

After the Tribulation
Matthew 24:29—31

With the end of the seven-year Tribulation coming to a close it is usually thought that there is an immediate setting up of the Kingdom with the Second Coming of Christ. His Second Coming usually coincides with the instant destruction of Israel's enemies at the battle of Armageddon and Christ then taking His rightful throne. However, there are verses that indicate these things won't happen immediately in succession but that there will be a number of weeks between some of these events. Daniel 12 gives insight into the timing of events directly after the Tribulation.

30 and 45 days (Daniel 12:11—12)

Daniel cryptically gives two sets of days after the daily sacrifice is taken away at the Abomination of Desolation. This will happen midpoint in the Tribulation when the antichrist comes into the temple and desecrates it breaking a covenant that was made with Israel 3.5 years earlier. The first number given is 1,290 days and the second is 1,335 days. We know that the last half of the Tribulation will last 3.5 years from Revelation 12:6 where we find that Israel would be protected by God for 1,260 days counting from the middle of the Tribulation. This is confirmed by Revelation 11:2 and 13:5 where we find out that the holy city will be under siege by the Gentiles for 42 months and that the antichrist will be actively blaspheming for 42 months (Daniel 7:25; 12:7 time, times and half a time). Prophetic passages use 360 days in a year.

The difference between 1,260 days and 1,290 days is 30 days while the difference between 1,260 days and 1,335 days is 75 days. This means there will be a special event happening 30 days after the end of the Tribulation and another special event 45 days after that. If these verses of Daniel 12 are juxtapositioned with Matthew 24:29—31 we can see a possible connection between these two passages. Right after the Tribulation there will be many signs in the heavens including the sun being darkened and the moon turning to blood. The sign of the Son of Man appearing in the sky will follow these signs. Christ will then send out His angels to gather up His elect from the whole world. If this expands on Daniel 12:11—12 then 30 days after the end of the Tribulation Christ will come back and 45 days after that believers (wheat) will be gathered and unbelievers (tares) will be "uprooted" and cast into hell after the Great White Throne judgment (Matthew 13:30, 39; Revelation 14:14—20).

I believe this view is supported by the parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22. Here we find a man who came into the wedding feast but was not clothed in proper wedding cloths. This will happen when the Millennial Kingdom is set up after the Tribulation. There will be unbelievers who are watching Christ come into power and destroy the armies surrounding Jerusalem. They will be in Jerusalem right at the beginning of the Marriage Supper of the lamb. They are they ones who will be pulled out of this wedding because they are clothed with their own self-righteousness and not Christ's righteousness and are therefore cast into hell.

As in the days of Noah

Having described the events after the Tribulation, Matthew fills in some details concerning what will happen to believers and unbelievers. Matthew 24:36—41 explains that the Second Coming will be just like in the days of Noah where people will be living their lives with no thought of their soon-to-come doom. There will be no excuse to not know what is coming because God gave them many signs to watch for and those who read the signs would know when the Son was coming. Those in Noah's day also had no excuse not to know that God's judgment was approaching since Noah was preaching repentance for 120 years. Those who refused to believe God were taken off the earth while those who heeded God's warning stayed.

Those going through the Tribulation will similarly have no excuse for not heeding the warning of impending judgment since the Gospel will have reached the whole world by the end of the Tribulation (Matthew

24:14). Those who repent will be left on this earth and brought into the Millennial Kingdom while those who ignore the warning signs will be taken to eternal doom.

Matthew describes two great gatherings in the end times. One tells of the angels being sent out with a great trumpet and will gather His elect from the world (Matthew 24:31). The second great gathering is mentioned in Matthew 13:41 where the angels are sent out to gather all those who are stumbling blocks and commit lawlessness. These are termed the wheat and the tares in the parable of the sower in Matthew 13.

This passage proves that there is a difference between the Rapture and the Second Coming. The Rapture takes the righteous while the Second Coming removes the unrighteous. This section of Scripture is almost always identified as showing the Church being caught up into heaven because most people don't see a true division between God's plan for Israel and His plan for the Church, the Body of Christ. If they see no difference then the Rapture and Second Coming must become the same event.

All Israel will be saved

I have thought (and taught) for a long time that all those alive at the end of the Tribulation will believe as soon as Christ appears at His Second Coming. I also understood that this event marked the end of the Tribulation. If the supposition in the section toward the top is true then the Second Coming would actually take place some 30 days after the end of the seven-year Tribulation and 45 days after that there would be unbelieving Jews who are then thrown into the Lake of Fire.

Paul says that all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:26) and this will happen after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in which I believe will be at the Rapture (not to be confused with the times of the Gentiles in Luke 21:24). It is after this that Israel's partial hardening will be lifted and they will no longer be partially blind to spiritual things. When Christ comes in His glory Israel will look on Him whom they pierced and the tribes of the earth (Israel) will mourn over Him (Revelation 1:7). From this it appears that when they see Christ coming down from heaven that they who are remaining will realize what they have done and come to see Him as their Messiah. Therefore, all Israel will believe.

However, Zechariah 12:10 gives a little more perspective on the order of events. Israel will first be given the Spirit of grace and supplication so that they will look on the One they pierced. In other words, God pours out His spirit on believing Israel (Ezekiel 37:14; 29:25—29) so that they will mourn over what they did to their Messiah. This means those who are not believers will be gathered up and cast out of the Kingdom just before the Marriage Feast of the Lamb and then God will pour out His spirit on Israel. It is only then that He will have a bride who is pure and ready to become wedded to the Lamb (see Revelation 19:7—9).

Events surrounding the Second Coming

The Old Testament spells out a number of things that will happen around the Second Coming. There will be a great earthquake, the sun, moon and stars will be affected, the sky will split open, mountains will collapse and islands will disappear. I believe Ezekiel 38:19—23 pictures what will happen when Christ returns because verse 20 clearly states that this will happen at his presence and verse 23 says this is how God will magnify Himself and make Himself know to the world. When the Lord alights on the Mount of Olives, the mountain will split from east to west through Jerusalem. It seems that this will be felt worldwide when the whole earth will be quaking and mountains will be leveled. It may also be at this time that Jerusalem will be so completely leveled that no stone will be left upon another (Matthew 24:2 Luke 21:6). If this were the case then Luke 19:44 would be referring to a time when God wipes out the enemies that are surrounding Israel. It's possible that doing this also destroys Jerusalem.

There is a problem with this way of thinking for Luke 17:44 speaks of the enemies surrounding Israel to be the ones who level Jerusalem. I leave the possibility open that the reason God destroys Jerusalem is because of the enemies who are coming up against Israel. Either way, this is a judgment against Israel for not recognizing their Messiah at His first visitation.

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