

## When Will Believers Be Taken Up (Raptured)

### The Events Culminating this Age

Whilst most believers talk about an end time tribulation and wrath, the common perception is these are one and the same. However, the scriptures show that these are two separate events with very different criteria. One fundamental difference is that the tribulation is borne of man: it is the product of Satan, whereas the wrath is from YHWH. Indeed, the wrath is YHWH's answer to Satan's tribulation. A second difference is all believers will experience the tribulation but not YHWH's wrath. Mashiach explains the tribulation in Matthew chapter 24,

*As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? What is the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?" Yeshua answered them, "Be careful that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Mashiach,' and will lead many astray. You will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you aren't troubled, for all this must happen, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there will be famines, plagues, and earthquakes in various places. But all these things are the beginning of birth pains. Then they will deliver you up to oppression, and will kill you. You will be hated by all of the nations for my name's sake. Then many will stumble, and will deliver up one another, and will hate one another. Many false prophets will arise, and will lead many astray. Because iniquity will be multiplied, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end, the same will be saved. This Good News of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world for a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matt.24:3-14).*

There is a teaching that Matthew 24 is not concerned with Mashiach's return or end time events but refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70AD. However, in verse 22 Mashiach says the event He is referring to will be brought short, that is, it will be ended prematurely and by heavenly intervention, this was not the case in AD70. Furthermore, this teaching disregards two fundamentals. Firstly, Mashiach's comments in Matthew are His response to the disciple's questions, "Tell us, when will these things be? What is the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?" Three questions are asked all concerning the end of time. In Matthew 24 Mashiach is describing the end time tribulation that His followers will suffer which is described in detail in Revelation. This brings us to the second fundamental, insofar as Revelation is concerned the apostle unequivocally states that the information provided relates wholly to the end of days,

*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, like a trumpet*  
(Rev.1:10).

The phrase "Lord's day" appears exclusively in this verse, and it is alleged John was referring to Sunday. However, during the period of John's revelation, there was no established practice of Sunday worship: Sunday worship was not introduced until the fourth century AD, the result of a declaration by the Council of Laodicea in AD363. A further difficulty is allocating a twenty-four-hour period for all that is contained in Revelation. A more logical interpretation compares this term with the expression "the day of the Lord," a phrase frequently found in the Old Testament referring to cataclysmic end-time events and a final judgment—themes paralleling Revelation.

Mashiach makes no mention of YHWH's wrath. Revelation on the other hand goes to great lengths in providing the details and effects of both the tribulation and wrath. In chapter 6 Revelation describes the tribulation via a metaphor of four horsemen. As said, from the information provided we can discern that YHWH's wrath is His answer to the tribulation.

Scripture does not tell us how long the period of tribulation or wrath will be and whilst Revelation contains isolated periods of time, these pertain solely to specific occurrences or activities. However, from what we are told, we can discern both the tribulation and wrath will not be less than three and a half years.

Some attribute Daniel's seventieth week (Dan.9:24-27) to this time, but this is a misconception. Indeed, the whole of Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy was fulfilled with Mashiach's death and resurrection.<sup>1</sup>

## **Tribulation**

The tribulation will be a period of persecution for those who refuse to deny The Father and The Son. It is during the tribulation that the two beasts of Revelation 13 will establish themselves: the first beast being the Antichrist, the second the false Mashiach. Those who refuse will be starved of all life support being unable to buy and sell and where coercion fails execution waits. Without intervention, all who remain steadfast in Mashiach will be killed, these are the martyrs referred to in Revelation chapter 7,

*And one of the elders responded, saying to me, "Who are these dressed in white robes, and where did they come from? And I said to him, "Master, you know." And he said to me, "These are those coming out of the great distress, (tribulation) having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Rev.7:13-14).*

This passage is confirmation that believers will suffer the tribulation and it is to prevent the total annihilation of those who remain steadfast in Mashiach that YHWH brings an end to the tribulation via His wrath,

*And if those days were not shortened no flesh would be saved but for the sake of the elect those days shall be shortened. (Matt.24:22).*

There is a teaching within the Church that its members will not suffer the tribulation but will be gathered (raptured) prior to the tribulation. If true, the question to be asked is who are the elect referred to in the above verse? One theory is this term refers only to Israel who is not raptured because of their rejection of Mashiach. According to this philosophy, at this time the Church will be resident in heaven, or wherever, and Israel are the elect remaining on the earth suffering the tribulation. But there is a problem with this philosophy: because of their rejection of Him, Mashiach told the Jews the kingdom would be taken from them (Matt.21:43). This being the case, why would He subsequently refer to them as the elect. The parable of the tenants (Matt.12) comes to mind, specifically verse 9. Furthermore, in verse 12 above, Mashiach says, "*And because of the increase in lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold*", here Mashiach is referring to the love of Him and the gospel truth. The Jews do not have any love for Mashiach and have no interest in the Gospel message. Besides, Matt.24:9 states that the persecution will be aimed at believers thereby precluding Israel. Then we have the martyrs standing around the heavenly throne described in Rev.6. Revelation is wholly concerning the end times, thus these are the souls of those martyred in the tribulation, which cannot include Israel *per se* because nobody comes to the Father accept

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to the article 'Daniel's 70 Shemitahs' at [www.undertorah.com](http://www.undertorah.com) in End Time Articles

through Mashiach. Finally, it is a probability the Jews will welcome the false Mashiach because he will accept the temple they are proposing to build. (2Thess.2:4). Another argument against them being Mashiach's elect.

Insofar as Mashiach is concerned the elect are those who remain true to Him and this verse leaves us in no doubt that all believers will experience the tribulation as does another of His comments,

*Because iniquity will be multiplied, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end, the same will be saved. (Matt.24:12-13).*

Here Mashiach is warning that the tribulation will be too severe for some to remain faithful. We are told that we will be unable to buy and sell. Consider what this means, being unable to pay the utilities bill: no water, gas or electricity. The tribulation will be our wilderness experience, when we will be wholly reliant on YHWH's provision. It will be a time of testing. Will our faith remain strong when we are unable to provide for ourselves the necessities of life: food, water for washing and cooking, electricity for warmth and light, petrol for the car etc, etc? Only via YHWH's provision will those who remain faithful be able to survive and we can take comfort in the following confirmation by Mashiach,

*Therefore I tell you, don't be anxious for your life: what you will eat, or what you will drink; nor yet for your body, what you will wear. Isn't life more than food, and the body more than clothing? See the birds of the sky, that they don't sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns. Your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you of much more value than they? Which of you, by being anxious, can add one moment to his lifespan? Why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They don't toil, neither do they spin, yet I tell you that even Solomon in all his glory was not dressed like one of these. But if YHWH so clothes the grass of the field, which today exists, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, won't He much more clothe you, you of little faith? Therefore don't be anxious, saying, 'What will we eat?', 'What will we drink?' or, 'With what will we be clothed?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. (Matt.6:25-32).*

YHWH will provide, remember he supported a whole nation for forty years in the wilderness, but He did test them and we should be prepared for similar testing. If there is a lesson from the past it is for us not to grumble or complain whilst in times of trial as did Israel in the wilderness, and to remember YHWH loves us and knows our predicament. The tribulation will be a testing time but as the apostle says it will be a time of prayer, a time for confirming our belief in YHWH,

*But the end of all things is at hand be therefore sober (of the right mind) and watch unto prayer. (1Pet.4:7)*

As tough as it will be we have a Father who will never fail us. The shame of it is, we fail Him.

So, if all believers are going to experience the tribulation when will the gathering described in the scriptures be?

### **The Timing of the Gathering of Believers**

Whilst only two gatherings are mentioned in the scriptures, a study of the information available shows there will probably be several. The two described in the scriptures are in 1Thessalonians and 1Corinthians,

*For this we tell you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of Mashiach, will in no way precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Mashiach himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with YHWH's trumpet. The dead in Yeshua will rise first, then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet Mashiach in the air. So we will be with the Lord forever. (1Thess.4:15-17)*

*Behold, I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must become imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. (1Cor.15:51-53).*

I have put these two passages in reverse order reflecting the correct sequence of these events. The first gathering will occur when YHWH decides to bring the tribulation to its end and immediately before His wrath. Scripture assures us that those who remain faithful in the tribulation will not experience YHWH's wrath,

*"Come, My people, enter your rooms, and shut your doors behind you. Hide yourselves for a while until the wrath has passed\*." (Isa.26:20).*

\*Chapters 25 and 26 of Isaiah pertain to events occurring at the end of this age.

*For in the day of trouble He hides me in His shelter; in His Tabernacle He hides me; on a rock He lifts me up. (Ps.27:5).*

*In the shelter of your presence You will hide them from the plots of man. You will keep them secretly in a dwelling away from the strife of tongues. (Ps.31:20).*

*"Because you kept My command to endure, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, which is to come on the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth." (Rev.3:10)*

As said, what is described constitutes the first gathering (rapture) of believers which coincides with the first resurrection. Mashiach also confirmed that believers will not experience YHWH's wrath,

*He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who disbelieves will be condemned. (Mark 16:16).*

Saved in this verse does not mean salvation. Belief and baptism on their own do not ensure salvation. Jam.2:17 says believe without works is dead. In other words, belief without works is the same as unbelief. *Prima facie* these two statements are contradictory, but scripture is never contradictory so how are we to reconcile what is said. Remember James also says even demons believe (Jam.2:19). For salvation you must have a correct relationship with YHWH and that means obeying all his commands basically living a correct lifestyle. Mashiach is not talking about salvation but referring to escaping the coming wrath. All who have accepted Mashiach will not face YHWH wrath but will be gathered beforehand. This is what Mashiach is saying - all believers will be saved from wrath.

Not only is this first gathering described in 1Thessalonians but also in Rev.20:4b,

*<sup>4b</sup> I saw the souls of those who had been cut off for the testimony of Yeshua Mashiach, and for the Word of Elohim, and such as didn't worship the beast nor his image, and didn't receive the mark in their forehead and in their hand. They lived and reigned with Mashiach for a thousand years.*

This verse is specific to Mashiach's followers and cannot be relating to any other time than the tribulation. Note, the above verse states that the members of this crowd will return to earth and rule with Mashiach. Initially, these souls will reside in She'ol but only throughout the period of wrath until the start of the millennial rule. The millennial rule is the period of Mashiach's earthly physical kingdom, hence there is no mention of a transition from immortality associated with this first gathering. Indeed, in preparation for their return to earth with Mashiach, we are told that these souls will receive new physical bodies from YHWH,

*For I will take you from among the nations and gather you out of all the countries, and will bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your filthiness, and from all your idols. I will also give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit within you. I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes. You will keep my ordinances and do them. (Ezek36:24-27).*

Note the highlights, those living in the Land and ruling with Mashiach will be wholly righteous,

*They won't defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will save them out of all their dwelling places, in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so they will be My people, and I will be their Elohim. (Ezek.37:23).*

Isaiah talks of a 'robe of righteousness which those destined to rule with Mashiach will also receive,

*I will greatly rejoice in Yahweh! My soul will be joyful in my Elohim; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation. He has covered me with the robe of righteousness\*, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. (Isa.61:10).*

\*The robe of righteousness is our wedding dress. This is what is referred to in the parable of the wedding feast (Matt.22:12) where a guest is described as inappropriately dressed, that is, he was unrighteous and did not qualify for Yahweh's robe. Hence, he had no right to be at the marriage ceremony.

Note it is Yahweh's water, Yahweh's Spirit, Yahweh's robe, and Yahweh's Law. Thus, those qualifying for a life in the Land will receive a body incapable of transgression. What we can understand from the above verses is that Yahweh recognises that the body we have today is incapable of achieving the perfection He desires. It is to receive this new body that believers are seen standing under the alter in His throne room, (Rev.6:9, 7:9). What is more, the book of Enoch says these new bodies will have a new longevity,

*Then (when in the Land) shall they greatly rejoice and exult in the Holy One. The sweet odour shall enter into their bones, and they shall live a long life on the earth as your forefathers have lived; neither in their days shall sorrow, distress, trouble and punishment afflict them. (En.24:10).*

It appears that those living in the Land with Mashiach in the millennium will enjoy a longevity as those before the flood. Remember Adam lived over nine hundred years. Enoch does tell us that there will be births and deaths in the millennium - not immortality.

So, this is the destiny for those who will be part of the first gathering that occurs before YHWH pours out His wrath, but what of the second gathering described in 1Corinthians? When does this happen?

The second gathering is of those living in the Land and will occur at the end of the millennium, after the final destruction of Satan and his army described in Revelation,

*And after the thousand years, Satan will be released from his prison, and he will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. They went up over the width of the earth, and surrounded the camp of the saints, and the beloved city. Fire came down out of heaven from God and devoured them. The devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet are also. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Rev.20:7-10).*

This second gathering is simultaneous with a second and final resurrection of the dead (the first resurrection is only of those who have died in Mashiach and accompanied the first gathering of believers) when all will stand in front of Mashiach for judgement,

*The sea gave up the dead who were in it. Death and She'ol gave up the dead who were in them. They were judged, each one according to his works. (Rev.20:13).*

This second gathering and resurrection heralds the convening of Mashiach's court for the final judgment when He separates the sheep from the goats. Mashiach's court will identify all of the righteous who have lived from the time of creation. These will form the fullness of Mashiach's bride thereby enabling His marriage to proceed. His court will also see all the unrighteous who have lived from the time of creation sent to their final destination, being the lake of fire. Mashiach alluded to the second resurrection, its sequence and timing with His parable of the weeds,

*Then Yeshua sent the multitude away, and went into the house. His disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the darnel weeds of the field." He answered them, "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the children of the Kingdom; and the darnel weeds are the children of the evil one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. As therefore the darnel weeds are gathered up and burned with fire; so will it be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send forth his angels, and they will gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend and those who do iniquity, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and the gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear. (Matt.13:36-43).*

It is this second gathering that the apostle is referring to in his epistle to the Corinthian congregation after which Mashiach's bride will achieve its fulness and believers will enjoy immortality,

*Behold, I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must become imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. (1Cor.15:51-53).*

After this second gathering the earth and the heavens as we know them will be destroyed,

*But the day of Yahweh will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise\*, and the elements will be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore since all these things will be destroyed like this, what kind of people ought you to be in holy living and*

*godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of Yahweh, which will cause the burning heavens to be dissolved, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? (2Pet.3:10-12).*

### **Additional Gatherings During the Wrath**

We need to understand the purpose of YHWH's wrath is not to punish but to bring people to repentance and salvation,

*"For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," declares YHWH, "So turn yourselves back (from unrighteousness) and live." (Ezek.18:32).*

*"Turn to Me and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am Elohim and there is none else." (Isa.45:22).*

*"I struck you with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands: yet you still would not turn to Me," says YHWH. (Hag.2:17).*

*YHWH is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (2Pet.3:9).*

Enoch tells us that YHWH will achieve a level of success,

*In the day of trouble, evil shall be heaped upon sinners; but the righteous shall triumph in the name of Yahweh Tzva'ot. Others shall be made to see, that they must repent, and forsake the works of their hands and that glory awaits them not in the presence of Yahweh (not in the Land), yet that by His name they may be saved. Yahweh Tzva'ot will have compassion on them. For great is His mercy, and righteousness is in His judgement and in the presence of His glory; nor in His judgement shall iniquity stand, he who repents not before Him, shall perish. (En.49:2-3).*

Through their repentance these people will be removed from the wrath. It is probable there will be several gatherings as more and more people come to repentance at different phases of the wrath. The gathering of these people will mark the completion of the 'Fullness of the Gentiles' mentioned by the apostle,

*For I do not desire you to be ignorant brothers of this mystery, so that you won't be wise in your own conceits, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, and so all Israel will be saved. Even as it is written, "There will come out of Zion the Deliverer, and he will turn away ungodliness from Jacob. (Rom.11:25-26).*

The fullness of the Gentiles is achieved during the outpouring of Yahweh's wrath specifically before the third Woe. Nothing is provided concerning the treatment of those gathered during the wrath but we can conclude with some conviction, those raptured at this time will also enjoy a life in the millennium but because they never believed they will not qualify for a life in the Land with Mashiach. Instead they will live outside the Land as inferred by Enoch, '*glory awaits them not in the presence of Yahweh.*' Enoch's use of the word glory is a metaphor for returning and experiencing the millennium rather than remaining in She'ol with sinners until the final judgement. We must now consider Israel. Because of unbelief Israel will suffer YHWH's wrath but He assures them that a remnant will be save,

*Awake, sword, against my shepherd, and against the man who is close to me," says Yahweh of hosts. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; and I will turn my hand against the little ones. And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, says Yahweh, two thirds thereof shall be cut off and die; but one third shall be left and I will bring the third part into the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will test them like gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will hear them. I will say, 'This is My people;' and they will say, 'Yahweh is my Elohim.'" (Zech.13:7-9).*

It says this remnant will be refined by fire i.e. wrath. This remnant will also will be gathered during the wrath. Ultimately they will return together with the believers and live in the Land with Mashiach and YHWH's promise to the patriarchs will be fulfilled.

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