

God's Plan For The Future

It is Thursday night on the day before Jesus dies, and He and His disciples have finished their Passover meal. Judas has discovered that Jesus knows what he is going to do. Hurriedly Judas leaves to betray Jesus. That evening Jesus seeks to encourage His disciples to love each other and tells them that He will be leaving them. Peter objects because he wants to be with Christ and claims that he will die for Him. Jesus knows better. Then Jesus assures them that though He is leaving, He will come again—the second coming of Christ. This is part of God's plan for the future.

Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered, "Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you shall follow later." Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down

my life for You." Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a cock shall not crow, until you deny Me three times. Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me . . . I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." John 13:36-14:3 (NASB)

Jesus' first appearance on earth is called His first coming or First Advent. When Jesus said, "I will come again," He was referring to His Second Coming, or Second Advent - which is yet in the future. The disciples may have thought that Jesus' appearance after His resurrection was His second coming. Apparently some thought He was going to establish His kingdom or "The Millennium" at that time. This explains why the disciples asked Jesus when He was going to "restore the kingdom" in Acts 1:6. But Jesus responded by saying it would not happen then, but in the future.

DISCIPLES WOULD DIE FIRST. Jesus' disciples were still

trying to understand the future of the world and their own future. They had not understood Jesus' comment that they would not see His return during their lifetimes. Jesus had said this after a discussion with the Pharisees.



Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst." And He said to the disciples, "The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. Luke 17:20-22 (NASB)

The Apostle Peter understood later in life that Jesus would not return before he died (2 Peter 1:15) nor in the near future (2 Peter 3:3-5).

The Apostle John wrote many years after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension back to heaven (A.D. 90 -100) that Jesus would be coming back. But he did not know when.

Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. 1 John 2:28 (NASB)

Some believe that Jesus returned when Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70. But this is not possible given Jesus' comment in Luke 17:20-22 and the fact that the Apostle John was alive after Jerusalem's destruction. It is important to notice that the book of Revelation was written sometime after A.D. 95.

That means John wrote about the future in the book of Revelation after Jerusalem was destroyed. Revelation tells us that the second coming of Jesus was a future event.

FOUR KINGDOMS IN DANIEL. When is Jesus coming again? In order to answer this question, we must go to the book of Daniel. The prophet Daniel gives us a glimpse of Israel's future when the prophet interprets a dream of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Daniel 2:19-45).

The dream was about a statue which symbolizes the future nations that would control the land occupied by Israel. Daniel prophesies a succession of empires starting with the Babylonian empire. The golden head symbolized Babylon. The silver chest symbolized the Medo-Persian empire. The bronze waist symbolized the Grecian empire. The iron legs symbolized the Roman empire. The iron and clay feet and the stone symbolized a future that arises from the ashes of the Roman empire.

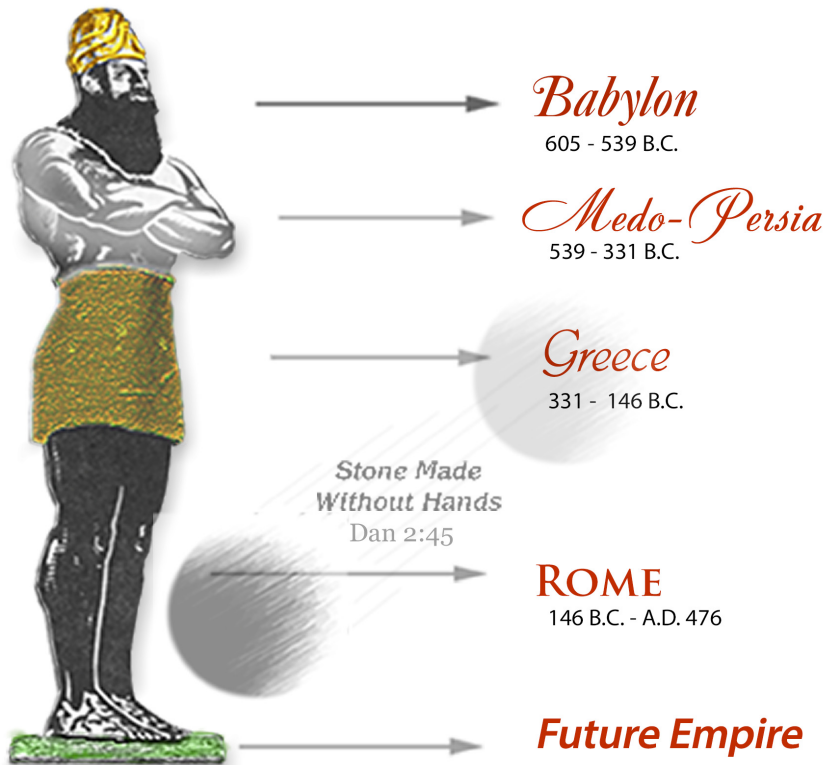
Each kingdom defeated the preceding one. Each new kingdom was a continuation of Gentile control over the nation of Israel. Each empire has controlled the land of Israel, and each was built on the previous empire.

LAST WORLD EMPIRE. The ten toes of the statue are a continuation of the old Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires. It is important to note that the Ottoman Empire occupied

the same territory from about A.D. 1300 to 1923, but it is not represented in the statue since the nation of Israel was destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Romans, and the Jews fled to other nations. The nation of Israel did not exist during the Ottoman Empire. Israel as a nation returned in 1948 when the United Nations allowed the Jews to return after almost 1,900 years. The statue deals only with those empires which controlled the Jews while they were in Canaan.

The Great Statue

Daniel 2:36-45



The ten toes of the feet are symbolic of a future version of an alliance of ten nations that will exist in the same territory previously occupied by the four kingdoms of the statue. Eventually, a one world empire will control all of the world. But it will be a different version of the Roman empire. It will be different than all of the other empires.

STONE HITS THE STATUE'S TOES. Every part of the statue was symbolic of a real physical kingdom or nation. So we should expect the feet and the stone in the prophecy in Daniel 2:19-45 to represent literal, real empires too! When Daniel says that a stone will crush the feet (Daniel 2:34, 45), it symbolizes one kingdom defeating all the previous nations or empires. The statue represents a succession of Gentile nations that have and will rule over Israel. The stone is made without hands; that is, God made the stone.

The message is that He will destroy all Gentile rule over Israel. After the statue is destroyed, the stone will become a great mountain. The mountain symbolizes a new kingdom which fills the whole earth (Daniel 2:35). This timeline is repeated in Daniel 7:1-8, 23-27. It is God's future earthly 1,000 year kingdom (Revelation 20:4-6). Each symbol is a kingdom and the stone is a kingdom ruled by God! It is the kingdom that Jesus was discussing with the disciples (Luke 19:11; Acts 1:6). This kingdom is the one that Christ will rule some day after His second coming.

SIGNS OF THE FUTURE. Now when will the future empire

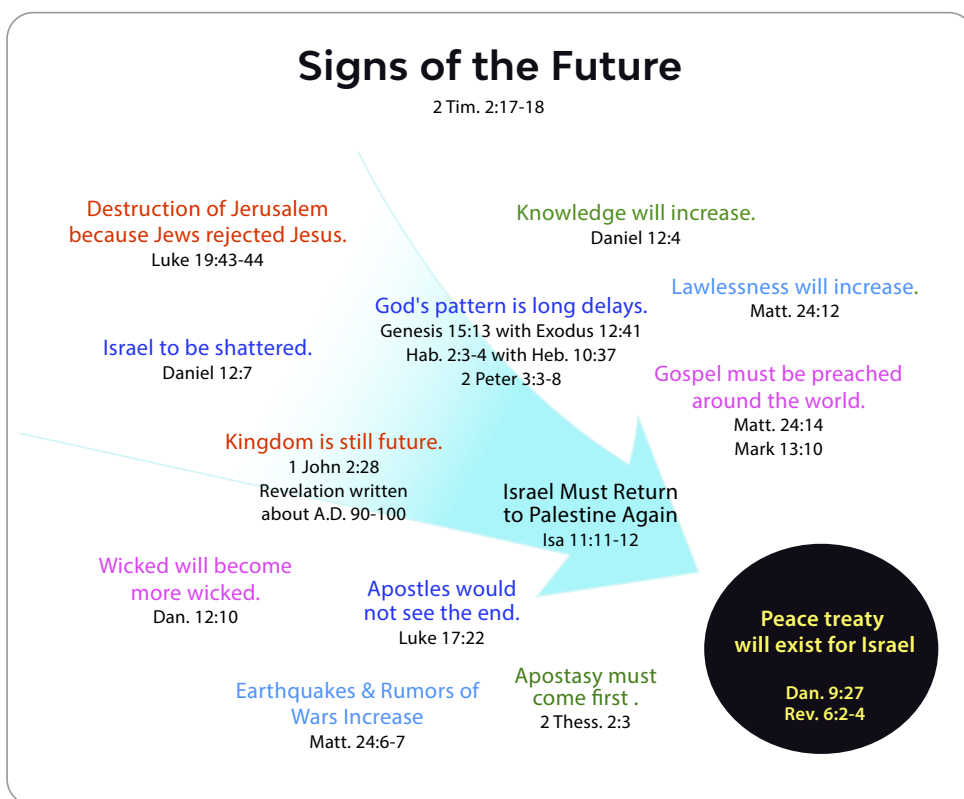
represented by the ten toes come to power in the future? What are the signs of Jesus' return? Jesus told us that lawlessness will increase (Matthew 24:12) and Daniel prophesied that knowledge will increase (Daniel 12:4) in the last days. Another sign is that many will turn away from God in the end. Even though the good news about Jesus Christ has been spreading around the world, many will also reject God. God calls this apostasy (2 Thessalonians 2:3). One very significant sign is the return of the Jews to the land they occupied. This was prophesied in Isaiah 11:11-12 and Ezekiel 37:11-14, and that has already occurred. Multiple passages indicate

that the temple must also exist in Jerusalem in the end-times in order for the abomination of desolation to occur (Daniel 9:25-27; Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

Jesus warned us that wars and earthquakes will increase (Matthew 24:6-7). The signs of these events

are already occurring and increasing. But we do not know if Jesus is coming soon or if He will delay His return for another 100 years. He could come tomorrow or in one hundred years. Christians have been expecting the end of the world for hundreds of years because the Bible tells us that Christ can at any moment.

Jesus also warned that His second coming would happen 3.5 years after the abomination of desolation appears that was prophesied by the prophet Daniel (Matthew 24:15). When Jesus said this, He was referring to the prophet's statement in



Daniel 9:27.

THE TRIBULATION TIMELINE. In Daniel 9:27 it is prophesied that a seven-year period known as Daniel’s 70th week will start with peace for Israel. Daniel also prophesied the abomination of desolation will occur in the middle of the 7 year period. When the abomination of desolation appears, the time of peace will end and plagues, disasters, terror, and war will follow (Revelation 6-19). This means that the first 3.5 years are peaceful and the last 3.5 years are filled with pain, misery, and a horrible war.

Jesus called the last 3.5 years a period of “great tribulation” (Matthew 24:21). As a result, the entire 7 year period is called the Tribulation. In other places in the Bible, each 3.5 year period is also called “time, times and half a time” (Daniel 12:7; Revelation 12:14), 42 months (Revelation 11:1-2) and 1,260 days (Rev. 11:3).

So the tribulation period in the future will start with a peace treaty.

When it occurs, only seven years will be left before Jesus returns to set-up His kingdom on earth - His future earthly 1,000 year kingdom.

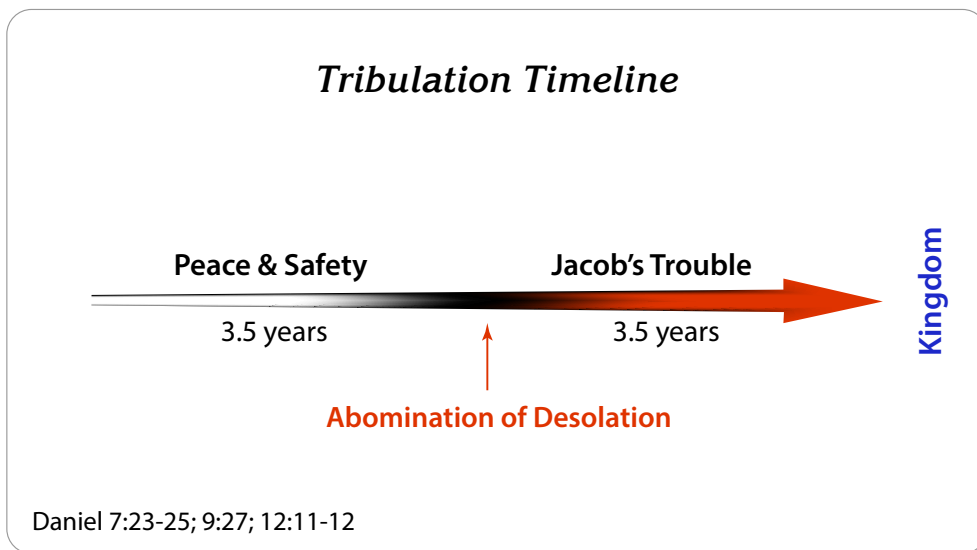
THE ANTICHRIST ARRIVES. Daniel 7:27 and 2 Thessalonians 2:4-5 reveal that the abomination of desolation will occur when the antichrist stops the temple sacrifices, sits down in the temple, and declares himself to be God.

... the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 (NASB)

Revelation 13:14-15 suggests that the antichrist might even erect a statue of himself in the temple. But his reign of terror will only last 3.5 years or time, times, and half a time. Who is this individual? The Bible calls him the antichrist. He is the leader of the empire which is known as the ten toes in Daniel 2:42-43 and the ten horns in Daniel 7:23-25.

ONE WORLD GOVERNMENT. So what do we know about ten toes or the ten horns? Daniel 7:3-7 presents the same information that is recorded in Daniel 2 but uses the symbols of four beasts: lion (Babylon), bear (Media-Persia), leopard (Greece), and a dreadful beast (Rome). The ten horns are ten kings (Daniel. 7:8, 20-24) or ten nations. The ten horns correspond to the ten toes of Daniel 2:41-43. This is the same future

version of the fourth empire that will be an alliance of ten nations that will establish the peace treaty for Israel in the Middle East. When peace occurs in the Middle East, the Tribulation will have started.



The leaders of these ten nations will have a leader who the Bible calls the antichrist or “the prince” in Daniel 9:26-27. The antichrist will establish what will appear to be a lasting peace for Israel, a covenant of peace; but it will only last 3.5 years (Daniel 9:27). This ten nation alliance and the antichrist will rule the world. 2 Thessalonians tells us that he will be a lawless man (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

PEACE FOLLOWED BY DISASTER. As we have already discovered, the peace will be established by the antichrist and the alliance of ten future nations. The peace will end after 3.5 years when the antichrist eliminates three of the ten world leaders of these nations (Daniel 7:7-8; 7:24). Then the antichrist and the global leaders will make war against

the Jews and the followers of Jesus Christ during the last 3.5 years of the Tribulation (Daniel 7:21; Revelation 13:1-10).

The book of Revelation describes the events of the tribulation (Revelation 4-19). The seven seals that Jesus breaks in Revelation 6 provide an overview of God's judgment on a God rejecting world that is willing to follow and worship the antichrist. The last 3.5 years will be a period of terrifying war, famine and death that will end with the great battle of Armageddon. We are told that God will warn and encourage people to believe in Jesus Christ but most people will ignore Him. He will send 144,000 Jewish witnesses who follow Jesus (Revelation 7:4-8; 14:1-5), two supernatural witnesses who speak out for God and perform miracles (Revelation 11:1-14), and seven angels who preach from the sky above (Revelation 15).

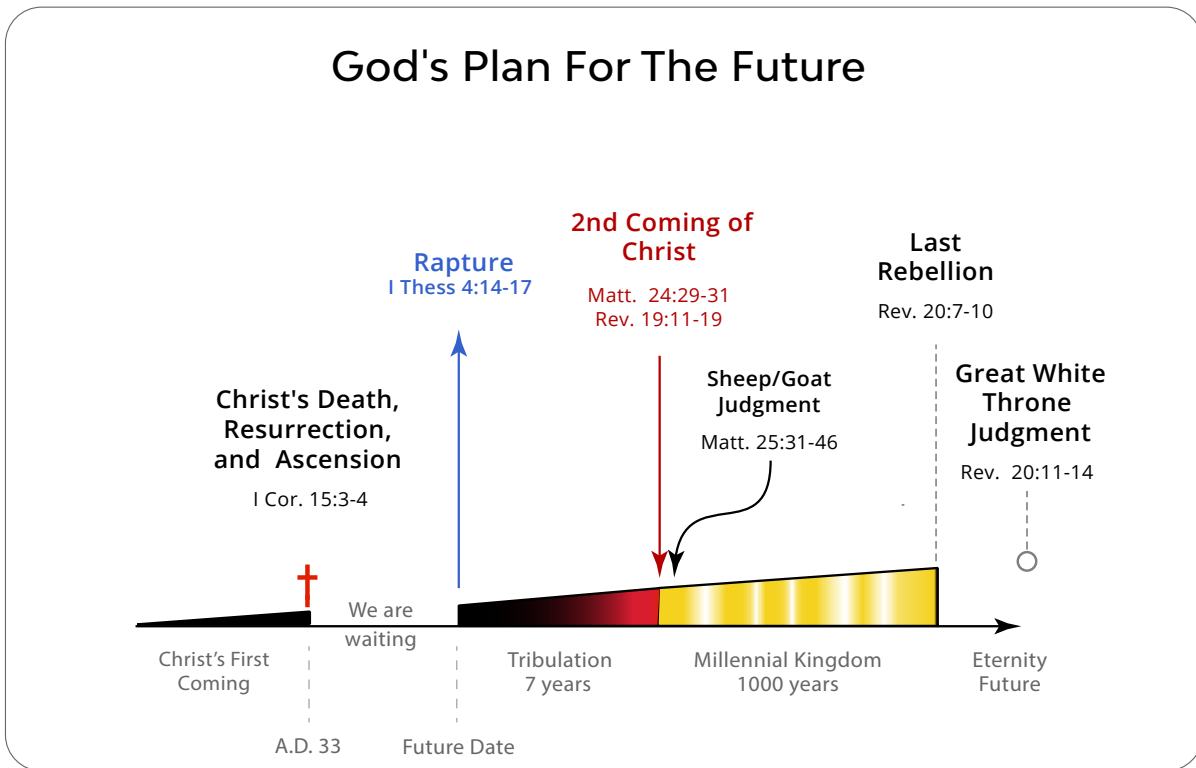
Many land animals, water life, plants, and people will die because the oceans, seas, rivers, and streams are polluted and destroyed. One-third of the trees and grasslands will be burned. A third of the sun, stars, and moon will be affected (Revelation 8). Many people will become sick, suffer, and

many will die (Revelation 8, 16). The city of Babylon will be destroyed and the economy of the world will collapse (Rev. 17-18). Revelation prophesies that people will know this is the hand of God, but they will not forsake their sin and submit to God. Instead they will become more angry and curse Him (Revelation 6:16-17; 9:20-21). That will be a tragic mistake.

The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts. Revelation 9:20-21 (NASB)

In the end, they will engage in war against Israel and God. The antichrist will convince the world leaders that they can defeat Israel and God at a battle called Armageddon (Revelation 19).

SECOND COMING OF CHRIST. Both Daniel and Revelation tell us that Jesus Christ will return and defeat the anti-



christ and the world's armies at the battle of Armageddon. His return is called the second coming of Christ. When the Ancient of Days, Jesus Christ, returns (Daniel 7:11-12; 7:26-27; Revelation 19:11-19), Jesus, the holy angels of heaven, and the believers who have already died will annihilate the armies of the world. The Antichrist and the false prophet will be killed and sent to the Lake of Fire after their defeat (Revelation 19:20-21).

THE KINGDOM. Then the dead who were followers of Jesus Christ will be resurrected at that time and enter into the 1,000 year kingdom that is promised in Acts 1:6-7. The kingdom will be a period of peace on earth. Even the animals will be at peace. The lamb and the wolf will lie together and a child will play with a cobra.

And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. Isaiah 11:6-8 (NASB)

Those who long for a world without guns will rejoice at this event. Psalm 72:8-11 says that the Lord's kingdom or "The Millennium" will cover the earth and the rulers of the nations who are still alive will come and give Him honor.

Isaiah 2 and 11 give us some great details about the kingdom. Psalm 2 and 72 provide others. Isaiah 2:2 says that in the "last days," the mountain of the house of God will be the chief of the mountains. The phrase "mountain" was a common ancient term symbolic of a kingdom (see Daniel 2:35). That appears to be the meaning here. If not, then it implies that Jerusalem will be the most significant place on earth, and the message is the same. Isaiah 2:3 and Psalm 2:6 tell us that the city of Jerusalem is on this mountain and it will be the capital of the kingdom, literally the capital of the world.

The kingdom or "The Millennium" will be what many dream about, but not everyone will be happy. Some will not like holiness or God. Even though the Antichrist will have been defeated, the religious and political influence of the

world's empire will be allowed to continue for an "extension of time" (Dan. 7:12; Rev. 20:1-10). Incredibly, they will try once again to defeat God, but they will utterly fail once more. The world empires, or kingdoms, as represented by Daniel's statue in Daniel 2 and the four beasts in Daniel 7 along with Satan will be defeated finally and forever (see Dan. 7:13-14), and Christ's kingdom will be established - an eternal one (Dan. 7:21-28). Praise the Lord!

FINAL JUDGMENT. Then the final judgment will follow. Those who never repented of their sins, never believed that Jesus was God, and never submitted themselves to God will be sent to an eternity of punishment. That they will be judged for their actions, thoughts, and deeds will be reminders or proof that God's judgment is just. Their actions, thoughts, and deeds will prove that they rejected God! Those who have rejected Jesus and refused to submit will be sent to the Lake of Fire.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John 3:16-18 (NASB)

ETERNITY. After the destruction of the universe, every follower of Jesus Christ will enter into an eternal future called the "new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1). Our future home will be a holy place filled with joy and peace, without pain because the curse of sin will be gone. There will not be any danger from thieves, murderers, or politicians. We will not need to worry about going to work or someone becoming angry with us. Everyone will love one another (Rev. 22:3). We will want to serve and praise God because of all that He has done for us. Heaven will be one great, awesome, glorious, exciting time.

But the greatest and most unbelievable gift will be living with God the Father and God the Son - Jesus Christ - the Lamb, and seeing Him face-to-face (Rev. 22:3-4).

Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to

render to every man according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Revelation 22:12-13 (NASB)

THE RAPTURE. The Bible teaches that not everyone will go through the seven years of tribulation. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 reveals that Christians will be removed from the earth prior to the start of the tribulation. The rapture refers to the removal of Christians from this world by Jesus before the great period of suffering starts. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 describes the rapture in this way,

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 (NASB)

1 Thessalonians 5:4-6 tells us that Christians should not be surprised by the signs of the end times and Jesus' coming to rapture believers; but the world will be surprised. The rapture will come as a thief in the night. Many of those who become followers of Jesus during the tribulation will die for their faith. They will suffer greatly. But many will then believe in Jesus because it will be obvious that God is fighting with the world.

Since the rapture can occur at any moment, are you ready to be raptured? Since only Christians will be raptured, are you ready? Are you a Christian? If you are not a Christian, you will be left behind. The tribulation will be an adventure, but it will be a bad experience. Great events in human government will occur. The antichrist will have great power, but God will also display His far greater power. The suffering will be excruciating as people suffer for following the antichrist and rejecting Christ. So, are you ready for the rapture? Are you a Christian? To discover how to become a Christian, visit "[Searching For God.](#)" If you are concerned that you are not a Christian visit [Are You A Christian? — Looking For Evidence.](#)

Overview: God's Plan For The Future

Future Events	Biblical Passage
Signs of Jesus's coming.	Dan. 12:4, 10; 2 Thess. 2:3-5; Matt. 24:3-14
Birth pangs occur	1 Thess 5:3; Matt. 24:7-8
Rapture - Christians are caught up to Jesus in the air	1 Thess. 4:13-17
Start of tribulation - Man of Sin Revealed	Dan. 9:27
- Peace & safety - Covenant	1 Thess. 5:2-3; Dan. 9:27
- Abomination of Desolation	Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:3-4
- Jacob's Trouble - Great Tribulation	Matt. 24:21; Jer. 30:7
Second Coming - Jesus returns, defeats world's armies	Matt. 24:29-31; 2 Thess. 2:8-12
Anti-Christ and False prophet cast into Lake of Fire	Rev. 19:20-21
Kingdom established - Jesus reigns as King	Dan. 7:21-28; Rev. 19:11-20:6
Satan Released - Last war	Dan. 7:12; Rev. 20:7-10
Final Judgment - Unbelievers sent to Lake of Fire	Dan. 12:1-3; Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15
Heaven - Eternal Life for believers in Jesus	Dan. 12:2-3; Matt. 25:46; Rev. 21-22