

"Matthew 24 - The Rapture Dilemma"

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CORRECTLY INTERPRETING THE PROPHECY OF JESUS



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The description of the endtimes in Matthew 24 has become a focus of attention in past months. It has been used to show the differences between the Rapture and the Second Coming, and has effectively blown away much of the classic pre-seven-year-trib teaching by demonstrating the sequence of events as prophesied by Jesus.

That much cannot be denied, but a frequent recourse of pre-trib defenders is to simply deny Jesus was talking to Christians at all. (That indeed is what I was raised on as a young evangelical. However, after I became more familiar with the bible as a whole, I realised it was not correct.)

It has had the effect of bringing out the best and worst in Christian polemics; the best being a serious and scholarly attempt to set Matthew 24 and other similar scriptures in their proper context, and the worst being ad hominem attacks and denunciations couched in aggressive language that is little more than self-defensive ranting.

Over the past two to three years I have found an encouraging number of different people willing to re-think the old dogmas, and to look intensively into scripture itself to see what the Holy Spirit inspired people to say about these matters.

And in Matthew 24 it goes further than that, because Jesus himself answered three questions asked by the disciples:

1. When will the Temple be destroyed, no stone being left upon another
2. What are the signs that you are coming back for us?
3. What are the signs of the End and Final Judgement, and the setting-up of the earthly kingdom?

Jesus answers these in turn. He prefaces everything with a warning "do not be deceived". Then he replies to the three questions with a prophecy that not only relates to their own time but also in the far distant future.

1. The Temple will be destroyed in AD70 but there will be another greater time of destruction. At both times there will be an "abomination" to defile the Temple, and on both occasions those who love God will escape. (24:15 and following)
2. There will be troubles and cosmic signs and deceptions, but the coming in the air will be as bright as lightning. (24:31)
3. When the Throne is set up on earth, all men and women will appear before God for Judgement. Jesus will rule. (25:31 and following)

Counter-Arguments

Inevitably, those who follow the classic evangelical teachings have been quick to defend their opinions on Matthew 24.

For instance, recently a group dedicated to the Pre-trib Rapture, Dispensationalism and Once-Saved-Always-Saved [posted a blog](#) purporting to show how Jesus' teaching in Matthew 24 must **only** refer to Israel and has **nothing to do with the Church** as "*Matthew 24 is not about the Church which didn't even exist on the day that they asked Jesus these questions*".

I don't wish to single anyone out, nor do I want to point fingers in anyone's direction, but it seems useful to look at the points raised in their blog as a foundation for discussion. In general I have no problem with the way [Now The End Begins](#) reports snippets of news and other topics, but I must take issue with this particular teaching.

WAS THE CHURCH NON-EXISTENT IN THE DAY OF JESUS?

The belief that the Church did not exist at the time of Jesus, and therefore Jesus cannot have been referring to the Church when he addressed the disciples, is one of the strongest lines of defense supporting the idea that Matthew 24 is only talking about the Second Coming and contains no reference whatsoever to the Rapture.

That is a large part of the debate on Matthew 24. So I will address that remark first.

What we today call "The Church" is the company of called-out ones who believed on the Name of Jesus for salvation rather than the Law. It is the Body of Christ, Jesus Christ being the Head and we being the living members.

The Church is the Body of Christ

While he walked the earth, Jesus confirmed that he was prepared to join spiritually with those who believed in him: **Matthew 18:20** *"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."* This spiritual union existed even when Jesus was incarnate on earth, but it was EXTENDED after his death since then by the Holy Spirit he could be IN them as well as WITH them:

John 14: 16 *"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but **ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you**".*

Righteousness by Faith in the Old Testament

Matthew 16:18 has Jesus saying to one of his DISCIPLES at the time. *"And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my **church**, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"*. He was referring to the statement of faith by Peter, that Jesus was indeed the Son of God and Messiah. That is the foundation stone of the Church and here Jesus is applying it to something said by a JEW, Peter.

Bear that in mind as we continue.

The difference between the Old Testament covenant and the New is precisely this, that the Old Testament promise was to bless those who obeyed the Law and who offered continuing sacrifices for redemption of their sins, but Jesus came to die for the sins of the world, thus making his one-time SACRIFICE and BLOOD sufficient for salvation, to those who had faith in them.

Yet, even in the Old Testament there were those who walked with God, believed by faith (Abraham and David for example) and Israel was referred to in Acts 7:37-38 as the "church in the wilderness".

- Please read [Hebrews Chapter Eleven](#) for many examples of those who had faith BEFORE the time of Jesus.
- "[The Church and Israel](#)", differences and similarities, a useful study from Christians speaking from a Hebraic viewpoint on scripture.

And – please note: **Hebrews 11: 13** “*These all died in FAITH, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth*”.

Did they receive the promise of inheritance in the Kingdom of God? YES. For “Heb 11:39-40 says,

“*these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not [at that time] the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, **that they without us should not be made perfect.***”

Has Israel Been Saved by Jesus?

A major plank in the pre-trib argument is that the Church is just a two-thousand year hiatus in history, and completely distinct from Israel so that the same method of salvation cannot be applied to both. This is called [Dispensationalism](#), a 19th century doctrine developed by J. N. Darby.

Yet Paul (himself a very observant Jew, a Pharisee of the Pharisees at one time) demonstrated that it was the JEWS who first grasped the importance of the completed Covenant, and the fulfilment of the Law in Jesus Christ.

What they missed is that the Promise came by faith not by works!

*The relationship between the people of God in the Old Testament and the people of God in the New Testament is better described in terms of an organic development rather than either separation or replacement. During most of the Old Testament era, there were essentially three groups of people: the Gentile nations, national Israel, and true Israel (the faithful remnant). Although the nation of Israel was often involved in idolatry, apostasy, and rebellion, **God always kept for Himself a faithful remnant**—those who trusted in Him and who would not bow the knee to Baal (1 Kings 19:18). This remnant, this true Israel, included men such as David, Joash, Isaiah, and Daniel, as well as women such as Sarah, Deborah, and Hannah. There were those who were circumcised in the flesh and a smaller number who had their hearts circumcised as well. So, even in the Old Testament, not all were Israel who were descended from Israel (Rom. 9:6). **At the time of Jesus’ birth, the faithful remnant (true Israel) included believers such as Simeon and Anna** (Luke 2:25–38). During Jesus’ adult ministry, true Israel was most visible in those Jewish disciples who believed that Jesus was the Messiah. **Those who rejected Jesus were not true Israel, regardless of their race.** This included many of the scribes and Pharisees. Though they were physically Jews, they were not true Israel (Rom. 2:28–29). True Israel became defined by union with the true Israelite—Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16, 29). [\[Source\]](#)*

Who are Israel?

Those who were to inherit the promises were NOT, as Paul explained, those who were merely Jewish by culture, nation and circumcision, nor are they today.

Romans 2:28 *For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

Thus, Paul argues that the genuine, faithful, Israel DID receive the promises and are not divided off from the Church and redemption as if they are a totally different category of people!

The Law

Jesus did not come to abolish the Law (which we see is perfect, holy, and everlasting - Romans 7:12) but to fulfil it.

Matthew 5:17-18 *Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfil them. For I tell you truly, until heaven and earth pass away, not a single jot, not a stroke of a pen, will disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.*



Jesus came to abolish the **curse** of the Law, which was that no human being could perfectly keep it. But he became the One Perfect Sacrifice for sins, bringing redemption in his blood, instead of the blood of animals. Jesus perfectly obeyed the Law, so as to pass on to both Jew and Gentile, to any who would trust in him, the redemption by his blood and salvation from the wrath to come.

One Tree, not Two

We Gentiles, though not coming from the Jewish background of commandments and sacrifices, were still ADDED IN and joined to the ONE Tree of Life, referred to as the “olive tree” below:

Romans 11:16-18 *For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, **remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.***

Romans 11:22-24 *Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. **Otherwise you also will be cut off.** (Compare the Vine and the Vinedresser in John 15:6) And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for **God is able to graft them in again.** For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into **their own olive tree?***

These members of the OT “church” had faith for salvation in the time to come, but had to wait for the Cross, wait until the New Testament (Jewish) believers were perfected in Christ, at which point they also received their reward, for Jesus “*preached to the spirits in prison*” (1 Pet 3:19) at his death, and raised them with him when he ascended.

Eph 4: 8-9 *“Therefore he says, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that he ‘ascended’, what is it but that he also ‘descended’ **FIRST** into the lower parts of the earth?”*

These members of the Church of God (Acts 7:38) looked forward in time to a “heavenly city to come” **Hebrews 11: 16** *“they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city”.*

WHO? The Old Testament saints, the ones that dispensationalism says cannot be saved by grace for that is the sole preserve of the Church. Although these men and women lived and died before the cross, yet they were “accounted righteous” by God because of their faith. They were OT saints but they were **part of God’s Church!**

To this pre-existing Church, were ADDED three thousand on the Day of Pentecost, proving that the Body of Christ existed BEFORE that day! (Acts 2:41).

The Calling and Anointing of the Church

Those who walked and talked with Jesus Christ on earth, his disciples – almost exclusively Jewish - not only at that time but after Pentecost and throughout the days of the early Church, those very same people (who wrote the epistles and gospels) believed in FAITH for salvation, thus making them members of the New Covenant and members of the Church.

The fact that salvation by faith, through the grace of God, is established by the New Testament gospels and epistles is proof in itself that those early disciples of Jesus were as much a part of the Body of Christ, the Church of God as we are today!

These Jewish disciples were hand-picked by Jesus to be the foundation of the CHURCH; they were commissioned with the task of evangelism (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15), and with pastoring the Church (John 21); they received the keys of the kingdom (Matthew 16:19), they were anointed by the Holy Spirit (John 20:22), participated in the Lord’s Supper which made them one with Jesus (Matthew 26:26-28), elected elders (Acts 1:23) congregated together to praise and worship (Acts 1:13-14) and used the gifts of the Spirit in ministry (Luke 10:17).



JESUS CHOOSES HIS DISCIPLES

Thus, to say the Church didn't exist at the time of Matthew 24 is incorrect.

To those who had, have, or will in the future have faith in the once-for-all sacrifice and righteousness of Jesus Christ, it is accounted as righteousness before God. No matter in what age or century! For God is merciful to all.

In Galatians 3:26-28 we read that there is NO DISTINCTION between Jewish and Gentile believers, before and after the Cross, for we are ALL ONE IN CHRIST:

*For ye are **all** the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. **There is neither Jew nor Greek**, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye **Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.***

Paul (a Jew) states categorically that there is NO division into Jew and Gentile, for “*the dividing wall between us has been removed*”.

Not only Israel but those of any nation who believe in Jesus have become partakers of the PROMISE and the INHERITANCE, being made heirs along with Abraham's children! What could be plainer?

Eph 2: 14-16 “*For he is our peace, who has **made both one**, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himself of two **one new man.**”*

What dispensationalism tries to do is to erect that wall again and exclude Old Testament believers from salvation through the blood of Christ!

That extends to the time (supposedly) after the Age of Grace has finished, the Holy Spirit and the offer of salvation through Jesus is withdrawn, the Church is no more, and there is a return to the old ineffective legal procedures and sacrifices that we already know **can never lead to salvation (Rom 3:20)**.

Israel after this ‘church dispensation’ ends is condemned only to a lower form of righteousness based on good behaviour, and a lower form of inheritance based on land and buildings! **They have to go back to try**

to achieve the impossible, to please God in the flesh and by the Law, which thing we are told “cannot be done” (Gal 3:11).

What a travesty of God’s plan for his people! It is a kind of anti-semitism, that I can see might have been prevalent in the day of Darby but surely cannot still hold today.

CAN PROPHECIES REFER TO MORE THAN ONE EVENT?

One of the ways in which Matthew 24 is wrongly interpreted today, is in forcing it to apply either to the first century, or to the endtimes. In this either-or scenario, events linked by scripture elsewhere to the Rapture CANNOT relate to the Matthew passage, because ALL of it must speak of the Second Coming.

But one major foundation of bible interpretation is that prophecies can have more than one meaning, while still being totally correct. Prophecies can legitimately contain an everyday meaning, a near-future interpretation as well as an endtime reference.

SEE FOR EXAMPLE: [Multiples References in Prophecy \(PDF file\)](#)

Many references in the **Psalms** were seen to be about the Messiah in due course, even though they were written about their own present misfortunes; many references to the persecution and restoration of Israel could be applied equally at that time and also in the 20th century; the letters to the churches in **Revelation** were undoubtedly about seven literal churches of John's day, but also refer to the Church throughout history and in the latter-day – and so on.

Psalms 16 and verses 8-10 are a poem of David about his own fears and faith. He is going through a time of trial. He says,

I have set the LORD always before me: because *he is* at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Yet we all know that this is a promise to Jesus when he died on the cross. We have no difficulty knowing that both interpretations are equally valid. One does not rule out the other.

Paul and the apostles constantly used the Old Testament prophecies to illustrate the truth about Jesus their Messiah. For instance in Acts 13 32-35 he says,

And we declare unto you glad tidings, how the promise which was made unto the fathers, God has fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he has raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, You are my Son, this day have I begotten you. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said in this way, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Therefore he says also in another psalm, You shall not allow your Holy One to see corruption.

How Does This Challenge Our Understanding Of Matthew 24?

In speaking of the destruction of the Temple in Matthew 24, Jesus was speaking at one and the same time of the circumstances of the first-century Church and the Roman destruction in AD70, and events in the far distant future, in our own day in fact. This is really why we need to pay close attention to what he said, and interpret it correctly.

How do we know? Simply, Jesus did not return at that time! Jesus promised that he would return for his people immediately after the troubles had come to a climax. When that happened in the first century AD (fulfilling in detail what Jesus had said), he did not in fact return - something that must have puzzled and dismayed the disciples.

But we now know that there was ALSO another fulfilment of the prophecy speaking of another greater destruction of Israel. Both are valid prophecies.

It is just as wrong to interpret ALL Matthew 24 as prophetic of the endtimes as it is to interpret it ALL for the first century AD. It is both at the same time.

Indeed, the Christians of the early Church **did** interpret the words of Jesus as prophetic of AD70, since they **did** take it as a warning when the siege of Jerusalem began, and they managed by the grace of God to flee the city, just as Jesus said.

It was THEN that Jesus commented that they should pray not to have to **flee on the Sabbath**, because it would have been much harder to travel, carry goods, and find alternative accommodation on a Sabbath day in Israel. That statement, about not fleeing on the Sabbath, incidentally, still holds true for those believers and Jews who have been saved at the time of the coming war and final destruction of Jerusalem even though it does not apply elsewhere in the world.

The early Christian scholar Eusebius wrote:

*"The whole body, however, of the church at Jerusalem, **having been commanded by a divine revelation, given to men of approved piety there before the war**, removed from the city, and dwelt at a certain town beyond the Jordan, called Pella." [Ecclesiastical History, tr. C. F. Crusè, 3d ed., in Greek Ecclesiastical Historians, 6 vols. (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1842), p. 110 (3:5).]*

Epiphanes also wrote of it, according to Bible scholar Adam Clarke.

*The latter wrote: "It is very remarkable that not a single Christian perished in the destruction of Jerusalem, though there were many there when Cestius Gallus invested the city; and, had he persevered in the siege, he would soon have rendered himself master of it; but, when he unexpectedly and unaccountably raised the siege, **the Christians took that opportunity to escape**. ... [As] Vespasian was*

approaching with his army, all who believed in Christ left Jerusalem and fled to Pella, and other places beyond the river Jordan; and so they all marvellously escaped the general shipwreck of their country: not one of them perished." [The New Testament ... with a Commentary and Critical Notes, 6 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, n.d.), 5:228–29.]

This becomes a difficulty for those who state categorically that Jesus was NOT warning Christians or speaking to the Church, when warning them to flee the city, because ALL of the chapter, they say, refers to a future Tribulation when the Church has been taken out, the Age of Grace has ended, and only Israel - in a fallen state - are left to face the music.

So we continue to the related question, is Matthew 24 speaking of the Rapture or the Second Coming?

THE RAPTURE OR THE SECOND COMING - OR BOTH?

The NTEB article (as I mentioned above as an example that I have used to sum up the debate) states that the Matthew 24 references *"we know to be the Day of the Lord, and the end of the world"*. That is to say, the Second Coming and subsequent events.

We know nothing of the sort.

This is the kind of leap of deduction that is made in support of dispensationalism that is undone by proper biblical exegesis. In this case their reasoning is that *"Matthew 24 is not about the Church which didn't even exist on the day that they asked Jesus these questions."*

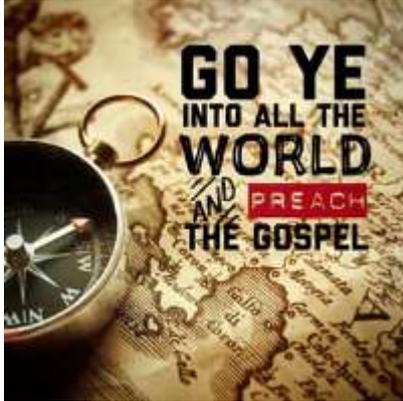
The Context

What was the reason for Jesus' instruction in Matthew 24? The believers who loved Jesus wanted to know when he was coming back FOR THEM. They did ask when the destruction of the Temple would happen (part one of their question in Matt 24:3) but they wanted to know in addition (2) what will be the sign of your coming; and (3) signs of the end of the age.

Jesus answers all these in turn. All that he said from verses 4-28 could have been (and was) applied to the Church of that day AS WELL AS applying in an endtimes context.

Persecution, hardships, hatred, imprisonment, gospel preaching, the destruction of the city and temple, great tribulation and deliverance, false prophets and christs, heresies about the second coming – ALL THIS happened to those who heard the words of Jesus in that day!

Gospel Preaching – by Israel? Or Evangelism by the Church?



And notice that among the events supposed by Dispensationalists to be **exclusively** about Israel and the seven-year Tribulation, at a time when they tell us that the Holy Spirit has gone from the world and the devil is fully in charge, Jesus prophesied that the gospel would be effectively spread right round the world "*and then the End shall come*", (Matt 24:14).

Now I don't know about you, but I rather think Jesus was referring to the Church in their worldwide evangelistic mission – it was to the CHURCH after all that Jesus gave the task of gospel preaching, saying "*Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every*

creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be condemned". (Mark 16 15-16)

There MAY indeed be a further and more specific endtimes aspect to this preaching, as a final call for the world, but Israel today is unlikely to participate in that preaching and during the reign of the Antichrist even less so.

Israel will be preoccupied with her own land and interests, and in her own survival, rather than gospel preaching.

The believing Remnant of Israel, the only group who might possibly have a hand in preaching about their Messiah, have been "caught up" to the Lord, (Revelation 12:5) and the godly remnant who have not yet accepted their Messiah have had to flee to the desert to avoid the war of the Dragon. (Revelation 12:6) That only leaves apostate Israel who are certainly not going to do the task.

So to whom was Jesus speaking? It seems obvious to me! THE CHURCH.

Matthew 24 and the Seals of Revelation

When we look at the words of John in Revelation we see a most startling correlation between the prophecies of Jesus and the Seals of chapter six! Except for those who argue that Revelation may have been written before AD70, this can only mean that Jesus was referring both to the Early Church AND the latter-day Church in his prophecies.

From the very same website that is the subject of this article, we find [another post](#) showing this very same truth, that the Six Seals of Revelation were prophesied, in order, by Jesus in Matthew 24. (OOPS)

I say OOPS, because, despite their attempts to support the pre-trib rapture from this fact, the most literal and obvious conclusion from the Matthew 24 and Six Seal conjunction is that THE RAPTURE HAPPENS AT SEAL SIX!!! Incidentally, JUST where Jesus prophesied it to be.

They say,

"This is also further proof of the Pretribulation Rapture of the Church because Paul, writing long after Matthew, introduced the doctrine of the Church Rapture as a "mystery" previously unknown. That means that Matthew could not have been talking about the Rapture of the Church. He didn't know anything about it. Understanding that Matthew 24 is actually giving us the first 6 Seal Judgements from Revelation 6 is a huge clue in helping to put events within a timeframe."

Well, possibly Matthew "knew nothing" about the Rapture of the Church BUT JESUS DID.

And it is JESUS Himself who is speaking, not Matthew. Matthew merely reported accurately what Jesus said, and what he said was a clear description of his coming to gather his saints "from one end of heaven to the other". (24:31)

And yes, as NTEB noted, this does (unfortunately for them) provide a prophetic timeframe, one in which verses 29-44 of Matthew 24 (the Rapture) follow **immediately** upon the celestial disasters of Seal Six of Revelation!

The disciples, you see, like us today, were **much** more interested in when Jesus was coming to take them home, than when he was to return with the armies of heaven to purge the wicked from earth and sit upon the Throne of Judgement of the nations.

Their question number (3) if you remember was about the End of the Age. (The Second Coming as we call it). Skip over to Matthew 25:31 and following, and there you read what happens "*when the Son of Man comes in his glory, with the holy angels*" to be seated on his throne of judgement.

Clearly this is a DIFFERENT coming to the one in 24:40-44 where the "thief in the night" comes to "snatch away" only certain people, an event that believers are told to be READY for, in case they miss it. One could hardly miss Jesus arriving with an entire army of angels!

Furthermore, in Matthew 24:29-31 the Rapture is clearly described as coming immediately on the heels of the disturbances of Seal Six, and when the Son of Man is seen IN THE SKY (verse 30) coming on a CLOUD not a horse (compare 1 Thess 4:16) and sending out his ANGELS with the great sound of a TRUMPET (compare 1 Corinthians 15:51-52) to GATHER his elect FROM THE FOUR WINDS of heaven.

If this isn't a description of the RAPTURE, you may apply to me immediately for the consumption of a piece of headwear of your choice.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 *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. 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.*

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 *Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the **trumpet shall sound**, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

WHEN AND WHAT IS THE DAY OF JACOB'S TROUBLE?

In attempting to link Matthew 24 only with the SECOND coming, Dispensationalists claim that Jesus was prophesying only of the far future, and speaking only of Israel in "The day of Jacob's Trouble" that Jeremiah spoke about: *Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.*" Jeremiah 30:7

Now, if Jesus himself in Matt 24 had used the quote in Jeremiah this could be forgiven, but he did not. To link the two is an opinion, not a fact. Nevertheless, let's see if there really is any connection between the two.

The Jeremiah passage has a time marker that is very clear. As the commentators state, it fixes events to the **birthpangs** of the Woman in Revelation! (The same word as is used for the "**beginning of sorrows**" by Jesus in Matthew 24. And then he added, THIS IS NOT THE END.)

The references in Jeremiah 30 to ISRAEL being the Woman of Revelation "in tribulation" crying out in the pain of her birthpangs (Rev 12) are valid, but do not at the same time fix her trouble to the END of the age, but the BEGINNING of sorrows, while the satanic Dragon-Beast is still in the heavenlies and the War of Michael the Archangel has not yet taken place!

Jeremiah 30:4-11 "And these are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus says the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask you now, and see whether a man does travail with child? **why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail**, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it...(11) For I am with you, says the LORD, to save you: though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet will I not make a full end of you: but I will correct you in just measure, and will not leave you altogether unpunished"..

It also provides what Dispensationalists and other pre-trib believers constantly ask for, a description of the RAPTURE within the context of the book of Revelation! For here we have godly Israel (The star-crowned Woman) under intense pressure to conform to a satanic agenda with the result that a small number from within Israel (her manchild) are both saved and **CAUGHT UP TO HEAVEN**. (Rev 12:5).

The words there "caught up" are EXACTLY the same as the references to the Rapture of believers elsewhere in scripture, "then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up..."

What is that word? It is HARPAZO, snatched away! Strong's 726. harpazó : *catch up, seize by force; snatch up, suddenly and decisively – like someone seizing bounty (spoil, a prize); to take by an open display of force (i.e. not covertly or secretly).*

It takes an almost wilful blindness NOT to see the Rapture in those verses!

One Taken, Another Left Behind

In addition, Jesus speaks in Matthew 24 of a selective "taking" of certain people:

Matthew 24:40-44 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be **taken**, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be **betaken**, and the other left. Watch therefore: for you know not what hour your Lord does come. But know this, that if the owner of the house had known in what watch **the thief** would come, he would have watched, and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore be you also ready: for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man comes.

Is this not speaking of the same "**thief in the night**" as in the Rapture verses we are so familiar with? It would be inconsistent to use one for the Second Coming and the other for the Rapture. They are both describing the same event. Look at the language and the references to "sudden destruction" and "travail as a woman with child" and the warning to "be ready" - Surely Paul was repeating what he knew of the Matthew 24 prophecy of Jesus about the Rapture?

1 Thess 5:1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so **comes as a thief in the night**. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then **sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child**; and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. You are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but **let us watch and be sober**. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that are drunk are drunk in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. **For God has not appointed us to wrath**, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

Where Are They Taken, Lord?

In Luke's version of this same prophecy, he follows the narrative of one taken and one left (in 17:34-35) with a question from the disciples in verse 37. They ask, "*Where, Lord?*" That is, where are they taken?

Some teach that the passage relating to some being taken and some left behind is about the JUDGEMENT, but that doesn't hold water, since at the End of the age ALL appear before the Throne in judgement, and furthermore, there is no selective taking or leaving at that time, in such a sudden moment of panic (we could say, as quick as the blink of an eye) where there is no time or opportunity to pick up belongings or even think about the situation before it happens!

And, since the disciples already understood the concept of the Final Judgement (even though they might not yet have understood the Rapture) they would not need to ask "Where are they taken, Lord?"

However, they did ask. And the answer is equally mysterious: "*And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.*" (Luke 17:37, KJV)

The Hovering Eagles



Later bible translations used the word "vultures" instead of "eagles" but the Greek word is aetos: an EAGLE. And that comes from the root word AER (from its wind-like flight) for AER means breath, air, the air that we breathe.

So in fact this Greek word is suggesting something coming in the AIR and gathering around the BODY (not "corpse" - the Greek word is SOMA, used everywhere in scripture to refer to the BODY either dead or alive).

Here Jesus tells us there will be a BODY of people, either believing Israel in the last days or the Church worldwide, who will be taken into the AIR by beings that hover like huge birds. And left behind in the city and nation will be a dead body of fallen Israel decimated by her sudden destruction!

FURTHER READING: *Is It Eagles or Vultures?*

Now turn to Isaiah 31:4-5 "...so shall the LORD of hosts **come down** to fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof. **As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it.**"

Not only do the believers of all nations go UP to the Lord in the AIR on that day of salvation and deliverance from sore troubles, but also the believers of ISRAEL who have come to accept Jesus Christ as their true Messiah and saviour.

The Eagles of Rome

But now we can see how Jesus, in his foreknowledge and wisdom ALSO managed to refer to the AD70 attack on Jerusalem, because the astonishing fact is that the Roman ensign being the EAGLE, the disciples **did** at that time see Jerusalem "surrounded by armies" and they **did** experience an abomination set in the Temple where it ought not to be, and they **did** see the eagles.

In A.D.66 the Romans surrounded the city of Jerusalem. **Luke 21:20** "*But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near.*"

Chrysostom wrote: (379 AD)

"For this it seems to me that the abomination of desolation means the army by which the holy city of Jerusalem was made desolate." (The Ante-Nicene Fathers)

C.H. Spurgeon wrote: (1888)

"As soon as Christ's disciples saw "the abomination of desolation," that is, the Roman ensigns, with their idolatries, "stand in the holy place," they knew that the time for their escape had arrived; and they did flee to the mountains." (Matthew: The Gospel of the Kingdom. . p. 215).

Albert Barnes wrote: (1834)

"The Roman army is further called the abomination on account of the images of the emperor, and the eagles, carried in front of the legions, and regarded by the Romans with divine honours" (Matthew p. 254)

Phillip Schaff, in his History of the Christian Church, gives us a vivid picture of the destruction of Jerusalem.

*"It was burned on the tenth of August, A.D. 70, the same day of the year on which, according to tradition, the first temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar." "No one," says Josephus, "can conceive a louder, more terrible shriek, than arose from all sides during the burning of the temple. ...The hill on which the temple stood was seething hot, and seemed enveloped to its base in one sheet of flame. The blood was larger in quantity than the fire, and those that were slain were more in number than those that slew them. The ground was nowhere visible. **All was covered with corpses** ; over these heaps the soldiers pursued the fugitives." The Romans planted their **eagles** on the shapeless ruins, over against the eastern gate, offered their sacrifices to them, and proclaimed Titus Imperator with the greatest acclamations of joy. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy concerning the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place." (Philip Schaff, vol. 1 pp. 397-398).*

Here we see a double prophecy, for not only did armies surround Jerusalem, an abomination entered the Temple, and eagles gathered over the corpses in AD70 but ALSO at the Rapture and deliverance of the faithful, armies will again surround Jerusalem, the eagles will hover in the air, the abomination of a false messiah will enter the new Temple (whatsoever that might be at the time) and God's people will flee the city again just as foretold (for the Woman of Revelation having seen her "baby" CAUGHT UP will be given the wings of an EAGLE to flee to her safe place for the three and a half years of the Beasts' demonic reign. (See Revelation 12:14))

Jacob's Trouble is the Woman's Travail



In providing his prophetic timeline, Jesus placed the day of Jacob's trouble (the woman's tribulation) immediately previous to the birth of her child (the Rapture).

This makes perfect sense, as "birthpangs" and the travail of childbirth DO result in the birth of the child. Jesus then confirms it by saying his coming for his chosen ones will be "immediately after the tribulation of that time."

SEE: [Tribulation is never used in scripture for other than Christians and the Church!](#)

And notice that all this takes place BEFORE the three and a half year reign of the Beasts and the Dragon. The Woman herself is carried away and protected in the wilderness for the remaining three and a half years. (Rev 12:14)

Matthew 24 is not just about the Second Coming

This important passage is therefore not about the Second Coming, as many suggest, but the RAPTURE. In other words, Revelation fixes the "day of Jacob's trouble" (that is, her Tribulation), to the **very same verses** that NTEB admits are the **six seals**, leading up to the sight of the Son of Man IN THE SKY coming to gather his Elect from one end of heaven to the other, ie. In the AIR.

ARE THE ELECT EXCLUSIVELY ISRAEL?

Another big problem with the challenge to Matthew 24, is claiming that the references there to "the Elect" CANNOT mean the Church. For instance, when Jesus says that the days of distress will be shortened "for the sake of the elect" (Matt 24:22) he must be referring to Israel.

The prohibition on using the ELECT to mean the Church extends throughout the bible, according to this teaching, and especially within the book of Revelation, where of course in the dispensationalist and pre-trib view, no Christian can still be present.

Who Are The Elect?

The word ELECT simple means CHOSEN. When Peter writes to Christians he tells them:

"But YOU are a **chosen generation**, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light," (1 Peter 2:9)

AND therefore:

"**Elect according to the foreknowledge of God** the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:2)

Used in the Bible for Christians

Indeed, a quick search on the word "elect" and "chosen" in the bible shows that it actually IS many times used of the Church! Romans 8:33 asks *"who shall bring an accusation against God's elect?"* If Paul had intended ONLY Jews to be included in this, why did he not say so? He obviously means all believers! Paul also refers to the elect in his letter to Titus: *"Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth..."*

What IS the "faith of God's Elect"? If they are right to say the Elect are only Israel, then Paul the Apostle must be claiming to have adopted the faith of ISRAEL again, after being saved. Clearly not. He is speaking of the CHURCH, believers, saved by grace.

If you would care to do a word search on the word "chosen" [identical to "elect"] throughout the New Testament you would prove to yourself that it is the CHRISTIANS who were and are "chosen in Him" as well as the Remnant Israel of the last days. (The Elect includes all who trust in Jesus for salvation including Jews.)

One summary of Election and the Elect says this:

The concept of God's chosen people is first found in the Old Testament. God chose Israel as His special people. *"And because He loved your fathers, therefore He **chose** their descendants after them; and He brought you out of Egypt with His Presence, with His mighty power"* (Deuteronomy 4:37). *"For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has **chosen** you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth"*(Deuteronomy 7:6 // Deuteronomy 14:2).

Who are God's chosen people now? Jesus warned: *"Many are called, but few are **chosen**"* (Matthew 22:14 // Matthew 20:16).

Now that the promised Messiah has come, God's chosen people are those who accept Him as Lord and Saviour: *"Even so then, at this present time **there is a remnant according to the election of grace**. And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work. What then? **Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were hardened**"* (Romans 11:5-7).

The election is no longer based on physical lineage, but on one's relationship with the Messiah: *"He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, **chosen**, and faithful"* (Revelation 17:14). [[Source](#)]

A Set Time Cannot be Shortened

Another problem with the interpretation of the Elect, is that in Matthew 24 Jesus speaks of the time of trouble being SHORTENED for the sake of the Elect who are undergoing massive tribulation.

If this is applied only to a remnant of Israel suffering the seven-year "tribulation period" as many claim, then how can it be made any shorter than the prophesied time, which we have in the bible plainly enough. Can prophesy be overthrown for the sake of Israel at that time?

We are told in numerous places how long the authority of the devil lasts - three and a half years, or 42 months and then even the day-count of 1260 days.

- In [Revelation 11:2](#), the gentiles will afflict Jerusalem for 42 months, that is, during the entire three and a half year period (albeit under varying circumstances).
- In [Revelation 12:6](#), the woman Israel is said to be protected for 1,260 days, that is, during the whole 42 months of the Beasts' reign (expressed in standard 30 day months).
- In [Revelation 12:14](#), the woman Israel is said to be protected for a time, times, and half a time, that is, during this same period of three and a half years.
- In [Revelation 13:5](#), the unbridled reign of the beasts is said to last for 42 months.

What then CAN be shortened? WHO then can be rescued in this shortened time period? It is not the Woman who has been taken to the wilderness for her protection, for a set period of time, and who will not in fact become a believing ELECT of God until she receives her Messiah at his coming.

The only Elect remaining in Israel at this time are the small number of Jewish baby believers who have stood firm against the pressures (tribulations) and who would all be slaughtered if things were left to run their course. This "baby" who is destined like all those who belong to Jesus Christ to "rule and reign with him", is caught up to God and his Throne, thus cutting short their terrible trial.

We see them sealed to God in Chapter 7 of Revelation, caught up in 12:5, and thereafter in Heaven, glorifying God in praise and worship in chapter 14, where they are called "redeemed" and "firstfruits to God and the Lamb" - for they are the first gleaning of saved Jews before the End.

Their tribulation on earth has been cut short by the Rapture! This is the ONLY event that can happen suddenly and outside of time.

IS THE TRIBULATION A SEVEN-YEAR WRATH OF GOD?

Implied in all classic pre-trib/seven-year tribulation teachings, is that the word "tribulation" whenever discovered – including of course Matthew 24 – MUST refer to seven years of abject persecution, torment and destruction for Israel before Jesus comes.

Although this is so easily disproved, nobody seems to attempt it. The current belief is set in stone, and to have the courage to investigate beyond the norm seems to be beyond the ability of most Christians.

So, when Jesus said in Matthew 24:29 that his coming happens "*immediately AFTER the Tribulation*" it is believed to be after a full seven years, and only to affect Israel. That of course could not then be the Rapture, but the Second Coming in glory and power.

The Challenge

I challenge you to show me anywhere, in any bible text, that "tribulation" lasts seven years, or that it refers to the entire events of Revelation. (That is, using the actual word 'tribulation' and not making an assumption based on other words or ideas!)

The word "tribulation" is more often used by Jesus and the apostles to refer to the troubles and hardships of being a **Christian**, than to Israel or the endtimes!

- **Matthew 13:21** Yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when **tribulation** or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.
- **John 16:33** In the world you shall have **tribulation** but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.
- **Acts 14:22** We must through much **tribulation** enter the kingdom of God
- **Romans 8:35** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall **tribulation**, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

- **Romans 12:12** Rejoice in hope, be patient in **tribulation**, be constant in prayer.
- **Romans 2:9** There will be **tribulation** and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek.
- **Romans 5:3** And not only this, but we also exult in our **tribulations**, knowing that **tribulation** brings about perseverance.
- **2 Corinthians 1:4** Who comforts us in all our **tribulation**, that we may be able to comfort them who are in any trouble, by the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted of God.
- **2 Corinthians 7:4** Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our **tribulation**.
- **Ephesians 3:13** Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my **tribulations** for you, which is your glory.
- **1 Thessalonians 3:4** For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer **tribulation**; even as it came to pass, and ye know.
- **2 Thessalonians 1:4** So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and **tribulations** that ye endure.
- **2 Thessalonians 1:6** Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense **tribulation** to them that trouble you;
- **Revelation 1:9** I, John, your brother and partner in the **tribulation** and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmo.
- **Revelation 2:9** I know your **tribulation** and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.
- **Revelation 2:22** Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great **tribulation**, unless they repent of her works.
- **Revelation 2:10** Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have **tribulation**.

The length of the Tribulation

As seen in the previous pages, the events described in Revelation (backed-up by Daniel) last for **three and a half years**, never seven.

Whatever happens previous to that can be a matter of speculation as to the length of time, because in truth we are not given a timescale for it. Even the "beginning of sorrows" that Jesus mentioned (identical to the first six seals) are not set into any kind of timeframe in scripture but are clearly a big and lengthy build-up to the appearance of the "Man of Lawlessness."

We are told specifically that the Beast is given authority only for three and a half years! (Rev 13:5) Daniel refers to the time of trouble as "a time, times, and half a time", a biblical way of saying three and one half years. ([Daniel 7:25](#)). Again in [Daniel 12:7](#), the angel speaking with Daniel declares that it will be "a time, times, and half a time" before the persecutions stop and everything comes to an end.

It's not the Tribulation

Furthermore, not EVEN that three and a half years is described as "The Tribulation", because in Revelation we are also told specifically that the Great Multitude, the saved of all nations who appear in Heaven after Seal Six have "**come out of the great tribulation**" – and if this is the one Jesus spoke about (Matt 24:9), then the "cutting short" has already happened, and the events of the WRATH to come are ready to take place. (See Revelation 6:17)

From that verse we learn that the Great Day of His WRATH is due to begin when the elect, the saints of God, the believers are gathered out. Just as Jesus prophesied. Those left behind cry out in fear, *"the great day of his wrath come, and who is able to withstand it?"*

IMMEDIATELY after this we see the Firstfruits of Israel sealed and the Great Multitude suddenly appear in Heaven, having come out of the Great Tribulation. Is that speculation? NO, we have it on the authority of one of the 24 Elders in Heaven, who tells John exactly that. (Rev 7:14)

*"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, Who are these who are arrayed in white robes? and from where did they come? And I said unto him, Sir, you know. And he said to me, **These are they who came out of the great tribulation**, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb".*

Just as Jesus said, this miraculous rescue happens "immediately after the tribulation" showing that what follows is the WRATH of God, not "The Tribulation".

Tribulation Correctly Interpreted

TRIBULATION in the bible NEVER refers to the Day of Wrath or reign of the Antichrist. The word THLIPSIS in Greek means *"persecution, affliction, distress"* and literally means PRESSURE, being hemmed in, rubbed up the wrong way, in dire straits, especially **internal pressure** that causes someone to feel they have no options.

Strong's concordance says, 2347 thlipsis ("compression, tribulation") carries the challenge of coping with the internal pressure of a tribulation, especially when feeling there is "no way of escape" ("hemmed in"). **By contrast**, 4730 (stenoxōría) focuses on the **external** pressure exerted by circumstances. See that? EXTERNAL pressures are a different Greek word.

The Endtimes Tribulation for Christians

No doubt the Christian's experience of "tribulation", which Jesus says will indeed be GREAT, is brought about by a situation so very dangerous to faith, and so very trying to all that is biblically true, that there almost seems no way to escape without denying the Lord.

THAT is the great danger of the latter-day for the Church! The very first warning Jesus gave to his followers, regarding that time, was the danger of DECEPTION, followed by many grave warnings not to become complacent, unready, lax and unheeding, nor to give way to the temptation to deny the Lord under pressure. Because in that day, "whoever seeks to save his life will lose it".

These pressures (falling away, denying the Lord and so on) are problems of the Church, not so much Israel. And Jesus takes time to explain it to the questioning disciples simply because they ARE the "Church"!

DO WE NEED TO ENDURE, AS CHRISTIANS?

The NTEB article was absolutely definite that the Church won't have to endure! It says, "*There is no Christian in our dispensation of the Age of Grace that needs to endure until the end to be saved*" (Thus, they argue, it's only ISRAEL who need to endure to the End.)

It continues, "*We are saved according to Ephesians 2:8,9, and kept saved according to Ephesians 1:13,14. There is nothing in Paul's teachings that tell us to "endure" for salvation. Paul taught and preached the doctrine of Eternal Security.*"

I don't know how they can believe that and at the same time show copious examples of false teachers and false prophets lying to and deceiving the Church today. Is it assumed that they will change tack and repent before the end, or else be taken up regardless (or perhaps none of them are truly saved in the first place?) From where did this great apostasy arise in the first place, if not from deceived Christians within the churches?

And what about the thousands, if not millions, who are drawn into false teachings, even accepting anointings and impartations, receiving in effect "another spirit" and "another christ"?

2 Cor 11: 1-4 I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his cunning, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that comes preaches another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if you **receive another spirit, which you have not received, or another gospel**, which you have not accepted, you might well bear with him.

Galatians 1:6-9 I marvel that you are so soon **removed from him that called you** into the grace of Christ to another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. **8**But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, **if any man preach any other gospel to you than that you have received, let him be accursed.**

Some have been saved, but still need to "make their calling and election sure" by exercising perseverance, patience and endurance, so they do not fall into the snare of false teaching in the last days. I see no reason to doubt the bible when it warns that **falling away is possible** and ENDURANCE is needed, with vigilance and diligence, to avoid the fate of those who overthrow the faith they once had:

Hebrews 6:4-15 For it is **impossible** for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, **if they shall fall away**, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinks in the rain that comes often upon it, and brings forth plants fit for them by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God, but that which bears thorns and briars is worthless, and is near unto cursing; **whose end is to be burned.** (11) And we desire that every one of you do **show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.** that you be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For Abraham...**after he had patiently endured**, he obtained the promise.

Here we see a stern call to remain in the true faith, holding onto the promises, avoid falling away, and be diligent and patient, enduring to the End. How could it be any clearer than this?

Can Christians Fall Away?

It seems obvious to me that Christians CAN fall away from the faith, for how can anyone fall away from something they never held to in the first place? (See for example Jn 15:1-6 branches that are cut out, Revelation 3:16 believers that are vomited out of the Body of Christ, and 1 Ti 5:8 addressed to Christians.)

But this is not about "once-saved-always-saved" which is an unbiblical doctrine that needs a whole new article, at another time. This is about never having to "endure" to "make our call and election sure" in the endtimes.

Personally I wish Eternal Security WAS a biblical concept. Having once received the Lord by faith, I could comfortably sit back on the pew and ease myself through all the trials of today without worrying that I'll have to withstand any of that "pressure" I spoke of above. Since it would be absolutely impossible for me ever to fall away from the truth, I could disregard the warnings of Jesus not to be deceived, and see myself in a safe zone right up to the Rapture.

In other words, why would I need to "endure"? I would be kept from all danger!

I wish also that could be said of the believers of all the centuries who went through countless torments, tortures, banishments, and martyrdoms for the Name of Jesus and yet obeyed the command to "stand firm" and to "fight the good fight" and "hold onto your crown" until the End.

James 1:12 Blessed is the man that endures trial: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love him.

But many didn't make it. Many DID fall away and wandered into heresies and cults instead. Or else, from where do Christian cults and heretical groups come from? They were once part of the Body, but **departed from the truth.** (Hebrews 3:12).

They all escaped from the world and its sins (Egypt); they all were all once baptised in the water and the Spirit (the Sea and the Cloud of the Exodus) but nonetheless – like most of Israel in the wilderness – they turned back to idols and suffered banishment from the Promised Land. (Read 1 Corinthians chapter 10).

They disqualified themselves from the prize at the end of the race, because those who run that race have to "*compete according to the rules*" according to 2 Timothy 2:5. The bible is full of examples of those who once believed, but who fell away because they did not CONTINUE in belief but started to believe in something or someone else. Or, they went back to the world and its wickedness as a choice, refusing to repent.

Hebrews 10:26-29 For if we sin wilfully after we have **received the knowledge of the truth**, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant, **with which he was sanctified**, an unholy thing, and has done insult unto the Spirit of grace?

It would be very difficult to deny that this Hebrews passage is addressed to the Church, warning Christians that they need to endure, to continue in faith, because of the punishment for denying the Lord, falling away into various heresies and unbiblical cults, or else going back to the world and its wickedness. Notice that the people addressed above were "sanctified by the blood" - who else but Christians?

Enduring in the Endtimes Trial

What else is the GREAT APOSTASY of the last days but those who were formerly Christians - albeit weak, worldly and biblically ignorant ones - who either set up heretical ministries or else followed them? These did NOT endure to the end! Hence the warnings of Jesus.

How much **more** needed is the warning when we all come under the intense pressure and trial that is called "tribulation" of the last days, when everyone regardless of status is pushed to the limit. That hard time will come to EVERYONE, Christians included, because we also qualify as "*all those who dwell on the face of the earth*" in the following verses:



Luke 21:34-36 And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be weighed down with carousing, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always, that you may be **accounted worthy to escape all these things** that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

And THAT is why Paul goes on to say that "*you (Christians) HAVE NEED OF ENDURANCE, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.*" (Heb 10:36)

Verse 39 of that chapter of Hebrews refers to those who, after having received the knowledge of the truth and having fallen away from it are those who "*draw back, to perdition*" referring again to the Israelites who came out of Egypt and yet returned to worship of idols.

On the other hand, we faithful are those who "*believe to the saving of the soul*". These two are contrasted as two possible courses that Christians can take! How MUCH then – especially in a time of even greater deception and persecution – do we need to endure in order to make it through without denying the Lord, turning away from the truth, or falling into one of the many heresies that are so powerful and attractive today!

Jesus called for endurance to the end, knowing that trials and tribulation would inevitably come.

It is not his will that any be lost, but sadly, MANY will chose another faith system, another christ at the end. They will have all the appearance of the Church without actually knowing God or his will. (Matthew 7:22)

Romans 2:1-11 Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whosoever you are that judge: for in what you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you that judge do the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them who commit such things. And do you think, O man, that judge them who do such things, and do the same, that you shall escape the judgment of God? Or despise you the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But according to your hardness and unrepentant heart treasure up unto yourself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who **by patient continuance in well doing** seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that does evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that works good, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek: For there is no respect of persons with God.

So, whatever your belief in eternal security, it seems plain that when Jesus spoke of the need for enduring, staying faithful, persevering and in patience remaining true to God unto the End, he was NOT talking to national Israel (who at the time he spoke and for centuries afterward denied the Messiah and hated the Church).

He intended his warnings and encouragement to apply to ALL who would undergo the fierce trials of the last days, as Paul said, *"to the Jew first and also to the Greek, for there is no respect of persons with God."*

ARE THERE DISTINCT AND ABSOLUTE DISPENSATIONS OF HISTORY?

The hard and fast belief in a secret pre-trib Rapture, the total end of all faith-based salvation, the removal of the Holy Spirit, and the resumption of temple sacrifices and Law comes in most instances from a belief in Dispensationalism.

That is the stance of NTEB, and that is how they end up removing the Matthew 24 scriptures from Christians. But Matthew 24 is not the only example. In many cases, Dispensationalists teach that large parts of the bible are NOT for the Church, but exclusively for Israel. Matthew 24 is just one example.

The Bible is Not For You

As an example of Dispensationalists, NETB say *"Many Christians are shocked when you tell them that Matthew, Mark and Luke were not written about or for the Christian Church from a doctrinal perspective. It was written to Jews..."*

Shocked indeed, to discover that the bible isn't really for us after all, but after we - the Church - have gone we are to understand that Jews and blasphemers will be reading the bible they despised to find out what God is going to do to THEM. (Yeah. Okay)

Click on the thumbnail of this image to see the entire chart listing which books are NOT for us but for Israel, according to this teaching. You will see that only a small portion of the bible is actually for you!



CLICK TO SEE FULL IMAGE [Credit to Columbia River Bible Fellowship]

- **One has to wonder** why Jesus bothered to have his words written down at all, if most of what he said wasn't for the believers, but for Israel who for many centuries would reject everything about Him.
- **One has to wonder** why Jesus in Person commanded that seven letters be written to the CHURCHES and then commanded that John (a Christian) write down a long involved prophecy about His coming that would – according to dispensationalism – be of no relevance to any of them!
- **One has to wonder** what kind of salvation is left to the Jews after the Holy Spirit has disappeared, the mission of the Church has ended, all believers have gone, and there is nobody to turn to apart from apostates.

Where did this Teaching arise?

Dispensationalism is a fairly recent invention that was unheard-of throughout all of the history of the Church.

Thomas Ice, a supporter of the system says, *"The first systematic expression of dispensationalism was formulated by J. N. Darby sometime during the late 1820s and 1830s in the British Isles."* And *"John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) is unquestionably the father of modern dispensationalism."* ([Source](#))

- Suggested reading: [The Heresy of Dispensationalism](#)
- Book by A. Pink: [A Refutation of Dispensationalism](#)
- Book review of ["Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth"](#)

Major Problems

The problem with Dispensationalism is that it divides completely and absolutely between "the Church" and "Israel" to the extent that there can be no interaction between the two. No prophecy of Israel can ever apply to believers and vice versa.

In Dispensationalism, no application of the Law can ever apply to the Church dispensation, nor can any application of grace be applied to Israel. The NEW Covenant is therefore a complete departure from everything God said to Israel over the ages, and cannot be a development of it nor a fulfilment of it.



Thus, the church becomes a secret entity unknown to everyone before Pentecost, breaking out of history like an alien object, springing up surprisingly like Jack out of his Box, rather like Athena springing forth fully-formed out of the head of Zeus, in a full suit of armour!

Because apparently, nobody knew about it before it suddenly arrived, not even Jesus it seems, for it is said that he could not have been referring to Christians in Matthew 24.

According to this theory, no prophecy applicable to Christians can be found in the Old Testament. (Nor indeed in any of the New Testament books intended for Israel only.)

This leads to a troublesome division of the bible text where all the bad stuff, like punishment, persecution and judgement, and what they say is the seven years of "tribulation" falls upon Israel while the good ole Church gets all the forgiveness, grace, mercy and deliverance. Nice!

As comforting as that may be, it's not biblical.

It leads to denying most of the gospel text, as it is "for Israel", and doing the same with large chunks of the epistles (such as James and Peter) and of course anything relating to the endtimes like Revelation. That (apparently) only exists in the bible to tell us what horrors await the nation of Israel after we are safe and sound in Heaven.

- Did the Holy Spirit really leave us a bible that is mostly for somebody else, a nation that for now at least has rejected the Messiah that it speaks of?
- Does salvation by grace, through the blood of Jesus, only belong to the Church, never Israel?
- Do all the warnings and rebukes belong to Israel, while all the praises and glories belong to the Church, who can never displease God nor fall away from the truth?

Quite the opposite, looking around the world today, where not only is persecution and testing coming down the road towards us faster and faster, but where a great majority of the Western churches and ministries are already preaching heresy and chasing after supernatural myths.

This could very well be the "great falling away" the APOSTASY spoken of by Paul in Thessalonians, where he gives yet another timeline of the end, and the rapture, saying "*Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come the falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition*". (2 Thess 2:3)

Warnings That Are Ignored

Jesus in Matthew 24 took the time and trouble to spell out in detail what conditions would be like immediately before his return, and he added a number of warnings about deception and heedlessness.

He also, in parable form, spoke about selfish, loveless, lazy and judgemental Christians who would be punished, even if they did make it through the last days. No doubt it is comforting to avoid these warnings by saying they are only for Israel, and not applicable to the Church - but is that true? I believe not.

📖 *Useful Reading: ["The Five Warnings to Christians in Matthew 24-25"](#)*

As well as telling us the danger of being deceived and dragged into the great apostasy to come, Jesus warned of being taken by surprise because of the unexpected nature of the Rapture. One of the biggest dangers of ignoring Matthew 24 is just that, failing to understand the circumstances and signs of his Coming!

REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY

It is a great shame that some groups chose to label those who do NOT hold to Dispensationalism, and who DO see the Church in Matthew 24 as thereby holding to "replacement theology".

This is entirely wrong and an unwarranted slur on some fine Christians who happen not to agree with the pre-trib rapture.

What is Replacement Theology?

This is the kind of belief held by the Roman Catholic churches and Liberal, or Reformed denominations many of whom historically held to the beliefs of Luther who hated the Jews and wrote them out of scripture. ([See Here for Instance](#))

📖 *Useful Reading: ["What Is Replacement Theology?"](#)*

They believe the Jews are no longer God's chosen people, having rejected and crucified their Saviour, and therefore God does not have future plans for the nation of Israel. (This led to some pogroms and persecutions of the Jews in many nations.)

Replacement theology teaches that the church HAS REPLACED Israel entirely. Thus the promises made to Israel in the Bible are being fulfilled in the Christian Church, not in Israel. Likewise, the prophecies in Scripture concerning the blessing and restoration of Israel to the Promised Land, and Israel's future restoration, are "spiritualized" or "allegorized" into promises of God's blessing for the Church.

I Do Not Hold To Replacementism

As a lover of Israel, and one who firmly believes in the prophecies for Israel, I resent the implication that because I'm not pre-trib nor am I dispensationalist, then I must hold to Replacement Theology.

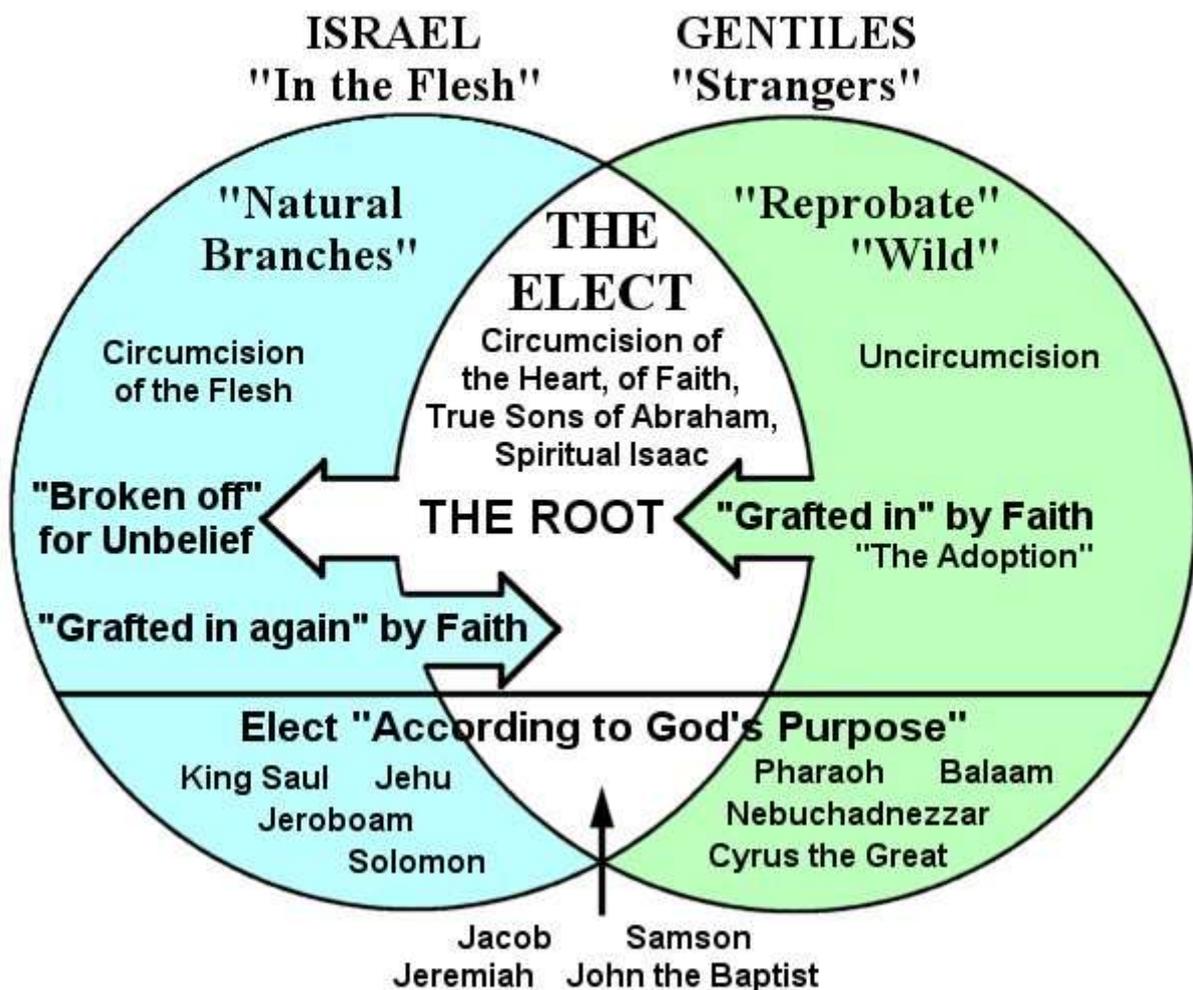
Who is actually closer to Replacementism, the Dispensationalist who denies Israel a part in the blood sacrifice of Jesus and condemns her to a whole seven years of horrific Tribulation and Final Judgement, or the bible-believer who supports Israel's return to the land as a prophetic fulfilment of the scriptures in our day?

I agree that there IS a measure of distinction in the prophetic future of believers and Israel, but it is not a division of covenants, but a division of those who trust in faith to the Saviour and those who do not. For we are all ONE in Christ, Jew and Gentile.

From [this page](#) comes the chart that displays what I believe to be biblical truth, instead of replacementism OR dispensationalism. (Credit goes to Paul A. Hughes.)

Conceptual Diagram of God's Elect

According to Concepts Expressed by the Apostle Paul



SUMMARY

If you have followed through all these pages - first, well done! I realise it was a bit of a Marathon and hard work to understand all the different concepts.

But the bottom line is this: Matthew 24 is written as much for the Church today as for Israel in the future (even more so I believe) and contains vital information about the times to come, times into which we are already entering - thus making the message of Jesus very relevant and vital to understand.

I apologise that this whole article is a bit more reactionary than plain explanation, but it does irritate me that so many are being led down a path of complacency, that could end up in deception or worse. That kind of teaching does no good to Christians; it may even be doing them much harm.

In any case, I have no intention of coming against or judging individuals or ministries. It is not my place to judge. All I can do is present what I truly believe is the correct bible interpretation and let God by his Holy Spirit open the minds and hearts of believers to see the truth.

It may well take courage to face up to an interpretation that seems strange, but on the other hand, how sure can you be that what you have read and heard (and adopted) up to now is the right doctrine, IF you do not have the courage to challenge yourself before God, and read the scriptures for yourself, raw and uninterpreted.

I pray that each and every one who reads these pages may be struck by the truth contained therein, be guided away from any error or misrepresentation here, and led to a strong, mature, intelligent and sustainable faith that will ENDURE TO THE END.

So be it, Amen.