



WEEKLY CELL GUIDE

3 OCT 2021 | SIGNS OF THE END OF THE AGE | MATTHEW 24:3-31

Series : Jesus is Coming Back (Pt 1/5) | Speaker : Josh Yeoh



WELCOME

[15 MINS]

You may want to look up the following websites for icebreakers suitable for your cell.

[Ice Breakers 1](#)

[Ice Breakers 2](#)



WORSHIP

[15 MINS]

You may select songs like

1. Blessed Assurance (My King is Coming)
 2. Reward
 3. Revelation Song
-



WORD

[45 MINS]

SPIRITUAL OBJECTIVES

At the end of the sermon discussion, cell members will:

1. Watch and pray as we look for the signs of the times while we fix our eyes on Jesus.
2. Prepare ourselves and our loved ones to be ready for the end of the age and Jesus' return.
3. Reach out to the lost and proclaim the Good News until He comes.

SERMON SUMMARY

This sermon series is important for two reasons:

1. We live in a unique generation where there is a possibility of completing the Great Commission and seeing the return of Jesus.
2. We have a unique responsibility in this hour of history to respond rightly to what Jesus has called us to do.

In [Matthew 24:3-31](#), Jesus responds to His disciples' questions by showing them clear signs that will precede His coming and the end of the age – not so that they would speculate but that they would be prepared and to prepare others. He gives us four clear signs from the passage: Disasters in the world, developments in the church, distress in Jerusalem, and darkness in the heavens before He returns. He warns us of the dangers of false messiahs and prophets, and He cautions us not to be deceived. He also calls us to be watchful and to be prepared ahead of time. The posture every believer should have is to be found “ready” and “anticipating” the return of Christ.

SERMON RECAP

“[Maranatha](#)” is an Aramaic word used as a greeting and a battle cry in the persecuted church in the New Testament. Maranatha means “Come, Lord Jesus.” If we could summarise this sermon series in the next five weeks, is that we would have the same battle cry in our hearts – “Maranatha, come Lord Jesus.” This series is important for two reasons.

1. We live in a unique generation

For the first time in history, the Gospel could reach all people. We live in a generation where we know where all the unreached people groups are. Entire missions organisations have been birthed to complete the Great Commission. We have all the resources we need to finish the task of world evangelisation. The prophets all through the Old Testament were longing for the day when something like this would happen. Today, Jesus is pointing us to a day when the consummation of all things will happen, and we get to partner with Him to hasten the day of His return, the day Jesus gets in full what He paid for.

2. We have a unique responsibility

The Lord's instructions to us become more important the closer we get to the end of the age. We are in a generation where we are almost at the finish line. We want His words to search and strike our hearts. Loving God is not enough. Loving God biblically means to obey Him. Many of us have a sincere love for God. But in this hour of history where He is about to do something unprecedented, sincere love must transition into mature love. And this mature love obeys Him in all things. We must know what Jesus is saying to us so we can obey Him. It is His invitation for us to join in God's story and prepare for Jesus' return.

Four Clear Signs from Matthew 24

Jesus gave us signs, not so that we could speculate about the future, or conjecture who the Antichrist is, or who is forming the One World Government. It's not about conspiracy but about preparation. The signs help us to prepare ourselves, our loved ones, our families, and our generations for His return. When these signs unfold, we are not to be discouraged or surprised, for these signs serve to fuel our faith. This entire study of the end times (or eschatology) can be summarised in two words – Jesus wins.

Sign 1: Disasters in the World (vv 4-8) – War, Earthquakes, Famine

This sign is the beginning of birth pains before a new birth. While the world is dismayed and does not know what is happening, the church is not alarmed. We are hopeful, for we know Jesus is coming back. Despite these global disasters, the danger in this sign is that there will be false messiahs who will deceive those both inside and outside the church. But our antidote for this danger is John 10:27, “My sheep will hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” Have we listened to Jesus long enough to discern who the false messiahs are? When we listen long enough to the real thing, we can immediately know the counterfeit. Have we made it a habit to behold Christ daily?

Sign 2: Developments in the Church (vv 9-14) – Persecution, Pressure, Preaching

The church will not just experience persecution, but experience it on a global scale. This pressure will cause the love of many in the church to grow cold, and many will fall away. Nominal Christians will leave but the pressure will

refine the rest of the church. The purified true church will have a greater impact in the world, and the Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached to all nations. The danger in this sign is that there will be false prophets – those who “preach peace where there is no peace” (Jeremiah 6:14). Pressure will escalate and become intense where even the wheat (true disciples) and the tares (nominal Christians) will grow together. In spite of this, the true church will endure to the end.

Sign 3: Distress in Jerusalem (vv 15-28) – The Abomination of Desolation

Persecution will also happen to the nation of Israel at a very intense level akin to “the abomination of desolation” ([Daniel 11:30-31](#)). The Antichrist or “the man of lawlessness” ([2 Thessalonians 2:3-10](#)) will set himself in Jerusalem, calling himself God and will influence the whole world. The danger in this sign is that there will be false Christs and false prophets. They will lead us astray if we do not use our spiritual eyes to see what is really happening and to prepare to stand with Israel.

Sign 4: Darkness in the Heavens (vv 29-31) – The Second Coming

When the end of the age comes, God is going to turn off all the lights in the sky. The sun will be darkened, the moon will cease to give us light, and lightning will suddenly flash across the earth. Jesus will then come in the clouds, in the same way He left 2,000 years ago. And as He comes, the church will be caught up to be with Him. In this sign, there is finally no danger, because we are going to be with Him and He is going to wipe every tear from our eyes, for there will be no more pain, sorrow nor death. ([Revelation 21:4](#)).

Conclusion

All these signs must take place, but the end is not yet ([Matthew 24:6](#)). They are just the beginning of birth pains. Our hearts will not be dismayed, discouraged or alarmed, for those who endure to the end will be saved. And the Gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. May we stay faithful to the end, and be found standing as a pure and spotless Bride of Christ.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. When it comes to the topic of the End Times or Second Coming, what has been your experience? [15 Mins]**

Leader’s Notes

This is an ice-breaker question to gauge the background and journey of individuals in their knowledge and experience on these frequently controversial topics. While we should never shy away from discussing difficult subjects in the cell, we should also learn to respect and value one another’s viewpoints, even when we disagree. In talking about such hotly debated matters, we make it our goal to agree to disagree without being disagreeable, and in humility spur one another on towards Christlikeness.

Refer to the end times resources at the end of this discussion guide.

Transition

At the end of the day we always turn the discussion back to Jesus and His call to discipleship, and what He wants us to do in preparation for His return.

- 2. In light of the coming end of the age, Jesus tells us to be prepared now and gives us sober warnings ahead of time. Read [Matthew 24:9-14](#) and reflect on Jesus’ warnings there. Do you see yourself vulnerable in any of the situations He mentions? If so, what steps will you take to be “the one who stands firm to the end” (v13)? [15 Mins]**

Leader’s Notes

This is a reflect question. Matthew 24:9-14 is a dire warning to the church: We may “be handed over to be persecuted and be put to death and hated by all nations because of me” (v9), we may “turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other” (v10), “false prophets will deceive many of us” (v11), and “the love of most will grow cold” (v12). But Jesus in the same breath also exhorts us that those “who stand firm to the end

will be saved” (v13), and He reassures us that “this Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (v14).

Additional questions to reflect on and discuss in the group if time permits: Will we succumb to persecutions and turn away from our faith? Will we betray and hate our brothers and sisters in the church? Will we be deceived by false prophets and preachers? Will our love for God grow cold? Or will we persevere and stand firm even when we face persecution and death? Will we continue to preach the Gospel to the nations until the end of the age?

Transition

The most important aspect of Jesus’s return is not the signs, but rather the posture we adopt as His Bride. His words are faithful and true – He is returning for His Bride. Therefore, may each of us be found faithful to our commitment to Him till the very end, in anticipation of His return. May we be found as a Bride that is radiant, pure and ready for the coming of the Bridegroom.

3. If we are waiting for the Second Coming while some have never heard of Jesus’ first coming, what are you personally doing to proclaim the Gospel to others? How is God leading you in this area? [15 Mins]

Leader’s Notes

This is a response question. The Bible makes it clear that God has called every believer to share the Good News with the world ([Matthew 28:16-20](#)). Jesus’ mission is “to seek and to save the lost” ([Luke 19:10](#)). Because we want to become like Christ, our mission must be the same as His. If we are His followers, our mission in life is not optional – it’s a command. We have the opportunity to represent the Saviour to the people in our lives before He returns. People are hopelessly lost without Christ and God wants everyone saved.

Closing

God’s timetable for history hinges on us completing our mission. We do not know when Jesus will return. But we do know what will happen first. “The Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14). Evangelism is both our responsibility and our privilege.



Consider dividing the group into micro-groups for a deeper time of sharing as well as praying for the following items:

1. Sermon Application

- Every disciple in RiverLife will awaken to the reality and nearness of Jesus’ return.
- We will evaluate how prepared we are for His coming and to truly live in light of His return.
- We will commit to share the Good News near and far.

2. COVID-19 in Singapore

- God’s intervention as we experience a sharp increase in the number of community cases and a return to tighter social measures in society.
- God’s hand to alleviate the sufferings, and for practical help to arise and be rendered to these suffering communities, especially the old and the vulnerable.

3. Exam Period

- Pray for all our children who are going through their exams. (PSLE until Wednesday (6 Oct), O/A levels preparation)
- Pray for the parents of these children as well for strength, wisdom and grace.

4. COVID-19 in the World

- A swift end to the COVID-19 crisis globally, if not a sharp reduction in cases, and a stabilised environment where humans and virus coexist.
- Healing and comfort for those who are sick and suffering.
- Protection and guidance for healthcare professionals at the frontline, giving them wisdom, courage, and strength to confront this crisis.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

[5 MINS]

1. **Services Update for October.** As a result of the new measure, there will only be ONE English Adult service at 9am on Sundays. There will be NO in-person gatherings in October for children. All SuperLife classes will be done online.
2. **New Pulpit Series: Jesus is Coming Back (3-31 Oct).** This series will unpack Jesus' prophecy on the Mount of Olives in Matthew 24 & 25, and help us gain insight on how to live with understanding of the times. The series will follow a weekly rhythm of Sunday Sermons, Tuesday Prayer Room Sessions based on Matthew 25 and Thursday Equipping Nights with Peter Tsukahira, tackling four key end-time topics.
3. **Missions from Home.** What does Missions look like when we're unable to travel? We believe God is calling RiverLifers to sow continually and faithfully into the nations by partnering Him and adapting in the way we approach Missions. We have 104 RiverLifers who have signed up for 9 MFH teams, reaching out to India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, and Thailand. Over the next few months, they will be collaborating with our Missions Partners to develop missions projects that provide prayer support, resources and raise awareness for their ministries. We encourage all to get involved by praying, giving, or serving. Find out more about the different countries we're working with: rlc.sg/mfh. Join a MFH team: rlc.sg/mfh-serve
4. **Prayer Ministry.** If you require prayer ministry for any issues you face (e.g. unforgiveness, demonic oppression, etc.), you can sign up for RLC's RTF ministry: <https://bit.ly/rlcrtf>
5. **Bible Reading Plan.** You can access our Two-Year Bible Reading Plan 2021-2022 by visiting <https://rlc.sg/brp2021>.

ONLINE GIVING TO RIVERLIFE CHURCH

Contribute your tithes and offering digitally:

1. PayNow

Log in to your bank's existing mobile banking app. Scan this QR code on the right OR enter UEN No. 200100806D.

2. Interbank Transfer

RiverLife Church Bank Account: DBS Autosave 029-902431-0
Bank Code: 7171 / Branch Code: 029



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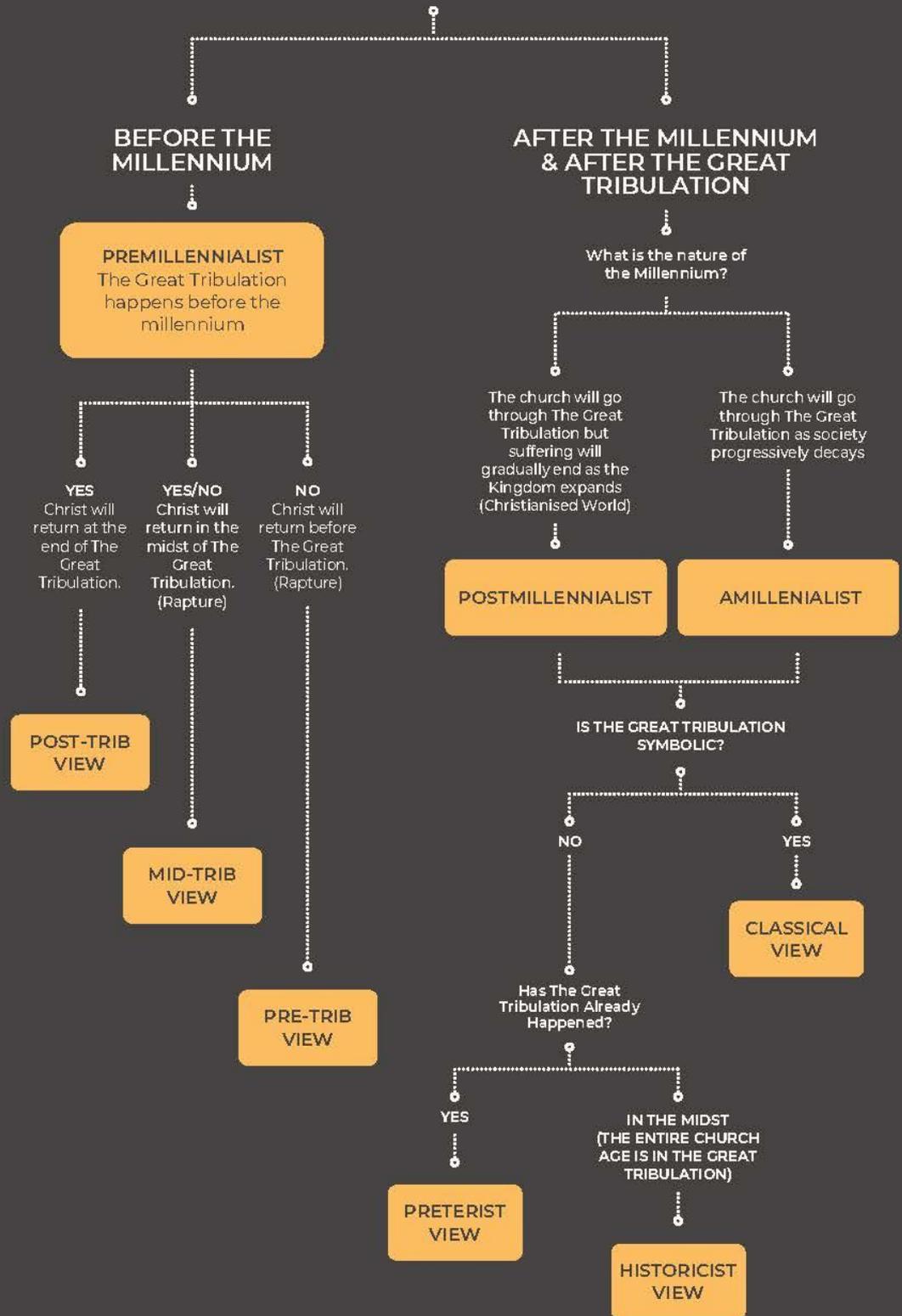
VIEWS ON THE END TIMES

NEW SERMON SERIES:

JESUS IS COMING BACK

3 - 31 OCT

WHEN WILL JESUS RETURN?



END TIMES OVERVIEW

Adapted from Four Square Life Church (<https://www.life4square.com/bldgblocks/block15.pdf>)



Key Verse

Revelation 1:3 – Blessed *is* he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time *is* near. (NKJV)

Introduction

How many of you wish you had bought a bunch of Microsoft stock when it first went on the market? You would be extremely rich today – even with the recent market loses. Imagine if you could know what was going to happen in the future. You can – at least parts of it. God told us quite a bit about the end times in His Word, the Bible. And it's a lot easier to understand the Bible teachings about end times than many people think.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO KNOW ABOUT END TIMES?

1. So you won't be shaken, deceived, or side-tracked by wrong teaching about end times.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5 – Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; ... Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

2. So you will help others because our time is short.

Hebrews 10:24-25 – And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

3. Because Jesus said it was important to be alert.

Luke 21:31, 34-36 – So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. – “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

If it wasn't important, God would not have included it in the Bible. Duh!

a) Purpose of Prophecy

Before His birth, there were many prophecies about the coming Messiah (Jesus). Some prophecies described the Messiah coming to conquer and reign. Other prophecies described His suffering in payment for our sins. These messianic prophecies were studied intently by the Jews. Unfortunately, many did not understand that the prophecies spoke of two separate comings.

Jesus would first come as a servant to redeem man from sin (Isaiah 52:13-15; 53:1-12). The second coming would be as a king, conquering all evil and delivering God's people (Jeremiah 23:5-6; Daniel 7:13-14). Unfortunately, many people only looked for the kingly Messiah whom they expected would deliver the Jewish people from the tyranny of Roman rule (Acts 1:6). Since the servant Messiah prophecies did not seem to fit this expectation, those prophecies were often ignored or misapplied.

As a result, when Jesus came the people thought that He was the kingly Messiah who would set up God's kingdom in Jerusalem. A few days before Passover, these people spread palm branches and clothes in the road to welcome their coming King (John 12:12-13). When Jesus failed to fulfil their understanding of the prophecies, these same people turned against Him, demanding His death (John 19:14-15).

The Jewish people made a common mistake when it comes to biblical prophecy. They thought that the primary purpose of prophecy was to describe what would happen in the future. They also added too many assumptions based upon their limited understanding of the prophecies. Even though the prophecies were fulfilled (to that point) exactly as given, many of the Jewish people did not recognize it because they were not fulfilled the way they expected. We must be careful to not make a similar mistake when studying end-time prophecies.

Throughout the Bible, God has provided many end-time prophecies for us. These prophecies serve two major purposes. First, when they come to pass, they assure us that God has everything under control (John 13:19; 14:29; 16:4). He is not surprised by the events taking place.

The second major purpose of these prophecies is to show us where we are in God's plan. For example, the Abomination of Desolation will show Christians when we are entering the Great Tribulation (Mat. 24:15,21). We will probably not know ahead of time when the Great Tribulation will start. However, when we see the Abomination of Desolation, we will know that the Great Tribulation has started.

When studying end-time prophecies, avoid the temptation to be too specific about how the prophecies will be fulfilled. Primarily, seek to understand enough about the prophecies to recognize them when they come to pass. If you do that, you will be least likely to miss these important indicators provided by God. Hold loosely to man's theories and firmly to Bible truth. Don't mistake the one for the other.

GREAT TRIBULATION OR WRATH OF GOD?

To accurately understand end-time events you must get a clear understanding of the difference between the *Great Tribulation* and the *Wrath of God*. Unless this difference is clearly understood, it is virtually impossible to accurately understand end-time events.

a) The Great Tribulation

An important clue to remember when studying end-time events is that the Great Tribulation is demonic in origin. It includes the persecution and killing of many people by Satan's representative – the Beast. The Beast (also called the Antichrist) will reign during the Great Tribulation. He will demand worship and conquer many countries. The Great Tribulation will be a time of intense evil. The source of the Great Tribulation is Satan.

Revelation 13:2-4 – Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like *the feet of a bear*, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. And *I saw* one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marvelled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"

Satan's purpose for the Great Tribulation is to kill, steal, and destroy (John 10:10). A major characteristic of the Great Tribulation is the deception of those who do not love the truth.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 – The coming of the lawless one [the Beast] is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

b) Who is the Source (Cause) of the Great Tribulation?

The Wrath of God

The Wrath of God is godly judgment against evil. This judgment takes the form of seven plagues poured out against the Beast and those who worship him. These seven plagues are poured out by the angels of God. The purpose of the Wrath of God is to punish the Beast and his followers.

Revelation 14:9-10 – Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

The major characteristic of the Wrath of God is severe punishment of those who do not belong to God.

Revelation 16:1-2 – Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth." So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.

c) Who is the Source (Cause) of the Wrath of God?

The Difference

The Great Tribulation and the Wrath of God are two separate events coming from two different sources for two different purposes at two different times. The Great Tribulation is a time of intense persecution. It is instigated by Satan through the Beast in an effort to deceive people and cause them to worship him instead of Jesus. The Wrath of God is a time of judgment which will be poured out upon the world by God. Its purpose is to punish the Beast and those who have taken his mark during the Great Tribulation. The Wrath of God occurs immediately after the Great Tribulation. So when does Jesus come to rescue us from this mess?

THE RAPTURE

When Jesus returns, He will gather His sons and daughters, taking them to be with Him forever. This is sometimes called the "Rapture" of the church. The word *rapture* (ecstasy, delight, joy) is not in the Bible, but the event is described in several places.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 – For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

Matthew 24:30-31 – Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect [chosen ones] from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

There are many people who teach that the Rapture takes place in two parts. They teach that the Christians are secretly taken out of the earth by Jesus just before the Great Tribulation. Christians will just disappear one day.

People who become Christians after that have to suffer intense persecution from the Antichrist during the Great Tribulation. Later, when Jesus returns to put an end to the Antichrist, he will take those people who became Christians during the Great Tribulation. This does not agree with the Bible!

a) The Rapture is Not Secret or Hidden

First of all, the Bible is very clear that the "Rapture" (gathering of the saints) is not a secret or hidden event.

Matthew 24:23, 26-27, 30-31 – "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Revelation 1:7 – Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

Revelation 6:15-17 – And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

b) Not a Partial Rapture

The Bible also does not teach a partial Rapture. All those who belong to the Lord are taken to be with Him when He comes. (See verses above.)

The return of Jesus and the gathering of his people (the Rapture) signals the end of the Great Tribulation and the beginning of the outpouring of God's Wrath. The Rapture is a transition event between these two important time periods.

Matthew 24:29-31 – "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Revelation 6:12-17 – I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

The Wrath of God is a time of punishment from God against the Antichrist and those who have rejected Jesus (Rev 14:9-11). No one repents and turns to God during the Wrath of God.

Revelation 9:20-21 – But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

Revelation 16:9-11 — And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory. Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.

Since no one repents during the Wrath of God, there will be no new Christians to gather at the end of the Wrath of God. So, there will not be a second rapture.

END TIMES OVERVIEW

Now that we understand the distinction between the Great Tribulation and the Wrath of God, let's see how those events fit into the end times as described in the Bible.

a) First, A Time of Relative Peace

Before the end, there will be a time of relative peace. There will still be wars and rumours of war. There will also be serious environmental problems. We are probably in that time right now.

Matthew 24:6-8 – And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

b) Time of Violence and Persecution

At the beginning of the end times, a strong, anti-Jesus and anti-Christian ruler will gain power. The Bible calls him the Beast and the Antichrist. He could be very religious or an atheist. He may even appear to be a Christian at the beginning. He will conquer countries and kill those who oppose Him. His rule will be widespread, but not 100%.

Revelation 13:1-8 – ... I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. ... The dragon [Satan] gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. ... And all the world marvelled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" ... Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

In the Bible, this time is called the Great Tribulation.

Matthew 24:9-22 – "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. "... For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

The Great Tribulation will last 3 ½ years.

Revelation 13:5 — And he [the Beast] was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.

c) Enough is Enough!

Jesus will return to bring an end to the rule of this Beast and judgment upon those who follow the Beast. At that time, Jesus will rescue His own people in the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

Matthew 24:29-31 – “Immediately after the tribulation of those days ... they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

This understanding is often called the “Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church.” This agrees with the Bible that Jesus takes His people out of the world after the Great Tribulation but before the Wrath of God. (The popular “Pre-Trib Rapture” view of end times teaches that we will be taken out before the Great Tribulation but that disagrees with the Bible.)

After His people are rescued, God will punish the Beast and those who serve him. Like the Egyptian plagues on steroids, God will pour out seven extreme plagues. The Bible calls this outpouring of God’s anger and punishment the Wrath of God.

Revelation 14:9-10 – Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation.”

Revelation 15:1 – Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.

God will not pour out the plagues of His wrath – His judgment – against Christians.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 – For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

d) After the Plagues of God’s Wrath

After the end of God’s Wrath when the last of the seven plagues is finished, there will be 1,000 years of relative paradise on earth – often called the Millennium. The devil will be imprisoned so he cannot tempt or harass anyone during the 1,000 years. Jesus and those who belong to Him will rule and reign in Jerusalem. Non-Christians who survive the punishment of the seven plagues will live outside of Jerusalem.

Revelation 20:1-4 – ... an angel ... laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

After the 1,000 years are finished, the devil will be released once again. Satan will tempt those who do not belong to God into rebelling against Jesus. It won’t be much of a rebellion for who can stand against God’s might?

Revelation 20:7-9 – Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

Satan will then be thrown into the Lake of Fire where he will be tormented for all eternity.

Revelation 20:10 – The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

e) Final Judgment

The earth and the whole universe will cease to exist, and this creation will come to an end. Then, the final judgment will take place with God sitting on a Great White Throne. Everyone who does not belong to God will be brought before Him and that person's works will be judged. Since everyone is guilty of breaking God's laws, each will be found guilty as a law breaker.

Next, the Book of Life will be consulted. This book contains the names of everyone who has made Jesus their Lord and Saviour and accepted Jesus' payment for his or her sins.

If the person's name is not recorded in the Book of Life, that means that he or she refused to accept God's offer of payment through Jesus in exchange for his or her life. That person will then have to pay the penalties himself or herself in the Lake of Fire where Satan is being tormented.

Revelation 20:11-15 – Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

f) New Universe, Earth, and Jerusalem

After the final judgment, God will make a new creation. This new creation will include a new universe, a new planet earth, and a special new city called the New Jerusalem. Jesus, the Father, and all those who belong to God will live there forever. There will be no sin, sickness, or sorrow.

Revelation 21:1-4 – Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

CONCLUSION — WHAT DIFFERENCE SHOULD IT MAKE IN YOUR LIFE?

Be sure you are ready. There is coming a separation of those who belong to God from those who do not. It is like separating sheep from goats. They are similar types of animals, but there are significant differences. While all humans were created by God, not all of them belong to Him as His sons and daughters.

Matthew 25:32-34 – All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'

To be ready you must make sure that you belong to God. That is done only by accepting Jesus' payment for your sin and receiving His lordship in your life.

Romans 10:8-9, 13 – But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ... For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

a) Limited Time. So Get Busy!

You must also realize that you have only a limited time to reach those around you who do not yet belong to Jesus. Whether we die first, or Jesus comes today, the time each of us has left is very short. We need to be busy learning about and doing the Father's business as good servants dispensing the things He has entrusted to us.

Matthew 24:45-51 – “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Don't allow the cares and distractions of life to make you unfruitful in God's work.

Mark 4:18-19 – Now these [seeds] are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

b) Do Not Fear

A feeling of urgency is good when it comes to thinking about the future. To be fearful is not good – unless you do not belong to Jesus. Then you should fear greatly! If you belong to Jesus and follow Him, you can know that fear does not come from Him.

2 Timothy 1:7 – For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

God will give you each day what you need for that day. But He won't always give you today what you will need for tomorrow.

Matthew 6:31-34 – “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Hebrews 13:5 – Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

c) Watch and Be Strong

Trust in God rather than in your possessions or your own abilities. Be watchful and attentive to the things of God.

Ephesians 6:10 – Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Mark 13:35-37 – Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming – in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning – lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: “Watch!”

INSIDER'S TIP FOR INVESTMENT

Be careful not to invest too much in the kingdom of this world. This world and its treasures are going down in flames! It will be the worst crash of all time. Remind yourself of the popular saying during the Jesus Movement of the 70's: “It's all gonna burn!”

2 Peter 3:10-13 – But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent

heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Invest heavily in God's Kingdom! It's going to go through the roof so put everything you have into it. We're not talking just about money, but your time, talents, skills, and other resources.

Hebrews 10:34-35 – for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.

Invest wisely and you will be set for life—eternal life!

How Do We Prepare for the Second Coming?

Adapted from Desiring God (<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/how-do-we-prepare-for-the-second-coming>)



One way to summarise our preparation for the second coming is to say that there are three impulses that help us be ready:

1. The impulse that comes from the glorious prospect of seeing the Lord
2. The impulse that comes from the necessity of suffering before he comes
3. The impulse to be found faithful and vigilant in our particular callings when he comes

So let me illustrate each of those three impulses, because that's the answer to the question "How do you prepare?" You prepare by responding biblically to those three impulses first.

1. PURSUE CHRISTLIKENESS NOW

First, the impulse that comes from the glorious prospect of seeing the Lord. First John 3:2-3:

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears [the second coming] we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

So think about the psychological dynamics of those verses. When he says, "everyone who thus hopes in him," he's referring to hoping to *be* like him. "When he appears we shall be like him ... [Whoever] *thus* hopes in him" – hoping to be like him – will purify himself now. So the point is, if you really want to be like him by seeing him when he comes, you'll pursue being like him now. You will.

So, the impulse of becoming a radically pure, holy, loving, sacrificial, Christlike person now is the intense hope and desire for that to happen when he comes and we see him. That's the first impulse.

2. READY YOURSELF FOR SUFFERING

Second, the impulse that comes from the necessity of suffering before Jesus comes. Now I have in mind here all Christian suffering, because Paul said that "through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" ([Acts](#)

[14:22](#)). And I have in mind the suffering that will become more intense near the end, when Paul says in [2 Thessalonians 2:8](#), “The lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.”

Now Jesus speaks of that season of lawlessness in Matthew 24:11-13: “Many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”

So, the implication is that (1) we should get ready for the Lord’s coming by being spiritually and mentally alert to satanic deception and false teaching; (2) we should be completely submitted to the word of God rather than being lawless or self-willed; and (3) we should be cultivating strong faith in the sovereign goodness of God, so that we can endure to the end through whatever suffering comes our way.

And just a word about how this applies today, perhaps more than any other time in history. (I could be wrong about that, but that’s my guess.) Human beings have developed popular as well as intellectual and sophisticated ways of denying the existence of any divine law or standard. We have found a way to claim plausibility for creating our own truth, creating our own right and wrong, creating our own identity.

If you were born a man and you want to be a woman, then there is no law in God, no law in nature, no law in culture to hinder you. You do whatever you think you want to do. You are a law to yourself. That’s what Jesus means by *lawlessness*. And it is multiplied and increased. And Jesus says such lawlessness will be multiplied, will be increased, and that the effect is a tragic coldness of love among Christians.

So, one way to prepare for the Second Coming and its antecedent sufferings is to submit ourselves with intelligence and wisdom and joy to the absolute standards of God’s law for the sake of warm love, not cold love.

3. WORK FAITHFULLY FOR CHRIST

The third impulse to be ready for the second coming is the impulse to be found faithful and vigilant in our particular callings. Over and over and over in the New Testament, we are told to be watchful, to be awake, to be ready. What does that mean? I think the parable of the ten virgins is a good illustration of what it means.

The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. [So this is a picture of being ready for the second coming, the return of the bridegroom.] Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed [that’s Jesus’s hint that there will be some distance of time], they all became drowsy and slept [all ten]. But at midnight there was a cry, “Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.” Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, “Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.” But the wise answered, saying, “Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.” And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, “Lord, lord, open to us.” But he answered, “Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.” [And here’s Jesus’ conclusion:] Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. ([Matthew 25:1-13](#))

So, the conclusion of the whole parable is answering this question: How do you get ready? “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day or the hour.” Now, what does that mean? Both the wise and the foolish virgins were asleep, and there was no criticism. That’s not a problem. To watch, therefore, doesn’t mean any kind of artificial getting up at night, looking out the window, paying a lot of attention to end-times conspiracy theories.

To *watch* means to do your job really well for Christ’s sake. They had an assignment: Have your lamps. Have your oil. Respond to the announcement when it’s given. Light the way of the bridegroom in. And they did their job just the way they should, and they entered in. They were morally, spiritually, and, you might say, professionally awake. They did their job the way God meant for them to do it.

So that’s what you find all over the New Testament. The Master has given all of us assignments for while he’s gone – gifts, resources, abilities, money, opportunities, relationships, spiritual disciplines. All of those are spheres where we do our job with faithfulness and diligence.

BLESSED SERVANTS

One of the most important texts for me over the years as a pastor, and even still, is [Luke 12:42-44](#), where he says,

Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.

Do you know what that means for me? That means: “Piper, work your faithful fanny off to speak truth on *Ask Pastor John*. And if the Lord comes and finds you getting ready the day before you record, you’ll be glad you were at work.” Yes, I will.

So, let your life be guided by (1) the impulse that comes from the prospect of seeing the Lord, (2) the impulse that comes from the necessity of suffering, and (3) the impulse to be found faithful, vigilant, full of love to Christ in our particular callings. And then we will hear him say, “Enter into the joy of your master” ([Matthew 25:21,23](#)).