation, so that there is no mid-trib rapture before the Great Tribulation. When I say that I place the rapture Post-Trib, I include the Great Tribulation in the Tribulation, so that the Parousia and Rapture occurs after the Great Tribulation.

The Tribulation upon the church lasted about three and a half years (AD 62-66), including the Great Tribulation (Neronic persecution in AD 64-65), followed immediately by the Parousia and rapture (AD 66).

When Christ came in AD 66, he did not just make a big splash in the sky for one day, and then disappear again. It was the beginning of a **three and a half year presence** of Christ (AD

66-70) to reward His saints and destroy His enemies. This was the three and a half years of Wrath Outpouring mentioned in so many Biblical texts.

Tribulation (AD 62-66) ---> Parousia, Rapture and Wrath (AD 66-70)

Since the timing of the rapture depends greatly upon how we sequence the Parousia in relation to the Tribulation and Wrath, we need to look more closely at the texts which talk about these relationships.

TRIBULATION -- WRATH

- A. Christians were destined for the Tribulation, but not for the Wrath:
 - 1. Tribulation -- **[1 Th. 3:3]** so that no one would be disturbed by these tribulations; for you yourselves know that we have been **destined for this**. (Jn. 16:33)
 - 2. Wrath -- **[1 Th. 5:9]** For God has **not destined us for wrath**, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,
 - 3. Christians "rescued" from the wrath -- **[1 Th. 1:10]** and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who **rescues us from** the wrath to come.
- B. Tribulation upon the Church, Relief from it, Wrath to their persecutors:
 - 1. **2Th. 1:4** therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your **persecutions** and **afflictions** which you endure.
2Th. 1:5 *This is* a plain indication of God's righteous **judgment** so that you will be considered **worthy of the kingdom** of God, for which indeed **you are suffering**.
2Th. 1:6 For after all it is *only* just for God to **repay with affliction** those who **afflict you**,
2Th. 1:7 and *to give relief to you who are afflicted* and to us as well when the **Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven** with His mighty angels in flaming fire,
2Th. 1:8 dealing out **retribution** to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.
2Th. 1:9 These will pay the **penalty of eternal destruction**, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,
2Th. 1:10 when He comes to be **glorified in His saints** on that day, and to be **marveled at among all who have believed** — for our testimony to you was believed.
 - 2. Notice the sequence in the above verses:
 - a. Persecutions, suffering, afflictions (tribulations)
 - b. Give relief to the saints, who marvel at Him in the presence of all believers
 - c. Repay with affliction, dealing out retribution, judgment, eternal destruction

Tribulation ---> Relief ---> Retribution (wrath)

- C. There is no doubt about the saints going through tribulation. Most of the time when the word "tribulation" is used in the NT, it is talking about the persecution that came upon the Church in the first century. The Jews certainly got some tribulation in AD 70 (2 Thess 1:6), but most of the time it is referred to as "wrath" or "judgment."

- D. The "Great" Tribulation was the brief period of intense persecution under Nero in AD 64-65. It just about wiped out the whole church. If God had not cut those days short, none of the elect would have been saved.
1. **[Matt. 24:22]** "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.
 2. Notice the implication here. The elect (those who were chosen to be saved and raptured) were subject to the tribulation, even the great tribulation). They were not raptured out of there (mid-trib) before the Great Tribulation upon the Church. The tribulation being spoken of here in the Matt. 24 context is upon the Church, not the wrath that comes upon the Jews later.
- E. Tribulation upon the Church, Wrath upon their persecutors:
- F. Judgment was to come upon the Christians first, then upon their persecutors:
[1 Pet. 4:17] For it is time for **judgment to begin with the household of God**; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?
- G. Notice the sequencing in Matthew 24:29-31 --
Matt. 24:29 "But **immediately after the tribulation** of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.
Matt. 24:30 "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.
Matt. 24:31 "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 the other.
- H. **[Rev. 7:14]** -- These are the ones who come out of the Great Tribulation... Notice the sequence here. The Great Tribulation first, then they were raptured out of it.
- I. So, here is the sequence we see in Matthew 24:
 Tribulation ---> Great Tribulation---> Resurrection/Rapture ---> Wrath Outpouring

PARABLE OF THE TARES (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43) -- Sequence:

[See the separate lesson outline dealing with this Parable]

Here is the sequence:

Tares Gathered & Bundled ---> Wheat Put in Barn ---> Bundles of Tares Burned (Zealots gather fighters) -----> Rapture of Saints -----> Romans burn Jerusalem

Tares were gathered into Jerusalem for the big bonfire later

Tares were gathered and sent to Gehenna, while the Christians were gathered into the Kingdom of Heaven first before the burning of Jerusalem.