

Will the Church (The Body of Christ) Go Through the Tribulation?

This question should be of interest to every individual belonging to some church organization. To many minds the meaning of the word "Church" is too indefinite; therefore it might clarify the question to ask in this way: "Will those who are members of the Body of Christ be on earth during the Great Tribulation"?

Some church members might reply, "We have not so much as heard whether there is to be a Great Tribulation." Or you might belong to that large class who have a faint recollection of having read or heard something about it in the Bible, but never paid very much attention to it. In other words, you may be too much occupied with other things to be worrying your soul, or troubling your mind with Bible prophecies.

On the other hand there are many who seem to be conscious that this present civilization is rushing on at a tremendous speed to some unhappy climax.

Among this number are found those, whose "hearts are failing them for fear of those things which are coming on the earth," according to the forewarning of Christ many years ago.

Some years after this Christ had gone back to Heaven by the way of Calvary, He spoke to His Church by His holy apostle concerning the climax of this present social order in these words:

- **"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."**
I Thessalonians 5:2, 3. And then He adds
- **"But ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief."**
I Thessalonians 5:4.

Surely there is the suggestion of the collapse of civilization in this sudden destruction in connection with the day of the Lord. But these words of warning are mentioned immediately following words for the comfort of the Lord's people.

The Lord Himself is to descend from Heaven, at which time every living Christian is to be caught up to meet Him in the air. The dead in Christ, shall first be raised and meet the living ones and this united company is to ever be with the Lord. *I Thessalonians 4:13-18.*

- **"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. [14] For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. [15] For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. [16] For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: [17] Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together**

with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. [18] Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

In connection with the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, sudden destruction is to come upon those who know not God. His appearing for this terrible judgment is like the coming of a thief in the night. This judgment is not for saved ones. It is for those who obey not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Just before He went to the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ spoke this warning to His disciples, **“Therefore, be ye also ready for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh”**. *Matthew 24:44*. This Chapter opens with the question of these disciples, **“What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and the end of the world?”** *Matthew 24:3*.

In the verses which follow, the question is answered “The sign of Christ’s coming” and “the end of the age.”

In *Matthew 24:20* the Lord instructs His people to pray that their flight be not on the sabbath day.

As the sabbath day belongs to Israel, and not to the Body of Christ, then we may be sure that Christ, in this discourse, is referring to that period of distress called in *Jeremiah 30:7*, the **“time of Jacob’s trouble”**. Carefully read *Jeremiah 30:1-11*. In the seventh verse you will note that Jacob is to be saved out of the time of trouble, that is, out of the horrors and intense sufferings of the Great Tribulation.

- **“Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.”** *Matthew 24:22*.

The “elect” here refers to Israel. They are to be again elected, because they are beloved for the sake of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, *Romans 11:28*. God’s Covenant with these fathers includes also the covenant with David, in which there is the guarantee of the reestablishment of His Throne and Kingdom.

It may be that some have gone to the extreme in teaching that the twenty-fourth Chapter of Matthew refers to Israel all the way through, and has no reference whatsoever to the Church of this age. But on the other hand, those have more seriously blundered who have used these words of Christ to prove His Church is to pass through the tribulation. Matthew is not the book that gives the course and culmination of the Church.

With respect to the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ, there are two general divisions in the Church, namely: the “Postmillennialists” and the “Premillennialists”. The “Premillennialists” are subdivided into the “Post-Tribulation Premillennialists” and the “Pre-Tribulation Premillennialists” and the “Partial Rapture Premillennialists” and several other varieties.

The doctrine of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ must be studied like all other Bible subjects, in the light of progressive Scriptural revelation. To properly understand the twenty-fourth Chapter of Matthew, that Chapter must be studied in the light of **“Church” or “Body” truth**. The Apostle Paul is the messenger of the risen Christ to give the truth to and concerning the Church which is His Body.

In the Book of Matthew, the emphasis, so far as the Second Coming of Christ is concerned, is primarily and principally in connection with the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom on the earth.

This is also true after the resurrection of Christ in Peter's Pentecostal discourse recorded in the second Chapter of Acts. There he plainly declared that Christ was resurrected to occupy David's earthly throne. In the closing verses of the third Chapter he stated that Christ would be sent back to Israel when they repented, to bring about the restitution of all things.

Several years later this same Peter, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, further developed the Coming of Christ to take David's throne, by declaring a newly discovered truth; that before this Messianic Kingdom would be established the Lord would visit the Gentiles for an elect company. **Acts 15:14-18.**

But even here it had not been revealed that after God had gathered out this full company, and before His Son would return to rebuild again the Tabernacle of David, the members of the out-gathered company would rise to meet the Lord in the air.

Progressive Revelation is a principle that cannot be ignored. As the Church was a mystery unknown to God's people or servants while Christ was on earth, He did not go into the details of the rapture of the Church. The general truth as to His appearing is set forth in the four gospel records.

Strictly speaking, the rapture of the Church is not the Second Coming of Christ. Between the moment Christ comes for His Church and the day that He shall come to save His earthly nation, the Great Tribulation will be on the earth.

Israel will be saved out of "the Great Hour of Temptation" which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth". The Church shall be saved from it. It is one thing to be saved out of it—It will certainly be a more blessed experience to be saved from it; that is, to escape such wrath, such unbearable judgment, such sorrow and distress. ***This is the promise to the Church of Philadelphia. Revelation 3:10.***

Those who are Christ's shall be made alive at His Coming—"They that are Christ's at His Coming". **I Corinthians 15:23.** Not some of those who have fallen asleep in Christ shall put on incorruptible bodies at His Coming; shall rise to meet Him in the air; but all of them. Not some of the Body of Christ, shall be raptured at His Coming; but every single member. The Lord will not take His Church home to Glory on the installment plan.

Certainly God did not withhold His terrific judgment from Sodom and Gomorrah until Lot left the scene, because Lot was a consecrated, Spirit-filled "wise virgin". **He was anything but that.** Be he was righteous and we have these words from the heart and lips of our Lord in His message concerning His return from Heaven: ***"But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from Heaven and destroyed them all."*** **Luke 17:29.**

Sudden destruction came. When? After Lot was led out by God.

Sudden destruction is coming upon this ungodly age; a time of intense suffering for apostate Israel and apostate Christendom, with all of their false prophets and deluded victims. When? **After God has called every saved one to meet Him in the air.** If the "Foolish virgins" of **Matthew 25:1-13** had ever

been saved, the Lord would not have said, "I know you not" or "I knew you not." He knows all His sheep.

To be sure there shall be Tribulation saints.

- ***“And He said unto me, These are they which come out of the Great Tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”
Revelation 7:14.***
- ***Note the company of Israelites in Revelation 7:4***
- ***and the company of all nations in Revelation 7:9.***

These Tribulation saints most certainly are not to be included in the number who are to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, according to ***1 Thessalonians 4:13-18***, and most assuredly they will not be saved from the great hour of temptation.

In the sixth Chapter of the Book of Revelation we have the beginning of the Great Tribulation. In the fourth and fifth Chapters we learn that before the book of judgment is opened the Church will be safe in Heaven with the Lord.

- I am not a "Pre-Tribulation Premillennialist" merely because I want to be; but because I am quite sure God's Word plainly teaches that neither all nor part of the Body of Christ will pass through or into the awful time of distress of nations which will take place on this earth in that period of time between the secret rapture of the Church and the Coming of the Lord to establish His Millennial Kingdom of righteousness and peace.

Here is a warning to Israel and the Gentiles:

***“Watch, therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that is the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.”
Matthew 24:42 and 43.***