

The End of the Tribulation
Matthew 24:9—28

The past several weeks have been spent discussing the events that will happen during the Tribulation. Beginning with the signing of a seven-year treaty with the many (Daniel 9:27), the Tribulation builds slowly marked by the appearance of the antichrist. Three and a half years into the Tribulation marks the beginning of the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21) a time of duress and calamity never seen since the beginning of the world. This last week of Daniel's seventy weeks is the full Tribulation period that is yet to be fulfilled.

Many understand that we will not go through God's wrath and therefore place the Rapture just before the outpouring of His wrath. However, quite a few redefine the timing of God's wrath so that the Rapture can be placed as late as the end of the Tribulation. Those who do separate the Tribulation from the wrath of God misapplying verses such as Matthew 24:21 and Revelation 6:17 to make a case that the Rapture will occur in the middle or end of the Tribulation. They read Revelation 6:17 (the great day of His wrath has come) to prove this is when God will pour out His wrath. This is not the beginning of God pouring out His wrath but the great day of Him pouring out His wrath. The labor pains of the Tribulation intensify and His wrath climaxes at the Second Coming even though the entire Tribulation is about God's wrath.

To counter such doctrines it is necessary to understand how Daniel's 70th week is all about God's wrath on Israel and on the Gentile nations. The real indication of this wrath is displayed by Jesus' posture. When He ascended into heaven He was seated at the right hand of God (Luke 22:69; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1). He was to remain in that seated position until the Father makes His enemies His footstool (Psalm 110:1). This will happen during the Tribulation When Christ arises in His anger and wrath (Psalm 7:6).

Stephen saw Jesus standing up at a very specific time. Israel had rejected the call to come into the Kingdom by the Father through John the Baptist when Israel allowed him to be put to death (John 1:6; Matthew 14:6—12; 3:1—2). They then rejected the call to come into the Kingdom by the Son when they crucified Him (Matthew 4:17; 27:35). Finally, they rejected the Holy Spirit's call to come into the Kingdom through Stephan by stoning him (Acts 7:54—60). It was at this point that we see Jesus standing, not to receive Stephen into heaven, but to finish out Daniel's 70th week in fulfillment of Psalm 110:1. When the Second Person of the Trinity stands up it is to pour out His wrath (Psalm 3:7; 82:8; Zephaniah 3:8). He did this at the beginning of Daniel's 70th week making the entire Tribulation period the focus of His wrath.

Another passage that confirms that the Lord's wrath will come upon Israel early into the Tribulation is Ezekiel 22:17—22. Here God will gather Israel into Jerusalem in His anger and wrath (verse 20). This will happen early into the Tribulation when they are living in a relatively peaceful time after the Daniel 9:27 treaty is signed. They will experience His full wrath beginning at the midpoint of the Tribulation.

Great tribulation (verses 21—28)

The seven-year Tribulation is divided up into two parts. The first part probably won't be so bad with Israel feeling more secure than she has in many years because of a treaty with the many (Daniel 9:27) and with the reinstatement of the sacrificial system when the temple is rebuilt. Accepting the antichrist as their Messiah will give them a false sense of security. This is why Jesus warns the Disciples that there will be false Christs and false prophets that will rise to power by performing signs and wonders. Many will be deceived by these miracles but the "chosen ones" will not be deceived. These chosen ones are the Little Flock of believers that have fled to the mountains when they see the Abomination of Desolation. They need to flee because it is right after this that the armies of the antichrist swoop down onto Israel breaking the covenant that was made at the beginning of the Tribulation (Luke 21:21—22).

Luke 21:24 adds that this demonic-led army will besiege Jerusalem until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. I believe that this period of time is marked by Israel losing control of Jerusalem. Once Israel gains control of the city of Jerusalem this time of the Gentiles will have been completed. This will happen at the

battle of Armageddon when Christ crushes Israel's enemies. Daniel 11 enumerates all the battles that will happen throughout the Tribulation ending with this great battle that signals the end of the Tribulation.

Intensity of the Tribulation

Scripture makes it clear that the Tribulation will be the most horrific event in mankind's history surpassing even the flood that killed every single person except eight (Luke 17:27). The flood was God's wrath being poured out on a wicked generation. In His grace He provided a safe haven to anyone who obeyed Him and got into the ark but only Noah's family responded. The Tribulation will be worse than even the flood.

If the Tribulation period were not shortened, everyone would be destroyed (Matthew 24:22). This is one indication that the destruction is worldwide and not just a local phenomenon. There are many who interpret this to mean that the Tribulation will be shorter than seven years. However, Daniel 9:27; 12:11; Revelation 11:2 and 13:5 make it clear that it will be a seven-year event. Also, the Greek word for shortened in Matthew 24:22 is in the aorist tense meaning it was something decided in the past. In other words, God acted to reduce the number of days of the Tribulation in times past.

Many speculate that the Tribulation was to be an additional 3.5 years long making it a total of 10.5 years. This has some merit if you observe that the feast days of Israel include approximately 10 days from the Feast of Trumpets, or Rosh Hashanah (that I believe signals the beginning of the Tribulation, not the Rapture) to the Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur (representing the Second Coming). This 10-day period represents the Tribulation. If each day represents a year then the Tribulation would be 10-years long and thus was made one-third shorter than it would have been. Interestingly, there is a possible confirmation of this proposition in Zechariah 13:8. Here we are told that two-thirds of Israel will be cut off while only one-third will live through the Tribulation. If the Tribulation were to last one-third longer than it seems that the last surviving one-third would also die.

Just like lightning (verses 25—27; Luke 17:22—24)

Jesus warns the Disciples to be discerning as they are watching for His return at the Second Coming. They will hear many reports of people who claim to be the Messiah but the true Messiah will come quickly, like a flash of lightning. Since verse 27 clearly compares His coming as a lightning bolt that flashes from east to west, many people assume this means that Christ will come from east of Jerusalem to the west, entering the eastern gate. A parallel passage in Luke 17:24 shows the intended meaning is about how quickly Christ will come and not about what direction He will be coming from. The Second Coming is compared to the days of Noah when people were living their lives with no clue that catastrophe was about to come upon them. They should know that Christ is soon to come but will ignore the signs preceding His return.

Even the Little Flock of believers will feel that God is far away during the Tribulation because God will be hiding His face from Israel (Deuteronomy 31:17—18; Isaiah 54:8). Many of the Psalms are a picture of the believing remnant going through the Tribulation with David pictured as the Little Flock. When David cries out to God not to hide His face from him (13:1; 27:9; 69:17; 102:2; 143:7) he is doing what the believers will be doing in the Tribulation.

Another picture is given to us in Matthew 14:22—33 when Jesus sent the Disciples across the Sea of Galilee while He stayed on a hill overlooking the sea to pray. The boat was being battered by the tempest and the Disciples were straining to get to the other side but Jesus was nowhere to be seen. Early the next morning while it was still dark Jesus comes walking to them on the water. John reports that when He got into the boat they found themselves at their destination. What a beautiful picture of the little flock during the turbulence of the Tribulation. Once Jesus Christ appears they are ushered to their final destination, the Millennial Kingdom.

For previous notes and additional mid-Acts materials please visit www.MidActsTruths.com