

# Understanding the Times: Tribulation, the Church Age, and Christ's Return

Key Theme: God has a plan for history. We are currently living in the **Church Age**, and the next major event is the **return of Jesus Christ**.

## 1. The Central Question: When Is Jesus Coming?

- *"The first thing is... we don't know."*
- Every generation since the early church has expected His return
- Despite doubt and skepticism, **the promise still stands**

📖 Acts 1:11

"This same Jesus... shall so come in like manner..."

### 👉 Application:

Live ready, not guessing dates.

## 2. The Reality of a Coming Tribulation

The Bible clearly teaches there will be a future time of intense trouble:

- 📖 Jeremiah 30:7 — "the time of Jacob's trouble"
- 📖 Matthew 24:21 — "great tribulation"
- 📖 Revelation 7:14 — "came out of great tribulation"

### Key Insight:

- This is a **unique, unmatched time of suffering**
- It is especially connected to **God dealing with Israel**

👉 *"Can we all agree there's going to be a time... the Bible defines as tribulation?"*

### 👉 Application:

Take God's warnings seriously—this is not symbolic language alone.

## 3. Why There Is So Much Debate

There are different views on **when Jesus returns in relation to the tribulation**:

- **Pre-tribulation** – before it begins
- **Mid-tribulation** – halfway through
- **Post-tribulation** – at the end

👉 *"I'm not really concerned that you have a particular position..."*

### Key Truth:

Agreement on timing is secondary—**belief in His return is essential**

### 👉 Application:

Prioritize unity around what Scripture clearly teaches.



## 4. God's Prophetic Timeline (Big Picture)

### A. Daniel's Prophecy (Daniel 9:24–27)

- 70 “weeks” (periods of years) determined for Israel
- 69 fulfilled leading up to Christ's death
- **1 week (7 years) remains** → **future tribulation**

👉 *“Only one week... is left.”*

### B. The Church Age (Where We Are Now)

- Began after Christ's rejection and crucifixion
- Marked by the gospel going to **all nations**

👉 *“We're living in a prophetic pause called the Church Age.”*

### C. What Happened at the Cross

- The temple veil was torn top to bottom → access opened to all
- Salvation is no longer limited to Israel alone

👉 *“Whosoever will may come...”*

### D. What Comes Next

- God will again deal specifically with Israel
- The tribulation will begin
- Christ will ultimately return to rule

#### 👉 **Application:**

Recognize where you are in God's timeline—and respond accordingly.

## 5. Why Israel Still Matters

- The tribulation is called **“Jacob's trouble”** (Israel)
- God is not finished with His people
- History and current events reflect ongoing tension

👉 *“Have you ever wondered why everybody hates the Jewish nation?”*

#### 👉 **Application:**

Trust that God keeps His promises—even across generations.

## 6. The Big Picture in One Sentence

God paused His direct dealings with Israel to extend salvation to the world, but He will resume that plan—and **Jesus is coming again.**

### Final Thought

This part of the message isn't just about charts or timelines—it's about confidence:

- God is in control of history
- His plan is unfolding exactly as promised
- The next event is not uncertain—it is **certain**

👉 *"We don't know exactly when... but we do believe He's coming."*

# The Coming of Christ: Our Certain Hope

**Key Text:** 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 (NKJV)

## 1. We Don't Know When—But We Know He's Coming

- *“We don't know exactly when he's coming, but we do believe he's coming.”*
- Scripture affirms a future **tribulation** (Jeremiah 30; Matthew 24; Revelation 7)
- Debate exists (pre-, mid-, post-trib), but the core truth remains: **Jesus will return**

### 👉 Application:

Focus less on timelines and more on readiness.

## 2. Our Comfort Is Rooted in Truth, Not Feelings

- *“We sorrow, but we don't sorrow like those who have no hope.”*
- Grief is real—but for believers, it is not final
- Death is not the end for the Christian—it is a **doorway**

📖 John 11:35 — “Jesus wept.”

### 👉 Application:

Grieve honestly, but hold tightly to eternal hope.

## 3. Certainty Is Anchored in Christ

- *“Everything rests on that little phrase: ‘If we believe.’”*
- Not religion, not denomination—**faith in Jesus alone**
- Because He lives:
  - Death is not final
  - The grave is temporary
  - Separation is not forever

### 👉 Application:

Ask yourself: *Am I trusting Christ or something else?*

## 4. Truth Is Not Relative—It Is Absolute

- Just like:
  - Gravity always works
  - Math is consistent
  - Moral truths exist
- So are **spiritual truths**

📖 John 3:16–18

- Salvation is offered to all
- Rejection has real consequences

### 👉 Application:

Don't build your own truth—stand on God's.

## 5. The Return of Christ Is Personal and Certain

- *“The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven...”*
- Not an angel—not a substitute—**Jesus Himself**
- Events described:
  1. A **shout**
  2. The **voice of the archangel**
  3. The **trumpet of God**
  4. The **dead in Christ rise first**
  5. Believers are **caught up together**

### 👉 **Application:**

Live with anticipation, not indifference.

## 6. This Hope Should Change How We Live

- *“I’m not living for the moment—I’m living because of the message.”*
- This truth is meant to:
  - Comfort us
  - Strengthen us
  - Motivate us

📖 1 Thessalonians 4:18 — “Comfort one another with these words.”

### 👉 **Application:**

Encourage someone this week with the hope of Christ’s return.

## Final Question

### **What are you holding on to?**

- Your own ideas?
- Your own efforts?
- Or the promise of God?

*“Either it’s true or it’s not... If it is, my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.”*