***“Reviewing Revelation”—Chapter 2, The Olivet Discourse***

The "Olivet Discourse" is an overview of the end times Jesus revealed to His disciples the week before His death. It all started when people in the crowd at the temple were verbally admiring the temple stones. Jesus unexpectedly threw them a curve when He announced that the temple they were admiring would be destroyed. This prompted questions from the crowd about when the temple would be destroyed:

[***Luke 21:5-7***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke%2021&version=NKJV) ***- Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, "These things which you see - the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down." So they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?"***

Jesus gave details about the prophesied destruction of the temple, which later took place in 70AD. But then the Lord reached beyond the prophecy of the temple to the time of the end of the age, when He would return to set up His earthly kingdom. Apparently, the disciples wanted to know more about the time of the end because later, as they were walking out to the Mount of Olives with Jesus, they asked the questions again about the temple, in addition to the questions about the time of the end.

The flow of the discourse follows in the order the disciples asked the questions:

***"...when will these things be?"*** *(*[*Matthew 24:4-26, Mark 13:5-23*](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php)*)*

***"...what will be the sign of Your coming?"*** *(*[*Matthew 24:27-31, Mark 13:24-27, Luke 17:24-25*](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet3.php)*)*

***"...and of the end of the age?"*** *(*[*Matthew 24:32-51, Mark 13:28-37, Luke 12:37-40, 17:26-37*](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet4.php)*)*

This study will follow Matthew's version of the discourse that Jesus gave to the disciples as they walked from the temple to the Mount of Olives. There are parallels to this discourse in Mark and Luke. Some of the Luke parallels go back to the questions asked by the crowd at the temple, which the disciples asked the Lord again later. I will note the passages from the scene of the temple that parallel the scene at the Mount of Olives through the study.

**Destruction of the temple - Matthew 24:1-2, Mark 13:1-2, Luke 21:5-6**

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|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Mark 13** |  | **Luke 21** |
| 1 | Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. | 1 | Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" | 5 | Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, |
| 2 | And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down." | 2 | And Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down." | 6 | "These things which you see - the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down." |

In the passages above we see that the Luke account took place in the temple in public, while the Matthew and Mark accounts were in private with Jesus and His disciples as they left the temple and walked out to the Mount of Olives.

Apparently, the disciples did not understand what Jesus meant when He told the crowd at the temple that it would be destroyed, because as the disciples walked toward the Mount of Olives from the temple they pointed out how well-built the temple was. In response, Jesus reiterated to the disciples what He had said in the temple - that it would all indeed be destroyed. The prophecy about the temple's destruction found fulfillment in 70AD, when the Roman General Titus and his army conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the temple.

**The questions - Matthew 24:3, Mark 13:3-4, Luke 21:7**

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|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Mark 13** |  | **Luke 21** |
| 3 | Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" | 3 | Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, | 7 | "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?" |
| 4 | "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?" |

As mentioned in the introduction, when Jesus announced that the temple would be destroyed, the crowd at the temple asked what to look for to know when it would be destroyed. The dialog in Luke answers these questions about the temple's destruction which took place in 70AD, but then Jesus reached out to the time of the end, which prompted the disciples later to ask more questions about the things he spoke of about the end of the age. The Matthew and Mark passages cover the answers to the questions the disciples asked Jesus.

The disciples probably asked these questions because they thought they were already at the time of the end, because later they asked Jesus before His ascension if He was going to restore the kingdom to Israel at that time ([Acts 1:6](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%201:6&version=NKJV)). The disciples probably were not surprised by the prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem in [Luke 21:20-24](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php#jerusalem), because Jerusalem's destruction was also foretold in [Zechariah 14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah%2014&version=NKJV):

[***Zechariah 14:1-3***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah%2014&version=NKJV) ***- Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle.***

Since the Lord did not return to Earth after 70AD, we know that the passage in Zechariah is speaking of a future event about Jerusalem. The disciples seemed baffled when Jesus said that the temple would be torn down because the prophecies in Daniel, Zechariah, and Ezekiel in the passages below show a temple and sacrifices taking place at the end of the age, which suggests that the disciples did not consider that the temple would be destroyed and rebuilt before the end of the age:

[***Daniel 9:27***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%209&version=NKJV) ***- "Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate."***

[***Zechariah 14:20-21***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah%2014&version=NKJV) ***- In that day "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" shall be engraved on the bells of the horses. The pots in the LORD's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the LORD of hosts. Everyone who sacrifices shall come and take them and cook in them. In that day there shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.***

[***Ezekiel 43:5***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel%2043&version=NKJV) ***- The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple. Then I heard Him speaking to me from the temple, while a man stood beside me. And He said to me, "Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever. No more shall the house of Israel defile My holy name."***

We also understand today from the passage above in Daniel that the Jews will build a third temple before the middle of the [Tribulation](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture2.php#focus), which is a seven-year transition time of judgment between the [Church Age](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture.php#church_age) and the [Millennium](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/heaven_millennium.php), where Christ will rule on Earth for a thousand years. The temple described in Zechariah and Ezekiel will later be built by Jesus after the Tribulation

**When will these things be?**

**Apostasy increases - Matthew 24:4-5 & Mark 13:5-6, Luke 21:8**

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|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Mark 13** |  | **Luke 21** |
| 4 | And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. | 5 | And Jesus, answering them, began to say: "Take heed that no one deceives you. | 8 | And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them." |
| 5 | For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many." | 6 | For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many." |

Christ warns three times about deception, as He begins to answer His disciples' questions. The Lord's emphasis here shows that the time of the end will run rampant with deception and false teaching, which Paul also discusses in the passage below:

[***2 Thessalonians 2:3, 9-12***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Thessalonians%202&version=NKJV) ***- Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition.... The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.***

The Lord admonished His disciples to stay on guard and watch to prevent getting deceived. Paul shows that ministry, praying, reading God's Word, and listening to the Spirit for discernment, instead of our own desires are all ways we can stay on guard and avoid deception:

[***2 Timothy 4:3-5***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy%204&version=NKJV) ***- For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.***

[***Ephesians 6:17-18***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%206&version=NKJV) ***- And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.***

**Birth pangs begin - Matthew 24:6-7, Mark 13:7-8, Luke 21:9-11**

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|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Mark 13** |  | **Luke 21** |
| 6 | And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. | 7 | But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet. | 9 | "But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately." |
| 7 | For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. | 8 | For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles.... | 10 | Then He said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. |
| 11 | And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven." |

Jesus warns of future events in these passages so believers living in the end times do not become troubled or afraid. Studying prophecy is a source of great comfort because when we see prophecy being fulfilled we know that God is in control.

"Nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom" is an idiom. An idiom is an expression where the meaning is generally known to a particular language or dialect. The following passages show that this idiom describes a conflict that engulfs the entire region at hand and affects every inhabitant:

[***Isaiah 19:2***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2019&version=NKJV) ***- "I will set Egyptians against Egyptians; everyone will fight against his brother, and everyone against his neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom."***

[***2 Chronicles 15:5-6***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Chronicles%2015&version=NKJV) ***- And in those times there was no peace to the one who went out, nor to the one who came in, but great turmoil was on all the inhabitants of the lands. So nation was destroyed by nation, and city by city, for God troubled them with every adversity.***

Therefore, Jesus uses this idiom to show the global involvement of nations and kingdoms who fight against each other. Many believe that World War I marked the beginning of these global conflicts described above.

**Birth pangs (continued) - Matthew 24:8, Mark 13:8**

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|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Mark 13** |
| 8 | All these are the beginning of sorrows. | 8 | ...these are the beginnings of sorrows. |

Some Bible versions translate "sorrows" as "birth pangs." In the original Greek, the literal translation is "travail," which is a term commonly used to describe child labor. In the natural birthing process, there are birth pangs before the baby arrives. The birth pangs usually begin slow and manageable, but become more intense, closer together, and less manageable approaching the delivery of the baby.

As the birth pangs described by Jesus become greater and greater, we will know that the end is getting closer and closer. It is obvious that the world has experienced these "birth pangs" for some time. For the most part they have been manageable, however anybody can see they are getting worse, but we are definitely not in the Tribulation yet.

As many mothers will tell you, most birth pangs are manageable up until a certain point called transition. This is basically the "point-of-no-return," where the birth pangs become almost unbearable, usually for a short period, right before the baby is born.

Likewise, there will be a "transition" to specific judgments given by Christ Himself in the Tribulation that will become unbearable to those receiving them. These birth pangs are the physical manifestations of the earth and people groaning under the increasing sin in the world, anticipating redemption when Christ returns:

[***Romans 8:22-23***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%208&version=NKJV) ***- For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.***

A woman in child labor depicts times of God's judgement throughout the Scriptures. The following passages compare a woman in child labor to those facing God's judgment in the Tribulation period:

[***Jeremiah 30:6-7***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah%2030&version=NKJV) ***- Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble....***

[***Isaiah 26:18-21***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2026&version=NKJV) ***- We have been with child, we have been in pain; we have, as it were, brought forth wind; we have not accomplished any deliverance in the earth, nor have the inhabitants of the world fallen. Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past. For behold, the LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth will also disclose her blood, and will no more cover her slain.***

Birth pangs are also associated with Israel becoming a nation again, as shown in the passage below which prophesied of the rebirth of Israel:

[***Isaiah 66:7-8***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2066&version=NKJV) ***- "Before she was in labor, she gave birth; before her pain came, she delivered a male child. Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor, she gave birth to her children."***

Israel became a nation in one day on May 14, 1948. Israel and the world have experienced birth pangs ever since, as the world cries "peace and safety," while they try to divide her:

[***1 Thessalonians 5:3***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Thessalonians%205&version=NKJV) ***- For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.***

However, as shown in the previous passage ([Matthew 24:7, Mark 13:8, Luke 21:11](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php#birth)), the global conflicts began before Israel became a nation, but most would agree that these conflicts led to the birth of Israel. World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1939-1945) both followed after the first political event that birthed the movement to form a Jewish state. This was the World Zionist Organization, first held in 1897. This Zionist movement sought to allow Jews to move back to the land promised to Abraham.

Great Britain issued the Balfour Declaration near the end of World War I in 1917. This was a statement issued by the British government that promised the Jewish people that they could form a nation in their ancient homeland. After World War II and with sympathy from other nations after the Holocaust, the Jews were finally allowed to form their nation in 1948. As prophesied in [Isaiah 66:7-8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+66%3A7-8&version=NKJV), Israel started experiencing birth pangs immediately after they declared independence, in the form of a military onslaught from the neighboring countries who tried to prevent fruition of the Jewish nation.

Notice the parallel of the birth pangs in the "Olivet Discourse" to the Seal judgments in [Revelation 6](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation6B.php#seals_intro). The birth pangs will start in the last days on a regional scale and increase and culminate into specific judgments with global consequences during the Tribulation:

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| **Regional Birth Pangs** | **Global Seal Judgments** |
| Many false christs [Matthew 24:4-5,11, Mark 13:5-6, Luke 21:8](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php#apostasy) | 1st Seal One ultimate false christ, the Antichrist [Revelation 6:1-2](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation6B.php#1a) |
| Wars and rumors of wars [Matthew 24:6-7, Mark 13:7-8, Luke 21:9](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php#birth) | 2nd Seal Global war [Revelation 6:3-4](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation6B.php#3) |
| Famine, pestilence and troubles in various places [Matthew 24:7-8, Mark 13:8, Luke 21:11](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php#birth) | 3rd & 4th Seal Global scarcity. 1/4th Earth subject to death [Revelation 6:5-8](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation6B.php#5) |
| Persecution and martyr of some saints [Matthew 24:9,13 & Mark 13:9-13](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php#saints) | 5th Seal Martyr of saints unrestrained [Revelation 6:9-11](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation6C.php#9-11) |
| Earthquakes in various places [Matthew 24:7, Mark 13:8, Luke 21:11](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php#birth) | 6th Seal Wrath of the Lamb worldwide earthquake [Revelation 6:12-17](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation6C.php#12-17) |

**Persecution of the early Church - Luke 21:12-19**

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|  | **Luke 21** |
| 12 | But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. |
| 13 | But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. |
| 14 | Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; |
| 15 | for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. |
| 16 | You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. |
| 17 | And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. |
| 18 | But not a hair of your head shall be lost. |
| 19 | By your patience possess your souls. |

The verses previous to this passage in [Luke 21:9-11](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php#birth) are describing end time events because these things had not occurred leading up to the temple destruction in 70AD. When Jesus says "but before all these things" in verse 12 above, He is again speaking of events leading up to the temple destruction of 70 AD and reveals that the Jewish believers would be persecuted before the 70AD destruction. The book of Acts records some of these persecutions and martyrs of the early Church:

[***Acts 5:40-41***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%205&version=NKJV) ***- And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.***

[***Acts 7:57-59***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%207&version=NKJV) ***- Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."***

[***Acts 8:1, 3***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%208&version=NKJV) ***- Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.... As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.***

**Persecution of Tribulation saints - Matthew 24:9-13, Mark 13:9,11-13**

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|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Mark 13** |
| 9 | "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. | 9 | "But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. |
| 10 | And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. | 11 | But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. |
| 11 | Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. | 12 | Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. |
| 12 | And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. | 13 | And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved." |
| 13 | But he who endures to the end shall be saved." |  |  |

The Matthew and Mark parallels to [Luke 21:12-19](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php#church) reach ahead to the time of the Tribulation. Persecution and martyrdom on believers in the Tribulation will become exceedingly great worldwide, as shown in the passages below:

[***Revelation 6:9-11***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation6C.php#9-11) ***- When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.***

[***Revelation 12:13, 17***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation12B.php#13-17) ***- Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child.... And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.***

[***Revelation 13:7,***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation13A.php#7)[***15***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation13B.php#15) ***- It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.... He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.***

[***Revelation 17:5-6***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation17.php) ***- And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.***

[***Revelation 18:24***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation18.php) ***- And in her [the great city Babylon] was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth."***

[***Daniel 7:21-22, 25***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel+7&version=NKJV) ***- "I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.... He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.***

Compare the passage in Luke: "but before all these things," against the passages in Matthew 24 and Mark 13: "then" and "endure to the end." It is clear that Jesus spoke of two different times leading up to Jerusalem's destruction in 70AD and the Tribulation period. However, the passage below speaks of both time periods when persecution would be great:

[***Matthew 10:17-23***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2010&version=NKJV) ***- "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. "Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.***

**The "great commission" fulfilled - Matthew 24:14, Mark 13:10**

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|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Mark 13** |
| 14 | And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. | 10 | And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. |

The Lord gave the great commission to spread the Gospel to His disciples:

[***Luke 24:33, 46-48***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+24&version=NKJV) ***- So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together... Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things."***

[***Acts 1:2-3, 6-8***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+1&version=NKJV) ***- ...the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.... Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."***

Paul tells us that the great commission found fulfillment in his day:

[***Colossians 1:5-6, 23***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians%201&version=NKJV) ***- ...the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth...the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.***

Like many prophecies, there is a partial fulfillment in the near term and the complete fulfillment later. Paul partially fulfilled the great commission. The end did not come in Paul's day and more generations have been born that need to hear the Gospel. Therefore, the complete fulfillment will come right before the end of the Tribulation, when Jesus returns.

The Church has continued to spread the Gospel for the last couple millennia. However, it is only in the last generation, with the increase of travel and technology, the Gospel has again spread to the far reaches of the Earth.

Right before Jesus returns, 144,000 sealed servants, two witnesses, and an angel will fulfill the great commission as shown in the passages below. Note that the passage in Isaiah is about the 144,000 servants who, like Christ, will preach "good tidings," which is the good news of the Gospel:

[***Isaiah 61:1-6***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2061&version=NKJV) ***- "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified." And they shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations. Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the foreigner shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But you shall be named the priests of the LORD, they shall call you the servants of our God.***

[***Revelation 7:2-4***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation7A.php#1-3) ***- Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.***

[***Revelation 11:3-7***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation11A.php#3-6) ***- And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." These are the two olive trees and the two lamp stands standing before the God of the earth. When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.***

[***Zechariah 4:11-14***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah%204&version=NKJV) ***- Then I answered and said to him, "What are these two olive trees - at the right of the lamp stand and at its left?" And I further answered and said to him, "What are these two olive branches that drip into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the golden oil drains?" Then he answered me and said, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord." So he said, "These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth."***

[***Revelation 14:6-7***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation14B.php#6-11) ***- Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth - to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people - saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."***

**Destruction of Jerusalem - Luke 21:20-23**

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|  | **Luke 21** |
| 20 | "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. |
| 21 | Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. |
| 22 | For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. |
| 23 | But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. |

Keep in mind that the Luke account focuses on the 70AD destruction of Jerusalem, while occasionally reaching out further to the end of the age. The passage above is a prophecy about Jerusalem's destruction, which took place in 70AD. The following passage describes the city's destruction in more detail:

[***Luke 19:43-44***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2019&version=NKJV) ***- "For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation."***

Bible teacher Jack Kelly describes what took place leading up to Jerusalem's destruction:

***"In what appears to be poor advice, [Jesus] told them to get out of town when they saw the city being surrounded by enemy troops, an event that took place nearly 40 years later. The objective of a besieging army was to trap everyone inside so the plight of starving women and children would have a discouraging influence on the leadership. Non-combatants were not allowed free passage through enemy lines for this reason.***

***But a strange thing happened in the siege of Jerusalem. After surrounding the city, the Roman army was suddenly told to abandon their position and prepare for an immediate departure to Rome. General Titus, who commanded the army, was the son of Vespasian, a man striving to become the Roman Emperor. Fearing he would need extra help in consolidating his power, Vespasian ordered Titus to bring the army home to assist. But before they could depart, another message arrived saying that all was in order and to resume the siege of Jerusalem.***

***For one week the siege lines had been abandoned, and during this time Christians who heeded the Lord's earlier warning escaped. Although 1.2 million Jews died in Rome's defeat of Israel, according to the historian Josephus, not one Christian perished in the siege of Jerusalem. The Lord's advice had been sound and even strategically clever."***

***Source:*** [***Gracethrufaith.com***](http://www.gracethrufaith.com/ikvot/the-end-times-according-to-jesus-part-1)

**Time of the Gentiles - Luke 21:24**

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|  | **Luke 21** |
| 24 | And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. |

The "times of the Gentiles" covers the time in history when other nations have had dominion over Jerusalem. This time began back with the exile of the southern kingdom by the Babylonians. Years before the Babylonian conquest, Assyria conquered the northern kingdom, but God spared the southern kingdom of Judah and Jerusalem at that time.

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God said that the southern kingdom would be conquered and come under Babylonian rule. He warned Judah not to look to their neighbors for help, but to go peacefully into exile ([Jeremiah 27](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah%2027&version=NKJV)). Sure enough, the Jews had nowhere to turn because Babylon also conquered Jerusalem's neighbors. Those who sought refuge, instead of submitting to Babylon, fell by the sword. In [Jeremiah 42](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah%2042&version=NKJV), a group petitioned to go to Egypt to escape the Babylonians, but God forbid it and Egypt fell too. The following passage shows that the "times of the Gentiles" began with the Babylonian conquest of Israel and her neighbors, including Egypt:

[***Ezekiel 30:3-4, 10-11***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel%2030&version=NKJV) ***- For the day is near, even the day of the LORD is near; it will be a day of clouds, the time of the Gentiles. The sword shall come upon Egypt, and great anguish shall be in Ethiopia, when the slain fall in Egypt, and they take away her wealth, and her foundations are broken down.... 'Thus says the Lord GOD: " I will also make a multitude of Egypt to cease by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. He and his people with him, the most terrible of the nations, shall be brought to destroy the land; they shall draw their swords against Egypt, and fill the land with the slain.***

After Babylon conquered Judah, God gave the king of Babylon a dream. In [Daniel 2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%202&version=NKJV), God showed in this dream there would be a series of Gentile kingdoms that would rule before an eternal kingdom would be established on Earth. Jerusalem has been under Gentile rule since Babylon took over the southern kingdom; that is until Israel declared their independence in 1948.

Jerusalem was later unified and recaptured by the Jews in the Six-Day War of 1967, but messianic rule did not begin at that time. In addition, Israel has given control of the Temple Mount over to Muslims. So we see that the "times of the Gentiles" did not end in 1948 or 1967.

The antichrist will have authority over the world, including Israel and Jerusalem during the Tribulation:

[***Revelation 13:5-7***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation13A.php#5-8) ***- And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.***

[***Daniel 11:45***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=daniel%2011&version=NKJV) ***- And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain....***

The antichrist will rule over the last Gentile kingdom, which the Lord will replace with His messianic rule when He returns, ending the "times of the Gentiles":

[***Daniel 2:44***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel+2&version=NKJV) ***- And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.***

[***Revelation 19:11-15***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation19.php) ***- Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron.***

**Abomination of desolation - Matthew 24:15, Mark 13:14**

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|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Mark 13** |
| 15 | "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand)... | 14 | "So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand)... |

The following passage is the prophecy about the "abomination of desolation" Daniel spoke of:

[***Daniel 11:30-31***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%2011&version=NKJV) ***- ...So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant. And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation.***

The ruler of the Seleucid Empire, Antiochus Epiphanes fulfilled this prophecy in the second century B.C. The "abomination of desolation" was that Antiochus defiled the temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar. He also set up a statue of a Greek god in the place of the Most Holy. The "abomination of desolation" has not happened again since Christ reiterated Daniel's prophecy here in His discourse.

The following passages show that a Jewish temple will stand in the last days and sacrifices will begin again. The antichrist will fulfill this future prophecy of defiling the temple and stopping the sacrifices in the middle of the Tribulation:

[***Daniel 9:27***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%209&version=NKJV) ***- "Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate."***

[***Daniel 12:8-11***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%2012&version=NKJV) ***- Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, "My lord, what shall be the end of these things?" And he said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand. "And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.""***

[***2 Thessalonians 2:3***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Thessalonians%202&version=NKJV) ***- Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.***

It is interesting to note that the [Temple Institute](http://www.templeinstitute.org/) in Israel has spent several years preparing to rebuild the Jewish temple. The garments and utensils that they plan to use are on display at their headquarters in Jerusalem. They have also prefabricated walls of the temple. Once complete, they say the temple could be built in a matter of a few months.

Currently, there is a huge obstacle to building the third temple which will stand before the middle of the Tribulation. The "Dome of the Rock" Muslim mosque sits on the Temple Mount today. Clearly, this road block will go away some time before the middle of the Tribulation, either by removing the mosque, or through an agreement to build the Jewish temple next to the mosque.

**Jewish remnant flees to the mountains - Matthew 24:16-19, Mark 13:14-17**

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|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Mark 13** |
| 16 | "Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. | 14 | "Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. |
| 17 | Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. | 15 | Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. |
| 18 | And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. | 16 | And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. |
| 19 | But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! | 17 | But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! |

These passages show a repeat in history, when a Jewish remnant will flee during the Tribulation, like they did before Jerusalem's destruction in 70AD. Many Bible scholars believe that the Jewish remnant will flee to Petra, where He will protect them through the last half of the Tribulation. Petra, called "Sela" in the Bible, means the "stronghold" or "rock." Petra is just 20 miles south of Bozrah, which means "sheepfold." Tombs and houses carved into the bed rock over a vast area at Petra could temporarily house several thousand people:

[***Micah 2:12-13***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Micah%202&version=NKJV) ***- "I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together like sheep of the fold, like a flock in the midst of their pasture; they shall make a loud noise because of so many people. The one who breaks open will come up before them; they will break out, pass through the gate, and go out by it; their king will pass before them, with the LORD at their head."***

[***Psalms 95:1, 7-11***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms+95&version=NKJV) ***- Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.... For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you will hear His voice. "Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, when your fathers tested Me; they tried Me, though they saw My work. For forty years I was grieved with that generation, And said, 'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.' "***

[***Nahum 1:6-7***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nahum+1&version=NKJV) ***- Who can stand before His indignation? And who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him. The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him.***

The passage in Isaiah shows that when Christ returns, He will first go to the area of Bozrah which is near Petra, and where presumably the Jewish remnant will be, before heading back to Jerusalem ([Zechariah 14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah%2014&version=NKJV)). It appears that Christ will execute judgment on those pursuing the Jewish remnant located near Bozrah:

[***Isaiah 63:1-6***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2063&version=NKJV) ***- Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, this One who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength? - "I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? "I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come. I looked, but there was no one to help, and I wondered that there was no one to uphold; therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me; and My own fury, it sustained Me. I have trodden down the peoples in My anger, made them drunk in My fury, and brought down their strength to the earth."***

[***Revelation 19:13-15***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation19.php) ***- He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.***

Today, the area around Petra is mountainous, but it is also desolate and sparsely populated because of the very low rainfall and scarcity of natural resources there, but God will supernaturally protect His people in the wilderness during the last half of the Tribulation like He did during the Exodus:

[***Revelation 12:13-16***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation12B.php#13-17) ***- Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.***

We see that God will also protect His people from a "flood." The passage below shows that God compares His enemy to a flood:

[***Isaiah 59:19***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2059&version=NKJV) ***- When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him.***

The scene in Revelation above is reminiscent of the parting of the Red Sea in Exodus that protected God's people, but later consumed the enemy:

[***Exodus 14:27-29***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2014&version=NKJV) ***- And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained. But the children of Israel had walked on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.***

**Jewish remnant (continued) - Matthew 24:20, Mark 13:18**

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|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Mark 13** |
| 20 | And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. | 18 | And pray that your flight may not be in winter. |

On the Sabbath, work was forbidden and everybody was to stay close to home:

[***Exodus 16:29***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2016&version=NKJV) ***- "See! For the LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day."***

The Lord's admonishment to pray that their flight is not on the Sabbath reveals that when the Jewish remnant flees, they will be trying to keep the Mosaic Law. This passage also shows that there are Jews in Jerusalem and a Jewish temple standing at the time, which shows that the Jews will return from global exile, which is coming to fruition today, and they will rebuild the temple before the Jews flee to the wilderness in the middle of the Tribulation.

**Great Tribulation begins - Matthew 24:21, Mark 13:19**

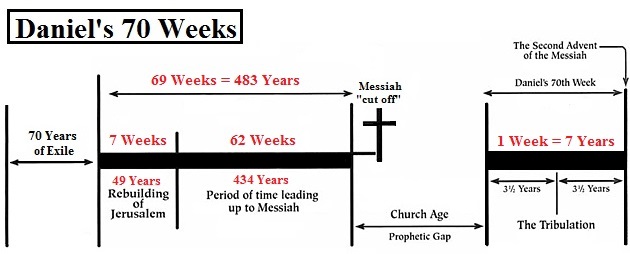
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|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Mark 13** |
| 21 | For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. | 19 | For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. |

The purpose of the Tribulation is as follows:

[***Daniel 9:29***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%209&version=NKJV) ***- To finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.***

God revealed to Daniel that He gave Israel 70 weeks in which He would punish their transgressing of the Law, before the Messiah would come to rule. History has shown us that the 70 weeks are 70 "weeks" of years, or 490 years. There were 483 years from the time of the command to Nehemiah to restore and build Jerusalem after Israel's 70-year exile, until Jesus died.

During those 483 years, God punished Israel under the yoke of Gentile rule. After the cross, God turned away from Israel because they rejected His Son ([Romans 11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%2011&version=NKJV)). It didn't take long for the nation to crumble after God abandoned them. Seven more years are left of the 70 "weeks" of punishment. During these last seven years, God will turn back to Israel. However, God will punish Israel along with His enemies through the Tribulation judgments. Today we live in the gap between the 483 years and the last seven years:



The Jewish people lived in exile, until Israel became a nation again in 1948. Israel becoming a nation again is the paramount sign that the end of the age is rapidly approaching, because God brought the Jews back to Israel for the purpose of fulfilling the last seven years of "Daniel's 70 weeks." Scripture divides the last "week" of years into two parts. [Revelation 17](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation17.php) shows that in the first half of the Tribulation, the world will be under the rule of ten kings and a religious system called ["Mystery Babylon."](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture2.php#babylonian) This religious system is later destroyed by the ten kings and then the antichrist begins his rule over the world.

Jesus tells us that the ["abomination of desolation"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture3.php#abomination) by the antichrist in the middle of the Tribulation will mark the beginning of "great tribulation," a 42-month period of tribulation worse than any ever seen on Earth - the darkest time in human history:

[***Daniel 9:27***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%209&version=NKJV) ***- "Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate."***

[***Daniel 12:1***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%2012&version=NKJV) ***- "... And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time"***

**Great Tribulation (continued) - Matthew 24:22, Mark 13:20**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Mark 13** |
| 22 | And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. | 20 | And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days. |

When the Jewish remnant flees to the wilderness after the "abomination of desolation," God will protect them from the antichrist for 1,260 days ([Revelation 12:6](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation12B.php#6)). Jesus characterizes this time as "great tribulation," as discussed in the last section. This coincides with the antichrist's 42-month rule during the second half of the Tribulation, which will last for 1,260 days and not a day less.

So what does it mean to shorten the days if there is an appointed day count to the second half of the Tribulation? Jesus doesn't tell us in what way He will shorten the days, but the following theories might explain how they could be shortened without being less than 1,260.

The first theory suggests that the days themselves will shorten in length by the earth spinning faster. This would still fulfill the day count because Genesis defines a day as one revolution of the earth:

[***Genesis 1:3-5***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%201&version=NKJV) ***- Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.***

The scene in Isaiah at the time of the Lord's judgment may support this theory, as the earth's rotation appears off kilter:

[***Isaiah 24:19-21***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2024&version=NKJV) ***- The earth is violently broken, the earth is split open, the earth is shaken exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall totter like a hut; transgression shall be heavy upon it, and it will fall, and not rise again. It shall come to pass in that day that the LORD will punish on high the host of exalted ones, and on the earth the kings of the earth.***

Also, some believe that the sixth Seal judgment describes what might happen in a polar shift, or reversal, which may also affect the earth's rotation:

[***Revelation 6:12-14***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation6C.php#12-17) ***- I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.***

In the fourth Trumpet judgment, some believe that in addition to the heavenly bodies darkening by a third, the days themselves will also be cut by a third, or down to sixteen hours:

[***Revelation 8:12***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation8B.php#12) ***- Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.***

Another theory is that the day count itself is shorter than a full Jewish calendar for 3 ½ years because of the leap months. Depending on the year, the Jewish calendar is anywhere from 353 to 385 days. So the thought here, is that a full 3 ½ years on the Jewish calendar is more than 1260 days. Indeed, the count is anywhere from 1269 to 1301 days per 3 ½ Jewish calendar years. [Daniel 12:11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%2012:11&version=NKJV) shows that there is a period of 1,290 days after the "abomination of desolation." So cutting the days short could simply mean that Jesus will not let the full calendar years play out before He ends the Tribulation.

Other than being within the average day count of the Jewish calendar, there is one interesting thing to note about the 1290 days. Thirty days after the Feast of Atonement, is the day of the year that God told Noah to get into the ark before the flood ([Genesis 7:1-11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%207:1-11&version=NKJV)). I'm not sure what the significance would be to the 1290 days with regard to the flood, but it is interesting nonetheless.

The "elect" in these verses are the Jewish remnant that will flee to the wilderness, which we will discuss when we get to [Matthew 24:31](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet3.php#elect).

**Deceptive signs and wonders - Matthew 24:23-26, Mark 13:21-23, Luke 17:23**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Mark 13** |  | **Luke 21** |
| 23 | "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. | 21 | "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look, He is there!' do not believe it. | 23 | And they will say to you, 'Look here!' or 'Look there!' Do not go after them or follow them. |
| 24 | For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. | 22 | "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. |  |  |
| 25 | See, I have told you beforehand. | 23 | But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand." |  |  |
| 26 | "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it." |  |  |  |  |

After the rapture occurs, people will clamor for answers to this supernatural event and the earth-shaking events that follow. The Bible says there will be great signs and delusions to deceive those who reject the truth. In other words, for those people who choose to reject the truth, God will harden their hearts, just like He did to Pharaoh ([Exodus 4:21](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=exodus%204&version=NKJV)). God will do this by allowing deceptive signs that unbelievers can physically see and easily believe because they didn't trust in Him by faith. Like Pharaoh, they will make up their mind to reject the truth, and God will simply give them over to their foolish disbelief:

[***2 Thessalonians 2:9-12***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Thessalonians%202&version=NKJV) ***- The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.***

Jesus tells us that these signs and wonders will be so great as to "deceive, if possible, even the elect" ([Matthew 24:24, Mark 13:22](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php#signs)). Later, we will see that the "elect" are Jewish. It doesn't seem likely that the Jewish remnant would easily be deceived, as they will have to trust God's Word to flee to safety in the first place ([Matthew 24:16-19, Mark 13:14-17](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php#flee)). In fact, the Lord said that the signs will be so convincing, that if not for their faith and heeding God's Word ahead of time, believers would likely be swept away by the deception too.

There are several theories about what some of these deceptive signs and wonders might be. The most probable in my view is when the antichrist, or beast is mortally wounded, but later healed:

[***Revelation 13:3***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation13A.php#3) ***- And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.***

The second beast, known as the false prophet of the antichrist, will do great signs and wonders to persuade the world to make an idol of the first beast and worship it:

[***Revelation 13:11-14***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation13B.php#11-15) ***- Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.***

The passages below show that the antichrist will apparently die from his mortal wound, but come back to life, returning from the bottomless pit:

[***Revelation 11:7***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation11B.php#7-13) ***- When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.***

[***Revelation 17:8***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation17.php) ***- The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.***

Satan cannot counterfeit a resurrection because only God has that power ([John 11:25](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2011:25&version=NKJV)). Therefore, it seems probable that God will resurrect the antichrist, but the antichrist will take the credit, hence being a lie ([2 Thessalonians 2:9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Thessalonians%202:9&version=NKJV)).

**The signs of Jesus' Coming**

**2nd Coming of Christ - Matthew 24:27, Luke 17:24**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Luke 17** |
| 27 | For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. | 24 | For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day. |

When Christ returns to Jerusalem, He will stand east of the city on the Mount of Olives, head west to the temple Mount, and enter through the east gate of the temple:

[***Zechariah 14:4***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah%2014&version=NKJV) ***- And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north. And half of it toward the south.***

[***Ezekiel 44:1-2***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel%2044&version=NKJV) ***- Then He brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary which faces toward the east, but it was shut. And the LORD said to me, "This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the LORD God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut."***

Prophecy teacher Dr. David Reagan gives some interesting insight on the prophecy in Ezekiel above:

***"This prophecy in Ezekiel was partially fulfilled more than 400 years ago in 1517 when the Turks conquered Jerusalem under the leadership of Suleiman the Magnificent. He commanded that the city's ancient walls be rebuilt, and in the midst of this rebuilding project, for some unknown reason, he ordered that the Eastern Gate be sealed up with stones.***

***Legends abound as to why Suleiman closed the [Eastern] Gate. The most believable one is that while the walls were being rebuilt, a rumor swept Jerusalem that the Messiah was coming. Suleiman called together some Jewish rabbis and asked them to tell him about the Messiah. They described the Messiah as a great military leader who would be sent by God from the east. He would enter the Eastern Gate and liberate the city from foreign control.***

***Suleiman then decided to put an end to Jewish hopes by ordering the Eastern Gate sealed. He also put a Muslim cemetery in front of the Gate, believing that no Jewish holy man would defile himself by walking through a Muslim cemetery. The Gate has remained sealed since that time. The Muslim cemetery still blocks the entrance. The old walled city has eight gates, and the Eastern Gate, and it alone, is sealed - just as prophesied in Ezekiel."***

***Source:*** [***Lamb & Lion Ministries***](http://www.lamblion.us/2008/09/eastern-gate-in-prophecy.html)

**Christ rejected and suffered first - Luke 17:25**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Luke 17** |
| 25 | But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. |

Christ predicted that He would not only suffer, but also be rejected by the generation at the time of the crucifixion. Therefore, the signs of His 2nd Coming were for a future generation:

[***Matthew 16:21***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2016&version=NKJV) ***- From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.***

[***Mark 8:31***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%208&version=NKJV) ***- And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.***

[***Luke 9:22***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%209&version=NKJV) ***- "...The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day."***

**Great Supper of God - Matthew 24:28, Luke 17:37**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Luke 17** |
| 28 | For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together. | 37 | And they answered and said to Him, "Where, Lord?" So He said to them, "Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together." |

The Greek word translated "eagles" indicates birds of prey. Some other Bible versions translate the birds as "vultures." The gathering birds of carnage come after Christ strikes the nations at His return, as shown below:

[***Revelation 19:15,17-18***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation19.php) ***- Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations.... Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great."***

Later, we will take a second look at the passage in Luke, when we discuss the ["Sheep and Goat Judgment."](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet4.php#sheep)

**Tribulation judgments before Jesus returns - Luke 21:25-26**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Luke 21** |
| 25 | "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; |
| 26 | men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken." |

Signs in the heavens and on the earth will occur throughout the Tribulation period, leading up to the 2nd Coming of Jesus. These signs were also prophesied by Joel:

[***Joel 2:30***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Joel%202&version=NKJV) ***- "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD."***

There will also be global calamities during the Tribulation. Today, we are experiencing the distress from the "birth pangs" that are occurring on a regional scale, but these calamities will become global when the Tribulation begins, as discussed earlier [(Matthew 24:6-8, Mark 13:7-8, Luke 21:9-11)](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php#birth).

**Heavens shaken and darkened - Matthew 24:29, Mark 13:24-25**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Mark 13** |
| 29 | "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken." | 24 | "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; |
| 25 | the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken." |

After the Tribulation is over, God will shake and darken the heavens. This event will probably be even more awesome than the signs in the heavens throughout the Tribulation period, as discussed in the last section:

[***Joel 3:11-16***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Joel%203&version=NKJV) ***- Assemble and come, all you nations, and gather together all around. Cause Your mighty ones to go down there, O LORD. "Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow - for their wickedness is great." Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness. The LORD also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the LORD will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.***

[***Isaiah 13:9-10***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2013&version=NKJV) ***- Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine.***

**Sign of the Son of Man - Matthew 24:30, Mark 13:26, Luke 21:27**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Mark 13** |  | **Luke 21** |
| 30 | Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. | 26 | Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. | 27 | They will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. |

Christ left the earth in a cloud after His resurrection, and He will also return in a cloud:

[***Acts 1:9-11***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%201&version=NKJV) ***- Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as He went up behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."***

We do not know exactly what the sign of Christ will be. Many believe it might be the "Shechinah glory." The "Shechinah glory" is the physical manifestation of the glory of the Lord, which must have looked like a bright cloud. This manifestation of the Lord was visible during the Exodus, and then again as a sign of the birth of Christ to the shepherds:

[***Exodus 16:10***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2016&version=NKJV) ***- Now it came to pass, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.***

[***Luke 2:9***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%202&version=NKJV) ***- And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.***

The passages from the discourse say that Jesus will return "on the clouds," "in the clouds," and "in a cloud," which is probably both physical clouds and the "Shechinah glory" cloud. Jesus will also return "with" clouds":

[***Revelation 1:7***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation1B.php#7-8) ***- Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.***

The passages below show that the heavenly hosts are sometimes called "clouds":

[***Daniel 7:13***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%207&version=NKJV) ***- I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him.***

[***Hebrews 12:1***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews%2012&version=NKJV) ***- Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.***

The following passage supports that the heavenly host, or the armies of Heaven are the "clouds" Christ returns to Earth with:

[***Revelation 19:14***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation19.php) ***- And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.***

[***Jude 1:14-15***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jude%201&version=NKJV) ***- Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."***

[***Zechariah 14:4-5***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah%2014&version=NKJV) ***- And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley.... Thus the LORD my God will come, and all the saints with You.***

[***Matthew 25:31***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah%2014&version=NKJV) ***- "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory."***

**Redemption of Israel near - Luke 21:28**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Luke 21** |
| 28 | "Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near." |

When believers during the Tribulation see all the signs pointing to the Lord's return, they can look forward to the future with hope of redemption instead of fear in the midst of calamity. Even in the last days leading up to the Tribulation, believers should look toward Heaven as they see the increasing ["birth pangs"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php#birth) and the signs converging and for the Lord to call the Church home in the [rapture](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture.php) before the Tribulation begins.

That said, the context of the passage above is looking to the end of the Tribulation. Previous to this verse, [Luke 21:20-24](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php#jerusalem) spoke of judgment and destruction for Israel, which occurred in 70AD. In contrast, verse 28 speaks of redemption, not destruction of Israel at the 2nd Coming of Jesus. Here is a parallel passage of Israel's redemption, which will take place when the Lord returns to rule as King:

[***Psalm 24:3-10***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2024&version=NKJV) ***- Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face. Selah Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts....***

**The gathering of the "elect" - Matthew 24:31, Mark 13:27**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Mark 13** |
| 31 | And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. | 27 | And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven. |

Scripture shows that the "elect" are Jewish believers. Angels will gather the "elect" from Heaven and Earth right before the 2nd Coming. The purpose of this gathering is for the Lord to give the Jews their inheritance He promised to Abraham. Recall that God will protect the Jewish remnant in Petra during the second half of the Tribulation ([Matthew 24:16-19, Mark 13:14-17](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php#flee)). Petra is east of the Jordan River. It seems fitting that the Jews will all be gathered at Petra and then follow Jesus back to Israel, crossing the Jordan River again to receive their inheritance like they did under the leadership of Joshua, which will fulfill the following promise:

[***Genesis 17:7-8***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2017&version=NKJV) ***- "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."***

Scripture refers to angels, the Church, and even Jesus as "elect" in Scripture, which has caused confusion on which group Jesus is referring to in Matthew. Letting Scripture interpret Scripture, it is clear that Israel is the group representing the "elect" in the Lord's discourse. Note the parallel wording:

[***Matthew 24:31***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet3.php#elect) ***- And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.***

[***Isaiah 65:9***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2065&version=NKJV) ***- I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, and from Judah an heir of My mountains; My elect shall inherit it, and My servants shall dwell there.***

[***Deuteronomy 30:1-4***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy%2030&version=NKJV) ***- "Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you, and you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you. If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you.***

[***Isaiah 11:12***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2011&version=NKJV) ***- He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.***

[***Isaiah 27:12-13***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2027&version=NKJV) ***- And it shall come to pass in that day that the LORD will thresh, from the channel of the River to the Brook of Egypt; and you will be gathered one by one, O you children of Israel. So it shall be in that day: The great trumpet will be blown; they will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria, and they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem.***

We can also see that the Church and the Tribulation martyrs are not the "elect," based on the order of events. First, angels gather the "elect" as Christ is coming on clouds:

[***Matthew 24:30-31***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet3.php#sign) ***- Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.***

Then we see the Church coming with Christ, dressed in fine linen. This event is not the rapture because the Church is not gathered by angels like the "elect," but by Christ Himself ([1 Thessalonians 4:16-17](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Thessalonians%204:16-17&version=NKJV)):

[***Revelation 19:11-14***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation19.php) ***- Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.***

After that, the Tribulation martyrs get resurrected after the 2nd Coming; they are not gathered before the Lord returns like the "elect":

[***Revelation 20:4***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation20.php) ***- And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.***

It is clear from these passages that the gathering of the Jewish "elect" will occur at the "sign of the Son of Man," right before the 2nd Coming of Jesus. [Click here](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture3.php#elect) for further discussion on the "elect."

# Signs of the end of the age

**Fig tree shoots forth its leaves - Matthew 24:32-33, Mark 13:28-29, Luke 21:29-31**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Mark 13** |  | **Luke 21** |
| 32 | "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. | 28 | "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. | 29 | Then He spoke to them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. |
| 33 | So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near-at the doors!" | 29 | So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near-at the doors!" | 30 | When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. |
| 31 | So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near." |

Jesus had finished answering the question about His 2nd Coming, when He switches gears to answer the questions about the "signs of the end of the age." The first sign that would show that the end of the age had arrived was the fig tree shooting forth its leaves. The fig tree is one of the last trees to bud in the spring. So when it puts forth leaves, people know that summer is right around the corner. What does the fig tree represent?

Hosea compares the people of Israel to figs and Isaiah compares them to plants in a vineyard:

[***Hosea 9:10***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hosea%209&version=NKJV) ***- "I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the first fruits on the fig tree in its first season."***

[***Isaiah 5:7***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%205&version=NKJV) ***- For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant.***

Joel compares the land of Israel to a fig tree:

[***Joel 1:6-7***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Joel%201&version=NKJV) ***- For a nation has come up against My land, strong, and without number; his teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he has the fangs of a fierce lion. He has laid waste My vine, and ruined My fig tree; he has stripped it bare and thrown it away; its branches are made white.***

The passage below is a another parable Jesus shared about a fig tree:

[***Luke 13:5-9***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2013&version=NKJV) ***- "...unless you repent you will all likewise perish." He also spoke this parable: "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?' But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.'"***

The passage in [Isaiah 5:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%205&version=NKJV) shows us that the vineyard belongs to the Lord. The keeper in the parable above is Jesus, who was three years into His ministry at the time. Right before Jesus shared the parable, He warned that unless Israel repented, the nation would perish. In the parable, God told Jesus to cut down the tree, which is Israel. Jesus requested to give the tree until the next season to bear fruit, before cutting it down.

Jesus was to spend the next half-year trying to bear fruit from the nation Israel, before giving up on them. The cursing of the fig tree in the passage below shows us the verdict of the nation Israel. Though Israel as a nation would be destroyed, faith and salvation would still be available on an individual basis, as shown at the end of the following passage:

[***Matthew 21:18-22***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2021&version=NKJV) ***- Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, "Let no fruit grow on you ever again." Immediately the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither away so soon?" So Jesus answered and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' it will be done. And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."***

In the passages below, Ezekiel likens Israel to a tree and Amos predicted that God would "plant" His people again in their land. These prophecies show that Israel would become a nation again, which found fulfillment in 1948. However, the people of Israel are not producing the fruits of belief and faith yet, but the following passage shows that they will bear fruit in the future.

[***Ezekiel 36:8-12***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel%2036&version=NKJV) ***- But you, O mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people Israel, for they are about to come. For indeed I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown. I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, all of it; and the cities shall be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt. I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bear young; I will make you inhabited as in former times, and do better for you than at your beginnings. Then you shall know that I am the LORD. Yes, I will cause men to walk on you, My people Israel; they shall take possession of you, and you shall be their inheritance; no more shall you bereave them of children."***

[***Amos 9:14-15***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Amos%209&version=NKJV) ***- "I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them," says the LORD your God.***

All these passages point to the nation Israel being the fig tree in the parable of the Lord's discourse. If so, then are who "all the trees" in Luke? Some say that the passages about the fig tree are just analogies to show that the people who see all the signs will know that the return of Jesus is near. They are correct, in that the increasing signs show the nearness of Christ's return, but they then discount Israel being represented by the fig tree.

However, the passage above in Ezekiel definitely likens Israel to a tree. The wording about "shooting forth your branches" nicely parallels that in the "Olivet Discourse," where Jesus is specifically talking about a fig tree. And the nation Israel died in 70AD, just like the fig tree did when Jesus cursed it. It shot forth its branches again in 1948AD, just as Ezekiel predicted.

So if the fig tree represents Israel as a nation, then all the trees would likewise represent a nation or nations in some way. Though not clear, there are some clues in Scripture that point us to what "all the trees" might represent in Luke.

All the other trees could be Israel's neighbors, who also became nations as a result of the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire after World War 1. The trees were then "planted" as a result of the League of Nations mandate and all became "budding nations" within the next two decades.

***"The League of Nations mandate refers to several territories established under Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, 28 June 1919. The first group or Class A mandates were areas formerly controlled by the Ottoman Empire deemed to have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory."***

***"The Class A mandates were: Iraq (Great Britain), 10 August 1920 - 3 October 1932, then an independent kingdom. Palestine (Great Britain), from 25 April 1920 (effective 29 September 1923 - 14 May 1948 to the independence of Israel), till 25 May 1946 including Transjordan (the Hashemite emirate, later kingdom of Jordan). Syria (France), 29 September 1923 - 1 January 1944, including Lebanon; By 1948 these mandates had been replaced by new monarchies (Iraq, Jordan) and republican governments (Israel, Lebanon, Syria)."***

***Source:*** [***Wikipedia***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/League_of_Nations_mandate)

At least two places in the Old Testament compare kings of Israel's neighbors to trees. Interestingly, Israel's neighbors, Iraq, Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon were all part of both the Babylon and Assyrian Empires:

[***Daniel 4:19-22***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%204&version=NKJV) ***- Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him. So the king spoke, and said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you." Belteshazzar answered and said, "My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies! "The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached to the heavens and which could be seen by all the earth, whose leaves were lovely and its fruit abundant, in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose branches the birds of the heaven had their home - it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth."***

[***Ezekiel 31:2-5***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel%2031&version=NKJV) ***- Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his multitude: 'Whom are you like in your greatness? Indeed Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon, with fine branches that shaded the forest, and of high stature; and its top was among the thick boughs. The waters made it grow; underground waters gave it height, with their rivers running around the place where it was planted, and sent out rivulets to all the trees of the field. 'Therefore its height was exalted above all the trees of the field; its boughs were multiplied, and its branches became long because of the abundance of water, as it sent them out.'***

[***Ezekiel 31:6-9***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel%2031&version=NKJV) ***- All the birds of the heavens made their nests in its boughs; under its branches all the beasts of the field brought forth their young; and in its shadow all great nations made their home. 'Thus it was beautiful in greatness and in the length of its branches, because its roots reached to abundant waters. The cedars in the garden of God could not hide it; the fir trees were not like its boughs, and the chestnut trees were not like its branches; no tree in the garden of God was like it in beauty. I made it beautiful with a multitude of branches, so that all the trees of Eden envied it, that were in the garden of God.***

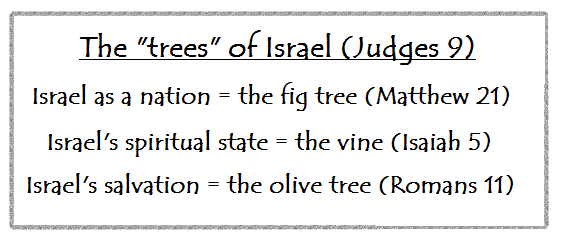
Another possibility is that "all the trees" could represent different aspects of Israel. In the parable of the trees in Judges, Jotham likened the men of Shechem to "trees." The first capital city of Israel was Shechem before the kingdom was split. In the following passage, Jotham depicts the specific trees associated with Israel as potential kings of Israel:

[***Judges 9:1-5***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Judges%209&version=NKJV) ***- Then Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem, to his mother's brothers, and spoke with them and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying, "Please speak in the hearing of all the men of Shechem: 'Which is better for you, that all seventy of the sons of Jerubbaal reign over you, or that one reign over you?' Remember that I am your own flesh and bone."And his mother's brothers spoke all these words concerning him in the hearing of all the men of Shechem; and their heart was inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, "He is our brother." So they gave him seventy shekels of silver from the temple of Baal-Berith, with which Abimelech hired worthless and reckless men; and they followed him.***

[***Judges 9:6-7***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Judges%209&version=NKJV) ***- Then he went to his father's house at Ophrah and killed his brothers, the seventy sons of Jerubbaal, on one stone. But Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left, because he hid himself. And all the men of Shechem gathered together, all of Beth Millo, and they went and made Abimelech king beside the terebinth tree at the pillar that was in Shechem. Now when they told Jotham, he went and stood on top of Mount Gerizim, and lifted his voice and cried out. And he said to them: "Listen to me, you men of Shechem, that God may listen to you!"***

[***Judges 9:8-15***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Judges%209&version=NKJV) ***- "The trees once went forth to anoint a king over them. And they said to the olive tree, 'Reign over us!' But the olive tree said to them,' Should I cease giving my oil, with which they honor God and men, and go to sway over trees?' "Then the trees said to the fig tree,'You come and reign over us!' But the fig tree said to them, 'Should I cease my sweetness and my good fruit, and go to sway over trees?' "Then the trees said to the vine, 'You come and reign over us!' But the vine said to them, 'Should I cease my new wine, which cheers both God and men, and go to sway over trees?' "Then all the trees said to the bramble,'You come and reign over us!' And the bramble said to the trees, 'If in truth you anoint me as king over you, then come and take shelter in my shade; but if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon!'***

If "all the trees" represent the different aspects of Israel, then the fig tree would represent Israel as a nation, based on Jesus' prophetic parable that pointed to the 70AD destruction in Matthew, and the rebirth of Israel in Ezekiel and Amos. The vine would represent the spiritual state of Israel, per [Isaiah 5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%205&version=NKJV). The olive tree would be associated with Israel's salvation based on [Romans 11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=romans%2011&version=NKJV).



Notice in the passage in Luke that the "kingdom" is near when "all the trees" are budding. The use of "kingdom" with "all the trees" may show that the vine (spiritual) and olive tree (salvation) of Israel will start to bud shortly before the [Millennium](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/heaven_millennium.php) begins, which Ezekiel and the Apostle Paul prophesied:

[***Ezekiel 37:13-14***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel%2037&version=NKJV) ***- "Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it," says the LORD.***

[***Ezekiel 37:24-28***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel%2037&version=NKJV) ***- David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. The nations also will know that I, the LORD, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.***

[***Romans 11:25-26***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%2011&version=NKJV) ***- For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved....***

More support for this view is found in the following passage:

[***Habakkuk 3:17***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Habakkuk%203&version=NKJV) ***- Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls.***

The book of Habakkuk is about God judging Israel at the hand of the Babylonians. The trees not blooming or bearing fruit shows how the nation Israel fell, both physically and spiritually. Therefore, the blooming and bearing of fruit of the trees shows Israel's restoration. Notice that the same trees listed here are those in the parable of the trees in Judges: fig tree, vine and olive tree.

**Fig tree shoots forth its leaves (continued) - Matthew 24:34-35, Mark 13:30-31, Luke 21:32-33**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Mark 13** |  | **Luke 21** |
| 34 | Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. | 30 | Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. | 32 | Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. |
| 35 | Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. | 31 | Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. | 33 | Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. |

It appears that the sign of the fig tree is the beginning of the last generation before Jesus returns. How long is a generation? How does the Bible define a generation? What is the context and starting point of a generation in this passage? The Bible tells us the following:

120 YEARS - TIME UNTIL JUDGEMENT DURING THE DAYS OF NOAH - God allowed 120 years for Noah's generation to repent before the flood:

[***Genesis 6:3***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%206&version=NKJV) ***- And the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."***

100 YEARS - PROMISE OF RETURN TO THE LAND - Egypt was in captivity for 400 years or four generations of 100 years each. Also, there have been four different generations of God's chosen people promised they would return to the land (Abraham, Exodus from Egypt, release from Babylon, the Balfour Declaration):

[***Genesis 15:13-16***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2015&version=NKJV) ***- Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."***

70-80 YEARS - NATURAL LIFESPAN OF MAN - The Psalm below gives a range of 70-80 years for the average lifespan of man:

[***Psalms 90:10***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms%2090&version=NKJV) ***- The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.***

As an interesting side note, a fig tree typically "puts forth leaves" in March, with the first figs ready for harvest in early June, or about 70-80 days later.

The number "70" appears in other prophecies about Israel. Israel was in Babylonian captivity for 70 years and God told Daniel that there were 70 weeks of punishment coming on Israel:

[***Daniel 9:2, 24***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%209&version=NKJV) ***- ...I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.... Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city.***

50 YEARS - JUBILEE - Liberty, cancelled debt, and possessions returned:

[***Leviticus 25:8-10***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Leviticus%2025&version=NKJV) ***- And you shall count seven Sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven Sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years. Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land. And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family.***

40 YEARS - PERIOD OF TESTING - The time it took for the evil generation in Israel to die in the wilderness during the Exodus.

[***Numbers 32:13***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Numbers+32&version=NKJV) ***- So the LORD's anger was aroused against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the LORD was gone.***

[***Joshua 5:6***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Joshua+5&version=NKJV) ***- For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people who were men of war, who came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they did not obey the voice of the LORD - to whom the LORD swore that He would not show them the land which the LORD had sworn to their fathers that He would give us, "a land flowing with milk and honey."***

The period of 40 years is also tied to 30 years, the age that a priest could begin to serve:

[***Numbers 4: 1-3***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Numbers%204&version=NKJV) ***- Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: "Take a census of the sons of Kohath from among the children of Levi, by their families, by their fathers' house, from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, all who enter the service to do the work in the tabernacle of meeting."***

Although not a priest, we see a parallel to David, where he became king at the age of 30 and reigned for 40 years:

[***2 Samuel 5:4***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Samuel%205&version=NKJV) ***- David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years.***

Satan tested Jesus at the beginning of His ministry for 40 days, when He was 30 years old. (Though not 40 years here, it is still a period of testing tied to the number 40):

[***Luke 3:23***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%203&version=NKJV) ***- Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age.***

[***Luke 4:1-2***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%204&version=NKJV) ***- Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil.***

There were 40 years after the cross, before Israel's exile and destruction of the temple.

Jesus said the generation that witnesses the fig tree budding would witness "all these things." Jesus had described "all these things" throughout the discourse; they are all the things that will occur before He returns. Then He answers the question about the end of the age and says that the fig tree budding would be the starting point of "all these things." It appears that the context of the fig tree budding is about the life of the generation that saw Israel become a nation again. If this is true, the life of the generation would be 70-80 years. The signs rapidly converging around us show that this length is reasonable. It is also interesting to note that all the prophecies predicting the Jewish exile, and destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, all occurred within the normal lifespan of 70-80 years from the birth of Christ.

A word of caution here. Though, the 70-80 year generation argument is convincing, we should take care not to pinpoint dates. God designed His inspired Word with purposeful patterns and symmetry. Therefore, it would make sense if the Scriptures point to the time of the 2nd Coming. However, we don't have the luxury of having the exact number of years set out for Christ's 2nd Coming like His 1st Coming in [Daniel 9:24-26](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%209:24-26&version=NKJV).

We are only human, so it is probable that our interpretations are not all correct. Therefore it is prudent to not get hung up on dates. The point of all this, even without dates, is that we know just from the signs that time is rapidly running out. Besides, we never know when our time on Earth is up. Therefore, it is best to busy ourselves to further the Kingdom, be ready to meet Jesus at any moment, and not be disappointed if our interpretations are not correct.

**Day and hour no one knows - Matthew 24:36, Mark 13:32**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Luke 17** |
| 36 | "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only." | 32 | "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." |

The next sign of the end of the age, after the fig tree blooms, is the event known as "the day or hour no one knows." Prophecy students and teachers disagree on the context of this verse. Some place it at the end of the Tribulation when Jesus returns. Others place it before the Tribulation at the rapture of the Church.

First, let's look at the context of who the intended audience was for. Most can agree that the "Olivet Discourse" was for the Jews, as was the rest of the Gospel of Matthew. In fact, the purpose of Jesus' ministry was to offer the "Kingdom of Heaven" to the Jews, if they would accept Him as the prophesied Messiah.

While it is clear that Jesus came to present the "Kingdom of Heaven" message to the Jews during His first coming, I do not believe this necessarily means that Jesus never made mention of the Church in His teachings. In fact, I believe the following verse is a direct mention that Gentiles would be part of the "kingdom of Heaven," which would include Tribulation and Millennial saints, in addition to Church saints:

[***Matthew 8:11***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%208&version=NKJV) ***- And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.***

The Church was a "mystery" until God revealed it to Paul. A "mystery" is something in Scripture that wasn't understood until God revealed it. Paul talks about the wisdom of God being a mystery that the Holy Spirit reveals:

[***1 Corinthians 2:6-10***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%202&version=NKJV) ***- However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.***

The passage below shows that accepting the Word of the Lord makes one wise:

[***Jeremiah 8:9***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah%208&version=NKJV) ***- The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken. Behold, they have rejected the word of the LORD; so what wisdom do they have?***

In short, the intended audience of the "Olivet Discourse" was Jewish. However, that does not negate possible veiled mentions of the Church in the ministry of Jesus and the Old Testament.

Now that the ground work has been laid, let's return to our discussion on the "day or hour nobody knows." First let's take a look at the view that places the "day or the hour no one knows" at the end of the Tribulation. Looking ahead, it is clear that the next section is speaking of the 2nd Coming of Jesus at the end of the Tribulation. Therefore, many believe that "the day or hour no one knows" is about the return of Jesus at the 2nd Coming.

Scripture teaches that the Jewish feasts are a shadow of Christ ([Colossians 2:16-17](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians%202:16-17&version=NKJV)). Because Jesus fulfilled the first four feasts at His 1st Coming, He will surely fulfill the last three feasts at His 2nd Coming. This is why many believe that the 2nd Coming of Christ will fulfill the Feast of Trumpets. In Jewish tradition, Jews celebrate the new moon festival of the Feast of Trumpets for two days. Before computer technology was available to predict the new moon, at least two witnesses had to sight the sliver of the waxing moon to declare the first day of the month, which sometimes took a day or two to see. In that regard, we can see where "no man knows the day or the hour."

One problem with this view, is from the time of the "abomination of desolation" to the end of the antichrist's rule, there will be 42 months, or an exact day count of 1,260 days ([Revelation 12:6](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation12B.php#6) & [13:5](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation13A.php#5)). Having an exact day count from a prophesied event would seem to negate the literal rendering of the "day or hour nobody knows." Jesus stated in His discourse that He didn't even know the day or the hour of His return. I am confident He knows the day and hour now. So if Jesus was just speaking in present tense, then when the Jews see the "abomination of desolation," they too will be able to know the day of His return.

The other view on "the day or hour no one knows" is that it is a prophetic event between the time Israel became a nation and the end of the Tribulation, described in the rest of the discourse. Many believe this in-between event is the rapture, which is when Christ takes the Church to Heaven before the Tribulation begins:

[***1 Thessalonians 4:15-17***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Thessalonians%204&version=NKJV) ***- 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 will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will 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.***

"The day and hour nobody knows" is a figure of speech in the ["Jewish Wedding Tradition."](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/jewish_wedding.php) Traditionally, the son would build a bridal chamber on his father's property. When the father decided the chamber was ready, he told his son it was time to go fetch his bride. When people asked the son when the wedding day was, he would respond with "no man knows the day or hour except my father." We see that Jesus spoke of this very tradition in regards to coming for the Church:

[***John 14:2-3***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2014&version=NKJV) ***- In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.***

There are many aspects of the ancient ["Jewish Wedding Tradition"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/jewish_wedding.php) that make it a prophetic picture of the marriage between Christ and the Church revealed to the Apostle Paul:

[***Ephesians 5:31-32***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%205&version=NKJV) ***- "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.***

Though we should take care in drawing conclusions using Jewish traditions, I believe Scripture supports the ["Jewish Wedding Tradition"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/jewish_wedding.php) as a picture of the marriage between Christ and the Church, and has merit in the study of "the day or the hour no one knows." [Click here](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/jewish_wedding.php) for more on the "Jewish Wedding Tradition."

"The day or hour no one knows" comes up again in one of the parables about the Kingdom, after the discourse. We will touch on the second parable in [Matthew 25:14-30](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet4.php#sheepgoatrevisit) at the end of this study. It is clear that the second parable is in the context of the 2nd Coming because Jesus destroys His enemies at the end of it. But let's take a look at the first parable to see if it can shed some light on "the day or hour no one knows":

[***Matthew 25:1-7***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2025&version=NKJV) ***- "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. "And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps."***

[***Matthew 25:8-13***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2025&version=NKJV) ***- And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."***

In the parable above, the virgins needed oil to go to the wedding with the Bridegroom. It is clear that the amount of oil had nothing to do with going out to meet the Bridegroom, as we are not told how much oil the wise virgins had. Only the foolish virgins, who had no oil, were not allowed into the wedding. Apparently any amount of oil was enough.

Oil is widely used in Scripture as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Wisdom comes from the Holy Spirit ([Exodus 31:3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2031:3&version=NKJV), [Isaiah 11:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2011:2&version=NKJV), [Daniel 5:14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%205:14&version=NKJV), [1 Corinthians 12:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%2012:8&version=NKJV)). Therefore, we see that the wise virgins had the wisdom of the Holy Spirit and the foolish did not.

The parable of the ten virgins is different from most of the other parables of the Kingdom, in that when the Lord separates groups of people, He sends those not saved to eternal punishment, like in the parables of the talents [(Matthew 25:30)](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet4.php#sheepgoatrevisit) and the "Sheep and Goat Judgment" [(Matthew 25:46)](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet4.php#sheep). In the parable of the ten virgins, no one goes to eternal punishment. This may suggest that these foolish virgins get a chance to gain salvation during the Tribulation. They will miss out on being part of the wedding in Heaven, but perhaps will be able to enter the Kingdom on Earth when Jesus returns.

Notice that the foolish virgins went to get oil, but by the time they came back with oil, they were already shut out of the wedding. In other words, the five foolish virgins had another opportunity to buy the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. However, they were too late for the wedding and had to go through the Tribulation. The foolish virgins would then be people who are not saved at the time of the rapture, but then find salvation through the Holy Spirit during the Tribulation.

The following proverb supports that the foolish virgins bought wisdom, which comes from the Holy Spirit, and suggests they later gain salvation through truth and understanding:

[***Proverbs 23:23***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs%2023&version=NKJV) ***- Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding.***

In the ["Jewish Wedding Tradition,"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/jewish_wedding.php) after the son builds the wedding chamber and the father decides when it is time, the son would go fetch his bride. The bride and wedding party would go back to the father's house, where the bride and bridegroom would go inside the wedding chamber for a week to consummate the marriage. The wedding party would celebrate outside the wedding chamber during this week. After the couple emerged from the chamber a week later, the celebration would continue with a reception and feast to honor the new couple. The following passages show this tradition:

[***Genesis 29:28***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2029&version=NKJV) ***- Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week. So he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife also.***

[***Judges 14:17***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Judges%2014&version=NKJV) ***- Now she had wept on him the seven days while their feast lasted. And it happened on the seventh day that he told her, because she pressed him so much. Then she explained the riddle to the sons of her people.***

[***John 2:1-3, 8-10***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%202:1-12&version=NKJV) ***- On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." ...And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast." And they took it. When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. And he said to him, "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!"***

So you can see, in light of the ["Jewish Wedding Tradition,"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/jewish_wedding.php) the rapture of the Church might be "the day no one knows." Christ will whisk away the Church to Heaven, where they will spend seven years in the New Jerusalem, or the "Father's house" ([John 14:2-3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2014:2-3&version=NKJV)). After the seven-year Tribulation is over, they will return to Earth to celebrate at the "Marriage Supper of the Lamb" ([Revelation 19:9](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation19.php)), with the Tribulation saints invited as guests ([Luke 12:35-37](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2012:35-37&version=NKJV)).

Many dismiss that "the day no one knows" could be for the Church because they believe the "Olivet Discourse" is solely for the Jews. As I mentioned earlier, that might be true, but Gentiles are still mentioned as being part of the Kingdom in [Matthew 8:11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%208&version=NKJV). That being said, an assumption is usually made on their part that the "Olivet Discourse" is only for the Jews that will go through the Tribulation. They overlook that there is a Jewish remnant within the Church who will go to Heaven in the rapture. In other words, the wise virgins may represent the Jewish remnant in the Church body and the foolish virgins would then represent the Jewish remnant that gets saved through the Tribulation.

Some that view "the day no one knows" as the 2nd Coming argue that Christ only has one Bride, not many as this parable would suggest. Instead, they see these virgins as "bridesmaids," being the servants spoken of through the rest of the discourse. Based on their assumption that these are "bridesmaids," they point out that these servants are Jewish because John the Baptist called himself a friend of the Bridegroom ([John 3:29](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%203:29&version=NKJV)). However, Jesus called the disciples "friends of the Bridegroom," yet they are part of the Bride ([Matthew 9:15](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%209:15&version=NKJV), [Mark 2:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%202:19&version=NKJV), [Luke 5:34](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%205:34&version=NKJV)).

There is one passage in Scripture where virgins are bridesmaids:

[***Psalms 45:13-15***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms%2045&version=NKJV) ***- The royal daughter is all glorious within the palace; her clothing is woven with gold. She shall be brought to the King in robes of many colors; the virgins, her companions who follow her, shall be brought to You. With gladness and rejoicing they shall be brought; they shall enter the King's palace.***

Note that the bridesmaids go where the bride goes. If the ten virgins are bridesmaids to the Church, then the five wise virgins would be part of the procession to the heavenly throne as part of the bridal party.

There are a few versions of the Bible that do translate virgins as bridesmaids in [Matthew 25](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2025&version=NKJV), but the original language has the literal meaning of "virgins." Even though Christ has one Bride, it consists of individuals who accept Christ as Savior and become sealed by the Holy Spirit. The following passage supports the notion that even though we are all one in the Spirit in the body of Christ, being His Bride, we are still "many members":

[***1 Corinthians 12:12-14***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%2012&version=NKJV) ***- For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free - and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many.***

Paul had said that he wanted to present the Church as a chaste virgin in betrothal to Christ ([2 Corinthians 11:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%2011:2&version=NKJV)). In other words these "chaste" virgins, having the wisdom of the Holy Spirit and being sealed by Him would have their lamps burning at the time of the rapture. We do see in [Luke 12:35](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2012:35&version=NKJV) that the servants are to have their lamps burning when Christ returns, but as already suggested, the foolish virgins might be able to "buy" their oil in the Tribulation.

There is support for both views, so it is no wonder prophecy students and teachers disagree. Personally, I lean more towards "the day no one knows" being the rapture. It is my opinion that the parable of the ten virgins seems to fit better with the rapture in view.

Being a "virgin" spiritual wise would suggest they believe that there is only one true God, and not harlot after other gods like we see throughout the Old Testament. In other words, spiritual harlots may believe there is one "supreme being," but they chase after other gods too. The foolish virgins would be those who believe there is only one true God, but do not have a true repentant heart; being Christian "in name only," yet they do not worship other gods like a harlot. The wise virgins would be those who genuinely accept Christ before the rapture. In other words, the wise virgins would be the true body of Christ and the foolish virgins would just be nominal Christians.

I also struggle with the thought that all the virgins would be sleeping and be taken unaware at the end of the Tribulation, when the Jewish remnant will be supernaturally protected and the rest of the believers will be constantly fighting to survive. Unbelievers will definitely be taken unaware at Christ's Coming, as He is coming to them as a thief ([Matthew 24:43-44, Mark 13:33, Luke 12:37-40](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet4.php#thief)). It seems more fitting that the Church would be sleeping in the time leading up to the rapture, which seems to fit Peter's characterization of the last days:

[***2 Peter 3:3-4***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Peter%203&version=NKJV) ***- ...scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."***

In other words, in the time approaching the rapture, people would question His return because they see everything as "business as usual," or for whatever reason they do not want to consider that He could return in their lifetime. On several occasions I have been a witness to this attitude described by Peter, and sadly it has been mostly from Christians who cite this very passage about not knowing the day or the hour as an excuse for not watching.

It seems to me that most of the Church is not watching and does not want to watch. It wouldn't surprise me if the percentage of believers not watching would be enough to round down to consider them ALL asleep, as depicted in the parable. The sleeping Church has no idea how near Christ's return really is. When the rapture does happen, it will take them by surprise. The parable of the ten virgins seems to illustrate this perfectly.

At any rate, it seems the verdict is still out on what the Lord meant when He said "no man knows the day or the hour."

**Days of Noah - Matthew 24:37-39, Luke 17:26-32**

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|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Luke 17** |
| 37 | But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. | 26 | And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: |
| 38 | For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, | 27 | They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. |
| 39 | and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. | 28 | Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; |
| 29 | but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. |
| 30 | Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. |
| 31 | "In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. |
| 32 | Remember Lot's wife." |

In the passage above, Jesus describes the time leading up to His 2nd Coming. Based on the description the Lord gives, I believe we are already living in the days of Noah. However, the context here is pointing to the time immediately before the 2nd Coming. It is incredible to picture people "living it up," and refusing to repent in the midst of judgment during the horrors of the Tribulation, but the following passages confirm what Jesus told us in His discourse:

[***Revelation 11:7-14***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation11B.php#7-13) ***- When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.***

[***Revelation 16:8-11***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation16.php) ***- Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory. Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.***

[***Revelation 18:9-14***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation18.php) ***- "The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.'" "And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore: merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men. The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all."***

**Mark of the Beast - Luke 17:33**

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|  | **Luke 17** |
| 33 | Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. |

Though this passage can apply to us today, in context, Jesus is reaching out to the Tribulation period. This will be the time in history where everybody will have to make a choice for either God or the antichrist. In order to buy or sell, people will have to take the "mark of the beast," which will seal their fate to eternal damnation if they take it. Many will take the mark to save their physical life. Those who refuse the mark of the beast will likely be killed or starve to death, but those who take the mark will be lost eternally:

[***Matthew 16:24-26***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2016&version=NKJV) ***- Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"***

[***John 12:25***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2012&version=NKJV) ***- He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.***

[***Revelation 14:9-10***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation14B.php#6-11) ***- Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb."***

[***Revelation 13:15-17***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation13B.php#15) ***- He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.***

With economies weakening and collapsing around us, eventually there will be a push for a global currency, which would likely be cashless. This could happen very soon, even before the Tribulation begins. Also, the technology for the "mark of the beast" is here, as it is now commonplace to implant pets and medical patients with microchips.

Even though the technology is already here and we may witness the change to a global currency, the Bible is clear that the "mark of the beast" system will not come until after the antichrist takes power in the middle of the Tribulation. People will have a clear choice to make - to accept the mark in allegiance to the beast, or death in refusal to worship the beast.

**Sheep and Goat Judgment - Matthew 24:40-41, Luke 17:34-37**

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|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Luke 17** |
| 40 | Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. | 34 | "I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. |
| 41 | Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. | 35 | Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. |
| 36 | Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left." |
| 37 | And they answered and said to Him, "Where, Lord?" So He said to them, "Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together." |

The passage above describes the "Sheep and Goat Judgment," and how Jesus will divide the people who survive the Tribulation after He returns. We see that people "will be taken" away to judgment like the flood that took the unrighteous away in judgment. But the righteous will be left to repopulate the earth like Noah and his family.

As discussed in the [Pre-Tribulation Rapture](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture3.php#harvest) study, there is a harvest of souls in the Tribulation, which Jesus alludes to in the imagery of the men in the field and the women grinding at the mill. The "tares" are the unrighteous who will die and go to the everlasting fire:

[***Matthew 13:24-30***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2013&version=NKJV) ***- Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."'"***

Jesus goes into more detail on the "Sheep and Goat Judgment" at the end of His discourse:

[***Matthew 25:31-34,41,46***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2025&version=NKJV) ***- "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world....' "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels....' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."***

Christ will first gather and separate the nations, then He will kill the unbelievers left after Armageddon, and birds will gather to feast on the carnage, as discussed in the parallel passage in [Matthew 24:28](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet3.php#supper) and shown in the passage below:

[***Revelation 19:17-18,21***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation19.php) ***- Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.... And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh."***

In short, the unrighteous "will be taken" away at the end of the Tribulation and the people left will enter the [Millennium](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/heaven_millennium.php) in the flesh.

**Church will stand before Christ - Luke 21:34-36**

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|  | **Luke 21** |
| 34 | "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. |
| 35 | For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. |
| 36 | Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." |

Before Jesus gave His discourse to His disciples on the Mount of Olives, He told the crowd at the temple to watch and lead holy lives as the time approaches. This message can be applied to the Church. In this time before the Tribulation, we are to watch the signs and pray that we "may be counted worthy to escape." Those who have prayed for salvation through Christ and are part of the Church body are worthy. The Lord will take them to Heaven via the rapture, and they will escape the Tribulation:

[***Revelation 3:10***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation3A.php#10) ***- Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.***

[***Psalm 27:5***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2027&version=NKJV) ***- For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock.***

[***Isaiah 26:20-21***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2026&version=NKJV) ***- Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past. For behold, the LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth will also disclose her blood, and will no more cover her slain.***

[***Zephaniah 2:3***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zephaniah%202&version=NKJV) ***- Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the LORD's anger.***

[***1 Thessalonians 4:14-17***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Thessalonians%204&version=NKJV) ***- For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 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 will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will 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.***

After the rapture, believers will stand before Jesus during what Bible teachers call the "Bema," which is the Greek word for "judgment seat." In the ancient Olympics, judges awarded ivy crowns, called "stephanos," to the winners of the various events at the "Bema." They still do this at the Olympics and other athletic events today, using medals instead of crowns. The following passages describe this judgment:

[***2 Corinthians 5:10***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%205&version=NKJV) ***- For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.***

[***1 Corinthians 4:5***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%204&version=NKJV) ***- Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.***

[***1 Corinthians 9:24-25***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%209&version=NKJV) ***- Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.***

[Click here](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture2.php#bema) for more on the "Judgment Seat of Christ."

**Tribulation saints are to watch - Matthew 24:42, Mark 13:35-37**

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|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Mark 13** |
| 42 | Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. | 35 | "Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming - in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning - |
| 36 | lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. |
| 37 | And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!" |

While the call to watch in [Luke 21:34-36](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet4.php#church) is for believers before the Tribulation, the Matthew and Mark passages are for believers who are in the Tribulation. Recall from our discussion about the ["day and hour no one knows,"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet4.php#day) that believers might be able to count the days to Jesus' return from the "abomination of desolation." However, as shown in the passages above, those watching will still not know the hour of Christ's return. In fact, pointing to certain times of the day to watch in the passage in Mark may suggest that the day might be known, but not the hour.

As discussed earlier, pinpointing the day of Christ's return cannot be determined until the ["abomination of desolation"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php#abomination) occurs. Later, in [Matthew 24:43-44](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet4.php#thief), Jesus says He will come on a day that unbelievers aren't expecting Him. Since Jesus only mentioned unbelievers not expecting the day of His return, perhaps believers in the Tribulation can expect Him to return on a certain day after they see the ["abomination of desolation"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php#abomination).

**Tribulation saints eat at Wedding Supper of the Lamb - Luke 12:35-36**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Luke 12** |
| 35 | "Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; |
| 36 | and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately." |

The servants in this passage are believers in the Tribulation who are watching for the 2nd Coming. As discussed in the ["day and hour no one knows,"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet4.php#day) perhaps these servants opening the door to the master will be the five foolish virgins who missed the rapture.

When Jesus returns, it will be from His own wedding to the Church. Together, they will return from Heaven to celebrate the "marriage supper of the Lamb," after the Tribulation. The servants will be guests at this feast. This pattern is found in the ["Traditional Jewish Wedding,"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/jewish_wedding.php) where the bride and bridegroom consummate their marriage for seven days in a room that the son built on the father's house, with a reception to celebrate the marriage at the end of the week. The consummation between Jesus and the Church takes place in Heaven, before the 2nd Coming of Jesus, because when He returns, the Church is no longer called His "bride" - she is now His "wife":

[***Revelation 19:7-9***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation19.php) ***- Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'"***

**Christ comes as a thief to unbelievers - Matthew 24:43-44, Mark 13:33, Luke 12:37-40**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Mark 13** |  | **Luke 12** |
| 43 | But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. | 33 | Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. | 37 | Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. |
| 44 | Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. |  |  | 38 | And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants |
| 39 | But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. |
| 40 | Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. |

Jesus coming as a thief portrays destruction and judgment on unbelievers. Therefore, it is important for believers during the Tribulation to watch and pray and be ready for Jesus' return, so He doesn't come to them as a thief, being caught unaware:

[***John 10:10***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2010&version=NKJV) ***- The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.***

[***1 Thessalonians 5:2-4***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Thessalonians%205&version=NKJV) ***- For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.***

[***Revelation 3:3***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation3A.php#1-6) ***- Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.***

**Sheep and Goat Judgment (revisited) - Matthew 24:45-51, Mark 13:34**

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|  | **Matthew 24** |  | **Mark 13** |
| 45 | "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? | 34 | It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. |
| 46 | Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. |
| 47 | Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. |
| 48 | But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' |
| 49 | and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, |
| 50 | the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, |
| 51 | and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." |

In conclusion, Jesus ends His discourse with some parables about believers watching and waiting for His return. Anyone that does not accept Christ during the Tribulation will die and be taken to await final judgment when He comes, as shown in the parable above and the parables of the "talents" and the ["Sheep and Goat Judgment"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet4.php#sheep) below:

[***Matthew 25:14-18***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2025&version=NKJV) ***- For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money.***

[***Matthew 25:19-23***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2025&version=NKJV) ***- After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'"***

[***Matthew 25:24-30***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2025&version=NKJV) ***- "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"***

[***Matthew 25:31-36***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2025&version=NKJV) ***- "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'"***

[***Matthew 25:41-43,46***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2025&version=NKJV) ***- "...Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me....' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."***

## Period between the Rapture and "Daniel's 70th Week"

**Bema - Judgment Seat of Christ:**

The Bible describes four future judgments:

* "Judgment Seat of Christ" before the Tribulation
* ["Sheep and Goat Judgment"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture3.php#sheep_goat) at the end of the Tribulation
* [Tribulation Martyr's Judgment](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture3.php#trib_martyrs) after the Tribulation
* ["Great White Throne Judgment"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture4.php#white_throne) after the thousand-year reign of Christ.

[Click here](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture4.php#rr_judgments) for a chart on these judgments.

We will discuss all four judgments in this study. In this section, we will take a look at the "Judgment Seat of Christ." Jesus spoke of this judgment in the following passage:

[***Luke 21:34-36***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet4.php#church) ***- "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."***

After the rapture, the Church will stand before Jesus at the "Bema," the Greek word for "judgment seat." In the ancient Olympics, judges awarded ivy crowns, called stephanos, to the winners of the various events at the "Bema." They still do this at the Olympics and other athletic events today, using medals instead of crowns. Similarly, the Church will receive rewards for good works:

[***1 Corinthians 4:5***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%204&version=NKJV) ***- Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.***

[***2 Corinthians 5:10***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%205&version=NKJV) ***- For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.***

At the "Bema" our works will go through a refining fire:

[***1 Peter 1:6-9***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter%201&version=NKJV) ***- In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith - the salvation of your souls.***

[***1 Corinthians 3:10-15***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%203&version=NKJV) ***- According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.***

We will receive crowns for our good works, as shown in the passages below. In the passage above, we see that Christ has laid the foundation for our crowns. Our good works that survive the fire will be our rewards that adorn our crowns with "gold, silver" and "precious stones." The following verses describe the specific works that get rewarded with a crown:

* **The Crown of Life** - Reward for faithfulness through trial, even unto death:

[***James 1:12***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James%201&version=NKJV) ***- Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.***

[***Revelation 2:10***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation2A.php#10a) ***- Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.***

* **The Incorruptible Crown** - Reward for living set apart for the Lord and from the world:

[***1 Corinthians 9:24-25***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%209&version=NKJV) ***- Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.***

* **The Crown of Rejoicing** - Reward for sharing the Gospel that leads to others accepting Christ:

[***1 Thessalonians 2:17-20***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Thessalonians%202&version=NKJV) ***- But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire. Therefore we wanted to come to you - even I, Paul, time and again-but Satan hindered us. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.***

[***Philippians 4:1***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%204&version=NKJV) ***- Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.***

* **The Crown of Glory** - Reward for leading and ministering to other believers:

[***1 Peter 5:2-4***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter%205&version=NKJV) ***- Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.***

* **The Crown of Righteousness** - Reward for those who have devotion to watching,   
                                                        as they fervently await the return of Jesus:

[***2 Timothy 4:8***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy%204&version=NKJV) ***- Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.***

The works that are left from the refining fire at the "bema" will become our wedding garments and awards:

[***Revelation 19:7-9***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation19.php) ***- "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'"***

On a side note, I wonder if the idea of purgatory, where people have to suffer in a hell-like place to become worthy to go to Heaven came out of these passages that teach about the refining fire. But the scriptures teach that this refining fire is for purifying, not suffering. The Church will have incorruptible bodies when they stand before the Lord in this judgment ([1 Corinthians 15:51-53](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%2015:51-53&version=NKJV)), so this is not a second chance to become "spiritually ready." It is our works, good and bad, that Christ judges in the fire ([2 Corinthians 5:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%205:10&version=NKJV)). Besides, the scriptures show that we would already be counted worthy to even be eligible to appear before Christ at this judgment ([Luke 21:34-36](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2021:34-36&version=NKJV)).

**The elders in Heaven represent the Church:**

Elders are spiritual leaders and teachers for both Israel and the Church. They also are representatives for the group at large:

[***Numbers 11:16-17***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Numbers%2011&version=NKJV) ***- So the LORD said to Moses: "Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you. Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone."***

[***1 Peter 5:1-4***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter%205&version=NKJV) ***- The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.***

As shown in [Revelation 4](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation4A.php#4), the twenty-four elders around the throne of God best represent the Church. Note the following parallels in the summary below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Elders** | **Church** |
| Sit on thrones ([Revelation 4:4](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation4A.php#4)) | Sit with Christ on His throne ([Revelation 3:21](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation3B.php#21)) |
| Kings and Priests ([Revelation 5:10](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation5A.php#10)) | Kings and Priests ([Revelation 1:6](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation1A.php#6a)) |
| Will reign on the earth with Christ ([Revelation 5:10](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation5A.php#10)) | Will reign with Christ ([2 Timothy 2:11-12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy%20%202:11-12&version=NKJV)) |
| Clothed in white robes ([Revelation 4:4](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation4A.php#4)) | Clothed in white ([Revelation 3:5](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation3A.php#5a)) |
| Wearing crowns ([Revelation 4:4](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation4A.php#4)) | Rewarded crowns (See [Bema Judgment](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture2.php#bema)) |
| Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb ([Revelation 5:9](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation5A.php#9)) | Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb ([1 Peter 1:18-19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter%201:18-19&version=NKJV)) |
| Judgment committed to occupants of the thrones ([Revelation 20:4](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation20.php)) | Will judge the world and angels ([1 Corinthians 6:2-3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%206:2-3&version=NKJV)) and the Apostles will judge Israel ([Matthew 19:28](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2019:28&version=NKJV)) |

If the elders around God's throne represent the Church, they will be called to Heaven before God releases any of the judgments in Revelation on Earth. This is further evidence that the rapture has to occur before the "dispensation of judgment" begins.

**God will turn His focus from the Church back to the Jews:**

As shown in our discussion on [dispensations](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture.php#grace), God's focus shifted to the Church after Israel rejected Christ. At some point in the future, God will again shift His focus back to Israel:

[***Romans 9:25-26***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%209&version=NKJV) ***- As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved." " And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God."***

When God turns back to Israel, it will be during a period of judgment, which is the Tribulation. Jeremiah refers to this period as the "time of Jacob's trouble":

[***Jeremiah 30:7, 10-11***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah%2030&version=NKJV) ***- Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.... 'Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob,' says the LORD, 'Nor be dismayed, O Israel; for behold, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid. For I am with you,' says the LORD, 'to save you; though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished.'***

Recall that the purpose of the Tribulation is that it is a curse and a punishment for Israel's iniquity and God's enemies in preparation for the Kingdom ([Micah 7:8-9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Micah%207:8-9&version=NKJV), [Isaiah 26:21](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2026:21&version=NKJV), [Jeremiah 30](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah%2030&version=NKJV), [Daniel 9:24](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel+9&version=NKJV)). The Tribulation period is very Jewish oriented, as seen in the names "Jacob's trouble" and "Daniel's 70th week." The Tribulation also begins with a covenant made with Israel, which is later broken by the "abomination of desolation" in the Jewish temple. So we see that the focus of the Tribulation is on the Jewish people and on Israel.

Recognizing the Jewish focus of the Tribulation is important, because many today believe the Church has replaced Israel in Scripture. While it is true that the Church is spiritually considered Israel ([Romans 2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=romans%202&version=NKJV)), this is different from the promises God made to the physical descendants of Abraham found throughout Scripture. Those who do not see the difference between spiritual and national Israel believe that the Church will receive both the punishments and rewards promised to Israel. This is known as "replacement theology."

The major flaw in "replacement theology" came to light in 1948, when Israel became a nation again. This event, along with the re-gathering of the Jewish people in the last century, literally fulfilled many prophecies that prove that the Church has not replaced Israel. Anybody that still holds to "replacement theology" ignores God's promise that He will call Israel His people again after at time of rejection ([Romans 9:25-26](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%209:25-26&version=NKJV), [Jeremiah 30:7, 10-11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah%2030&version=NKJV)).

## First Half of "Daniel's 70th Week"

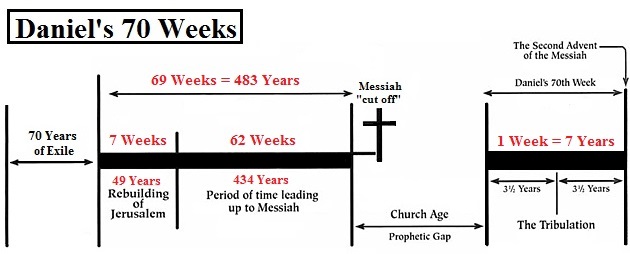
**Covenant brokered by the antichrist begins "Daniel's 70th Week":**

As mentioned in the last section, the Tribulation begins with a covenant brokered by the antichrist with Israel:

[***Daniel 9:24-27***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%209&version=NKJV) ***- "Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined. "Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate."***

God revealed to Daniel that He gave Israel 70 weeks in which He would punish their transgressing of the Law, before the Messiah would come to rule. History has shown us that the 70 weeks are 70 "weeks" of years, or 490 years. There were 483 years from the time of the command to Nehemiah to restore and build Jerusalem after Israel's 70-year exile, until Jesus died.

During those 483 years, God punished Israel under the yoke of Gentile rule. After the cross, God turned away from Israel because they rejected His Son ([Romans 11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%2011&version=NKJV)). It didn't take long for the nation to crumble after God abandoned them. Seven more years are left of the 70 "weeks" of punishment. During these last seven years, God will turn back to Israel. However, God will punish Israel along with His enemies through the Tribulation judgments. Today we live in the gap between the 483 years and the last seven years:



The last seven years will begin with the covenant brokered by the antichrist with Israel. The antichrist coming as a peacemaker is part of the first Seal judgment released by Jesus. Having a bow with no arrows may suggest that the spirit working through the man of the antichrist will use diplomacy as a weapon at the beginning of the Tribulation, instead of war:

[***Revelation 6:1-2***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation6B.php#1-8) ***- Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see." And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.***

The only other place we read of this covenant is in the following passage:

[***Isaiah 28:14***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2028&version=NKJV) ***- ...hear the word of the LORD, you scornful men, who rule this people who are in Jerusalem, because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we are in agreement. When the overflowing scourge passes through, it will not come to us, for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood we have hidden ourselves."***

[***Isaiah 28:18,22***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2028&version=NKJV) ***- Your covenant with death will be annulled, and your agreement with Sheol will not stand; when the overflowing scourge passes through, then you will be trampled down by it.... Now therefore, do not be mockers, lest your bonds be made strong; for I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts, a destruction determined even upon the whole earth.***

[Isaiah 26-29](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2026-29&version=NKJV) shows God judging Israel and the "whole earth," which places these chapters in the Tribulation period. It appears that Israel makes the "covenant with death" because they mistakenly believe it will make them secure by becoming a refuge for them. But the problem is that Israel does not seek security in God, so it will lead to death.

Anybody who has followed the affairs of Israel has seen many world leaders attempt to bring peace to the Middle East over the last several decades. Their goal has been to push Israel to divide her land. The following passages suggest that the "covenant with death" brokered by the antichrist will finally see fruition of this peace treaty that will involve dividing the land:

[***Daniel 11:36-39***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%2011&version=NKJV) ***- "Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done. He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above them all. But in their place he shall honor a god of fortresses; and a god which his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and pleasant things. Thus he shall act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign god, which he shall acknowledge, and advance its glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain.***

[***Joel 3:2***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Joel%203&version=NKJV) ***- I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land.***

However, as shown in the ["Great Middle East War,"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/middle_east_war.php) which I believe will occur near the beginning of the Tribulation, Israel defeats all her neighbors and greatly expands her borders, including the land claimed by the Palestinians. Therefore, even if the current peace process to create a Palestinian state resulted in a brokered covenant, it would be broken by Israel shortly after in the ["Great Middle East War,"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/middle_east_war.php) and not remain viable into the Tribulation period. Therefore, the "covenant with death" cannot be the peace agreement the world has championed for.

It makes more sense, in light of the ["Great Middle East War,"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/middle_east_war.php) that the confirmed covenant in Daniel could actually be the land covenant that God made with Abraham ([Genesis 17:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2017:8&version=NKJV)). Israel's borders would become similar to the borders of the kingdom during David's reign in the Old Testament. ([Click here](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/middle_east_war3.php#expansion) for maps.) If the "covenant with death" is actually the Abrahamic land covenant, then division of the land will probably take place later in the Tribulation during the conquest of the antichrist prophesied in [Daniel 11:29-45](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%2011:29-45&version=NKJV).

As an interesting aside, the antichrist will be unable to conquer current day Jordan ([Daniel 11:41](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%2011:41&version=NKJV)). Later, we will see that God will supernaturally protect a Jewish remnant during the second half of the Tribulation in Petra, which today is in Jordan. In other words, the antichrist will conquer all the land Israel gained in the ["Great Middle East War,"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/middle_east_war.php) except for the current area of Jordan, where God will protect the Jewish remnant.

**God will send a strong delusion to those that rejected Christ:**

After the rapture occurs, people will clamor for answers to this supernatural event and the earth-shaking events that follow. The Bible says there will be great signs and delusions to deceive those who reject the truth. In other words, for those people who choose to reject the truth, God will harden their hearts, just like He did to Pharaoh ([Exodus 4:21](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=exodus%204&version=NKJV)). God will do this by allowing deceptive signs that unbelievers can physically see and easily believe because they didn't trust in Him by faith. Like Pharaoh, they will make up their mind to reject the truth, and God will simply give them over to their foolish disbelief:

[***2 Thessalonians 2:9-12***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Thessalonians%202&version=NKJV) ***- The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.***

Jesus tells us that these signs and wonders will be so great as to "deceive, if possible, even the elect" ([Matthew 24:24, Mark 13:22](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php#signs)). Later, we will see that the "elect" are Jewish. It doesn't seem likely that the Jewish remnant would easily be deceived, as they will have to trust God's Word to flee to safety in the first place ([Matthew 24:16-19, Mark 13:14-17](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php#flee)). In fact, the Lord said that the signs will be so convincing, that if not for their faith and heeding God's Word ahead of time, believers would likely be swept away by the deception too.

There are several theories about what some of these deceptive signs and wonders might be. The most probable in my view is when the antichrist, or beast is mortally wounded, but later healed:

[***Revelation 13:3***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation13A.php#3) ***- And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.***

The second beast, known as the false prophet of the antichrist, will do great signs and wonders to persuade the world to make an idol of the first beast and worship it:

[***Revelation 13:11-14***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation13B.php#11-15) ***- Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.***

The passages below show that the antichrist will apparently die from his mortal wound, but come back to life, returning from the bottomless pit:

[***Revelation 11:7***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation11B.php#7-13) ***- When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.***

[***Revelation 17:8***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation17.php) ***- The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.***

Satan cannot counterfeit a resurrection because only God has that power ([John 11:25](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2011:25&version=NKJV)). Therefore, it seems probable that God will resurrect the antichrist, but the antichrist will take the credit, hence being a lie ([2 Thessalonians 2:9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Thessalonians%202:9&version=NKJV)).

Some believe the "strong delusion" is that demonic beings arrive on the scene at the beginning of the Tribulation purporting themselves as aliens. Can you imagine how difficult it would be to not believe the lie, if physical alien beings arrived in space ships with convincing deceptive answers to disappearance of Christians in the rapture? The Bible does say that Satan is the prince of the power of the air ([Ephesians 2:1-2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%202:1-2&version=NKJV)). The many documented incidences of UFO and alien abductions that are on the rise these days, along with the decades of public conditioning for such a scenario, give some credence to this theory. If this scenario plays out and the "aliens" come with spiritual answers for the supernatural occurrences, I could see how the masses could easily be lead into the global cult the Bible calls "Mystery Babylon," which we will touch on next.

Scientific delusions are possible too. Scientists have spent the last several decades building a particle accelerator called the "Hadron Collider" in Switzerland. There are a few concerned scientists who protested, claiming that this atom smasher could potentially make microscopic black holes. I imagine that after the rapture happens, these same scientists could blame the Hadron Collider for producing black holes that sucked up the missing people. I don't think this idea would last very long with all the "signs and wonders" going on, but it could initially lead people in the wrong direction.

Another recent craze and possible delusion is the Mayan Calendar. The Mayan Calendar ended at the same time our solar system came into alignment with the galactic plane in December 2012. Some scientists predicted an increase in tectonic activity, extreme weather, and possibly even a reverse in our magnetic poles in the years surrounding the alignment, which reminds me of the birth pangs described in [Matthew 24](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php#birth). So you can see that if the rapture occurs within a few years around 2012, people could easily be deluded by either the scientific explanation for what is happening, or get drawn into some "New Age" cult that develops around the Mayan Calendar.

**The Babylonian religion will rise:**

The supernatural signs and wonders will not only be deceptive, but also give rise to a global cult. I believe the supernatural war of [Ezekiel 38-39](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/gog_magog.php) will occur soon after the rapture, possibly at the beginning of the Tribulation, as I discuss in the ["Gog and Magog War"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/gog_magog.php) study. There will be no such thing as an atheist after this supernatural war.

Islam will be severely judged, since many of the members of the confederacy of the ["Gog and Magog War"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/gog_magog.php) are Muslim nations who will be left to reconsider their belief system. Many will find their answers in the truth of the Gospel and get saved ([Revelation 7:9-17](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation7B.php#9-12)), but many more will be swept away and deceived by the signs and wonders, as we saw in the last section.

[Revelation 17](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation17.php) shows that a harlot called "Mystery Babylon" rules during the first half of the Tribulation. Throughout the Old Testament, we see that a "harlot" was someone who sought after foreign gods, instead of the "One True God." Therefore, the harlot in the Tribulation is a religious system that follows after a false god, or gods. To further understand what this religious system is, we need to go back to [Genesis 10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2010&version=NKJV), to the account about the mighty hunter named Nimrod, who built and ruled over Babel, the city later known as Babylon.

Turning over to [Genesis 11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2011&version=NKJV), we see that the people of this city tried to build a tower to the heavens. The reason the people built the tower was because they wanted to make a name for themselves. God had commanded them to spread out and fill the earth in [Genesis 9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%209&version=NKJV). Instead they decided to stay in one area. By making a name for themselves with the tower, the people shook their fists at God in rebellion. This original Babylonian system was simply the gathering of the people under the leadership of Nimrod to do their own will and not God's will. To stop the rebellion, God confused their language and forced them to scatter over the earth, which He had commanded them to do in the first place.

Historical accounts tell us that Nimrod's wife, Semiramis, believed that after Nimrod died people should worship him as a god. When her son Tammuz was born, Semiramis claimed that he was supernaturally conceived and people worshipped both Tammuz and his mother as gods. This was the beginning of idolatry and mother/son worship, which resonates within many of the ancient religions of the past as well as many religions today - even in the Roman Catholic Church.

Some Catholics make Mary more prominent than Jesus by praying to, or even worshiping her. Interestingly, even the Muslims have a special reverence for Mary, as they believe Jesus was a prophet. There are also many "New Age" cult groups that worship the earth as a goddess. The point here is that the Babylonian system that started under Nimrod, will come full circle as the religious system that Satan uses to deceive the masses at the beginning of the Tribulation, and most of the world religions could be brought together under the shared belief that Jesus was born to a virgin, or a goddess.

[Revelation 17:6](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation17.php) tells us that the harlot is "drunk with the blood of the saints... and the martyrs of Jesus." Apparently, followers of the "Mystery Babylon" religion will consider anyone that doesn't join them a traitor, or infidel worthy of death. The Muslims already believe that, but Christianity has also had an ugly history of killing those who would not convert to their religion. A strong delusion will surely come at the beginning of the Tribulation that will bring all faiths together and cause the followers of the new religion to insist that all should convert or die.

Amazingly, many of the faiths of the world are already trying to find common ground for peace and understanding. Some believe that world peace is impossible without peace between all religions first. Interfaith conferences and events are rapidly on the rise. Many accusations have come against churches, or other religious groups that refuse to join in these activities of being intolerant, extreme, or hateful. Ironically, the religious system that will rise out of this growing movement at the beginning of the Tribulation will be all of those things.

**God's judgment begins:**

Before God's judgment begins, there is a scene in Heaven with a scroll that has seven seals on it ([Revelation 5](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation5A.php)). Curiously, John begins to weep because he thinks there is no one worthy to open the scroll. What is in the scroll that would cause John to weep?

In Jeremiah we read about the prophesied exile of Israel to Babylon. Before the exile, the Lord told Jeremiah to buy a field from his cousin. The exchange occurred as follows:

[***Jeremiah 32:10-15***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah%2032&version=NKJV) ***- And I signed the deed and sealed it, took witnesses, and weighed the money on the scales. So I took the purchase deed, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open; and I gave the purchase deed to Baruch the son of Neriah, son of Mahseiah, in the presence of Hanamel my uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses who signed the purchase deed, before all the Jews who sat in the court of the prison. "Then I charged Baruch before them, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Take these deeds, both this purchase deed which is sealed and this deed which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may last many days." For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land."'***

So we can see that this sealed deed was a "purchase deed" to the land. Being the next of kin, Hanamel was able to buy the land so that he or another relative could claim the land back after the exile. Similarly, Adam was given the earth to rule over. But after the fall, God revoked the "purchase deed" to the earth and Adam lost his dominion. Jesus, being the only next of kin to Adam who was sinless, paid for the "purchase deed" with His own blood. That is why Jesus is the only one worthy to take to scroll and open it, to redeem both the earth and men back to God ([Revelation 5:9](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation5A.php#9)).

Over the course of the book of Revelation, we find that opening this scroll will ultimately redeem the earth from it curse. However, each broken seal results in judgment from Heaven. Once Jesus reaches the 7th Seal, seven more judgments come, called the Trumpet judgments. After the 7th Trumpet, seven more judgments come, called the Bowl judgments. In other words, the Seals of the "purchase deed" of the earth contain all the judgments described in Revelation. It is important to note that Jesus Himself breaks each Seal. Therefore, Jesus is the one administering judgment through the catastrophes described throughout Revelation. After the judgments are over, Jesus returns to redeem and reclaim Earth, which Adam lost at the fall in Genesis.

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of the Tribulation is to punish Israel's iniquity and God's enemies. Punishment comes through the judgments in Revelation. Also, recall that the dispensations of grace and judgment cannot work concurrently. The following verses confirm why the Church is not on Earth while God is pouring out His wrath:

[***Romans 5:8-9***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%205&version=NKJV) ***- But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.***

[***1 Thessalonians 1:9-10***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Thessalonians%201&version=NKJV) ***- For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.***

[***1 Thessalonians 5:9-10***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Thessalonians%205&version=NKJV) ***- For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.***

[***Revelation 3:10***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation3A.php#10) ***- Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.***

[***Psalm 27:5***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2027&version=NKJV) ***- For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock.***

[***Isaiah 26:20-21***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2026&version=NKJV) ***- Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past. For behold, the LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth will also disclose her blood, and will no more cover her slain.***

[***Zephaniah 2:3***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zephaniah%202&version=NKJV) ***- Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD's anger.***

To summarize, God has promised His people that they will "be saved from wrath," He "delivers us from the wrath to come," He "did not appoint us to wrath," He will keep believers "from the hour of trial" that will test everyone on Earth, He will hide believers in the heavenly tabernacle in the "time of trouble," believers will be hidden until the "indignation has passed," where the Lord will "punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity," and believers "will be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger." It cannot be any clearer - the Church will be in Heaven during the Tribulation, while God is pouring out His wrath on Earth.

Some people try to categorize the judgments in Revelation as "man's wrath" versus "God's wrath," instead of all being from God. As pointed out earlier, the sealed "purchase deed" holds all the judgments in Revelation. Jesus, who is God, personally breaks all the seals. Therefore all the judgments are the wrath of God. While the "wrath of man" is the cause of many of the sorrows in this world, the Bible teaches that God can use man to carry out His wrath. The passages below clearly show that God has and will carry out His judgments through men:

[***Habakkuk 1:5-6***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Habakkuk%201&version=NKJV) ***- "Look among the nations and watch - be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days which you would not believe, though it were told you. For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, a bitter and hasty nation which marches through the breadth of the earth, to possess dwelling places that are not theirs."***

[***Revelation 17:15-17***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation17.php) ***- Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.***

**The 5th Seal martyrs:**

Let's take a moment to further discuss the difference in how God deals with the Church in the "dispensation of grace" versus the believers in the Tribulation. Recall, the blood of Christ has [reconciled and sanctified the Church,](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture.php#reconciled) making us righteous before God. There is no need for the Church to make "reconciliation for iniquity" in the "dispensation of grace" like Israel in the "dispensation of judgment" ([Daniel 9:24](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%209:24&version=NKJV)). This does not mean that God does not punish the Church at all. In fact, the Bible teaches that God will chasten believers as a loving father who corrects his children:

[***Hebrews 12:6-7***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews%2012&version=NKJV) ***- "For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?***

Just as being disciplined by parents is uncomfortable or painful, chastening from the Lord is no different. However, During the "dispensation of judgment" believers are not chastened, or simply martyred for their faith like many Christians today - God will give them over to unrestrained evil who will seek to exterminate them all:

[***Revelation 6:9-11***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation6C.php#9-11) ***- When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.***

[***2 Thessalonians 2:7***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Thessalonians+2&version=NKJV) ***- For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.***

[***Daniel 7:21-22***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel+7&version=NKJV) ***- "I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom."***

[***Revelation 13:7***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation13A.php#7) ***- It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.***

It is interesting to note, Jeremiah prayed to see vengeance on those who tried to kill him, and the Lord answered this prayer, as He will the martyred saints' prayer under the altar:

[***Jeremiah 11:19-23***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah%2011&version=NKJV) ***- But I was like a docile lamb brought to the slaughter; and I did not know that they had devised schemes against me, saying, "Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be remembered no more." But, O LORD of hosts, You who judge righteously, Testing the mind and the heart, Let me see Your vengeance on them, For to You I have revealed my cause. "Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the men of Anathoth who seek your life, saying, 'Do not prophesy in the name of the LORD, lest you die by our hand' - therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Behold, I will punish them. The young men shall die by the sword, their sons and their daughters shall die by famine; and there shall be no remnant of them, for I will bring catastrophe on the men of Anathoth, even the year of their punishment.' "***

On the other hand, during the ["dispensation of grace,"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture.php#grace) Paul admonishes believers to show love to our enemies:

[***Romans 12:19-20***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%2012&version=NKJV) ***- Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."***

Imprecatory prayer, or prayer calling for judgment, is not found in the New Testament, except for in the book of Revelation, which covers the "dispensation of judgment." The ["dispensation of grace"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture.php#grace) is over before the martyred saints ask the Lord to vindicate their death. The fifth Seal is judgment against the "earth dwellers" over the course of the Tribulation, with vengeance specifically taken against Babylon the harlot religious system ([Revelation 19:1-3](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation19.php)) and Babylon the city ([Revelation 18:10, 20](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation18.php)).

## Period between the Rapture and "Daniel's 70th Week"

**Bema - Judgment Seat of Christ:**

The Bible describes four future judgments:

* "Judgment Seat of Christ" before the Tribulation
* ["Sheep and Goat Judgment"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture3.php#sheep_goat) at the end of the Tribulation
* [Tribulation Martyr's Judgment](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture3.php#trib_martyrs) after the Tribulation
* ["Great White Throne Judgment"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture4.php#white_throne) after the thousand-year reign of Christ.

[Click here](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture4.php#rr_judgments) for a chart on these judgments.

We will discuss all four judgments in this study. In this section, we will take a look at the "Judgment Seat of Christ." Jesus spoke of this judgment in the following passage:

[***Luke 21:34-36***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet4.php#church) ***- "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."***

After the rapture, the Church will stand before Jesus at the "Bema," the Greek word for "judgment seat." In the ancient Olympics, judges awarded ivy crowns, called stephanos, to the winners of the various events at the "Bema." They still do this at the Olympics and other athletic events today, using medals instead of crowns. Similarly, the Church will receive rewards for good works:

[***1 Corinthians 4:5***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%204&version=NKJV) ***- Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.***

[***2 Corinthians 5:10***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%205&version=NKJV) ***- For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.***

At the "Bema" our works will go through a refining fire:

[***1 Peter 1:6-9***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter%201&version=NKJV) ***- In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith - the salvation of your souls.***

[***1 Corinthians 3:10-15***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%203&version=NKJV) ***- According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.***

We will receive crowns for our good works, as shown in the passages below. In the passage above, we see that Christ has laid the foundation for our crowns. Our good works that survive the fire will be our rewards that adorn our crowns with "gold, silver" and "precious stones." The following verses describe the specific works that get rewarded with a crown:

* **The Crown of Life** - Reward for faithfulness through trial, even unto death:

[***James 1:12***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James%201&version=NKJV) ***- Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.***

[***Revelation 2:10***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation2A.php#10a) ***- Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.***

* **The Incorruptible Crown** - Reward for living set apart for the Lord and from the world:

[***1 Corinthians 9:24-25***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%209&version=NKJV) ***- Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.***

* **The Crown of Rejoicing** - Reward for sharing the Gospel that leads to others accepting Christ:

[***1 Thessalonians 2:17-20***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Thessalonians%202&version=NKJV) ***- But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire. Therefore we wanted to come to you - even I, Paul, time and again-but Satan hindered us. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.***

[***Philippians 4:1***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%204&version=NKJV) ***- Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.***

* **The Crown of Glory** - Reward for leading and ministering to other believers:

[***1 Peter 5:2-4***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter%205&version=NKJV) ***- Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.***

* **The Crown of Righteousness** - Reward for those who have devotion to watching,   
                                                        as they fervently await the return of Jesus:

[***2 Timothy 4:8***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy%204&version=NKJV) ***- Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.***

The works that are left from the refining fire at the "bema" will become our wedding garments and awards:

[***Revelation 19:7-9***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation19.php) ***- "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'"***

On a side note, I wonder if the idea of purgatory, where people have to suffer in a hell-like place to become worthy to go to Heaven came out of these passages that teach about the refining fire. But the scriptures teach that this refining fire is for purifying, not suffering. The Church will have incorruptible bodies when they stand before the Lord in this judgment ([1 Corinthians 15:51-53](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%2015:51-53&version=NKJV)), so this is not a second chance to become "spiritually ready." It is our works, good and bad, that Christ judges in the fire ([2 Corinthians 5:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%205:10&version=NKJV)). Besides, the scriptures show that we would already be counted worthy to even be eligible to appear before Christ at this judgment ([Luke 21:34-36](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2021:34-36&version=NKJV)).

**The elders in Heaven represent the Church:**

Elders are spiritual leaders and teachers for both Israel and the Church. They also are representatives for the group at large:

[***Numbers 11:16-17***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Numbers%2011&version=NKJV) ***- So the LORD said to Moses: "Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you. Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone."***

[***1 Peter 5:1-4***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter%205&version=NKJV) ***- The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.***

As shown in [Revelation 4](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation4A.php#4), the twenty-four elders around the throne of God best represent the Church. Note the following parallels in the summary below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Elders** | **Church** |
| Sit on thrones ([Revelation 4:4](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation4A.php#4)) | Sit with Christ on His throne ([Revelation 3:21](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation3B.php#21)) |
| Kings and Priests ([Revelation 5:10](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation5A.php#10)) | Kings and Priests ([Revelation 1:6](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation1A.php#6a)) |
| Will reign on the earth with Christ ([Revelation 5:10](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation5A.php#10)) | Will reign with Christ ([2 Timothy 2:11-12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy%20%202:11-12&version=NKJV)) |
| Clothed in white robes ([Revelation 4:4](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation4A.php#4)) | Clothed in white ([Revelation 3:5](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation3A.php#5a)) |
| Wearing crowns ([Revelation 4:4](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation4A.php#4)) | Rewarded crowns (See [Bema Judgment](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture2.php#bema)) |
| Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb ([Revelation 5:9](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation5A.php#9)) | Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb ([1 Peter 1:18-19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter%201:18-19&version=NKJV)) |
| Judgment committed to occupants of the thrones ([Revelation 20:4](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation20.php)) | Will judge the world and angels ([1 Corinthians 6:2-3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%206:2-3&version=NKJV)) and the Apostles will judge Israel ([Matthew 19:28](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2019:28&version=NKJV)) |

If the elders around God's throne represent the Church, they will be called to Heaven before God releases any of the judgments in Revelation on Earth. This is further evidence that the rapture has to occur before the "dispensation of judgment" begins.

**God will turn His focus from the Church back to the Jews:**

As shown in our discussion on [dispensations](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture.php#grace), God's focus shifted to the Church after Israel rejected Christ. At some point in the future, God will again shift His focus back to Israel:

[***Romans 9:25-26***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%209&version=NKJV) ***- As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved." " And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God."***

When God turns back to Israel, it will be during a period of judgment, which is the Tribulation. Jeremiah refers to this period as the "time of Jacob's trouble":

[***Jeremiah 30:7, 10-11***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah%2030&version=NKJV) ***- Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.... 'Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob,' says the LORD, 'Nor be dismayed, O Israel; for behold, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid. For I am with you,' says the LORD, 'to save you; though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished.'***

Recall that the purpose of the Tribulation is that it is a curse and a punishment for Israel's iniquity and God's enemies in preparation for the Kingdom ([Micah 7:8-9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Micah%207:8-9&version=NKJV), [Isaiah 26:21](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2026:21&version=NKJV), [Jeremiah 30](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah%2030&version=NKJV), [Daniel 9:24](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel+9&version=NKJV)). The Tribulation period is very Jewish oriented, as seen in the names "Jacob's trouble" and "Daniel's 70th week." The Tribulation also begins with a covenant made with Israel, which is later broken by the "abomination of desolation" in the Jewish temple. So we see that the focus of the Tribulation is on the Jewish people and on Israel.

Recognizing the Jewish focus of the Tribulation is important, because many today believe the Church has replaced Israel in Scripture. While it is true that the Church is spiritually considered Israel ([Romans 2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=romans%202&version=NKJV)), this is different from the promises God made to the physical descendants of Abraham found throughout Scripture. Those who do not see the difference between spiritual and national Israel believe that the Church will receive both the punishments and rewards promised to Israel. This is known as "replacement theology."

The major flaw in "replacement theology" came to light in 1948, when Israel became a nation again. This event, along with the re-gathering of the Jewish people in the last century, literally fulfilled many prophecies that prove that the Church has not replaced Israel. Anybody that still holds to "replacement theology" ignores God's promise that He will call Israel His people again after at time of rejection ([Romans 9:25-26](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%209:25-26&version=NKJV), [Jeremiah 30:7, 10-11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah%2030&version=NKJV)).

## First Half of "Daniel's 70th Week"

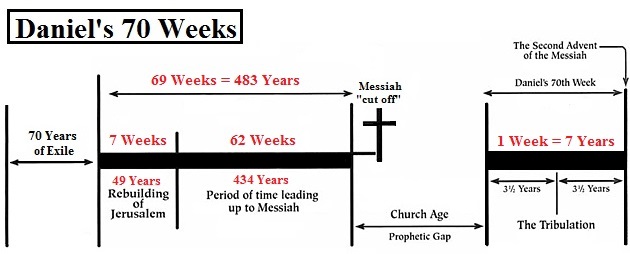
**Covenant brokered by the antichrist begins "Daniel's 70th Week":**

As mentioned in the last section, the Tribulation begins with a covenant brokered by the antichrist with Israel:

[***Daniel 9:24-27***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%209&version=NKJV) ***- "Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined. "Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate."***

God revealed to Daniel that He gave Israel 70 weeks in which He would punish their transgressing of the Law, before the Messiah would come to rule. History has shown us that the 70 weeks are 70 "weeks" of years, or 490 years. There were 483 years from the time of the command to Nehemiah to restore and build Jerusalem after Israel's 70-year exile, until Jesus died.

During those 483 years, God punished Israel under the yoke of Gentile rule. After the cross, God turned away from Israel because they rejected His Son ([Romans 11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%2011&version=NKJV)). It didn't take long for the nation to crumble after God abandoned them. Seven more years are left of the 70 "weeks" of punishment. During these last seven years, God will turn back to Israel. However, God will punish Israel along with His enemies through the Tribulation judgments. Today we live in the gap between the 483 years and the last seven years:



The last seven years will begin with the covenant brokered by the antichrist with Israel. The antichrist coming as a peacemaker is part of the first Seal judgment released by Jesus. Having a bow with no arrows may suggest that the spirit working through the man of the antichrist will use diplomacy as a weapon at the beginning of the Tribulation, instead of war:

[***Revelation 6:1-2***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation6B.php#1-8) ***- Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see." And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.***

The only other place we read of this covenant is in the following passage:

[***Isaiah 28:14***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2028&version=NKJV) ***- ...hear the word of the LORD, you scornful men, who rule this people who are in Jerusalem, because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we are in agreement. When the overflowing scourge passes through, it will not come to us, for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood we have hidden ourselves."***

[***Isaiah 28:18,22***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2028&version=NKJV) ***- Your covenant with death will be annulled, and your agreement with Sheol will not stand; when the overflowing scourge passes through, then you will be trampled down by it.... Now therefore, do not be mockers, lest your bonds be made strong; for I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts, a destruction determined even upon the whole earth.***

[Isaiah 26-29](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2026-29&version=NKJV) shows God judging Israel and the "whole earth," which places these chapters in the Tribulation period. It appears that Israel makes the "covenant with death" because they mistakenly believe it will make them secure by becoming a refuge for them. But the problem is that Israel does not seek security in God, so it will lead to death.

Anybody who has followed the affairs of Israel has seen many world leaders attempt to bring peace to the Middle East over the last several decades. Their goal has been to push Israel to divide her land. The following passages suggest that the "covenant with death" brokered by the antichrist will finally see fruition of this peace treaty that will involve dividing the land:

[***Daniel 11:36-39***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%2011&version=NKJV) ***- "Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done. He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above them all. But in their place he shall honor a god of fortresses; and a god which his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and pleasant things. Thus he shall act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign god, which he shall acknowledge, and advance its glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain.***

[***Joel 3:2***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Joel%203&version=NKJV) ***- I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land.***

However, as shown in the ["Great Middle East War,"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/middle_east_war.php) which I believe will occur near the beginning of the Tribulation, Israel defeats all her neighbors and greatly expands her borders, including the land claimed by the Palestinians. Therefore, even if the current peace process to create a Palestinian state resulted in a brokered covenant, it would be broken by Israel shortly after in the ["Great Middle East War,"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/middle_east_war.php) and not remain viable into the Tribulation period. Therefore, the "covenant with death" cannot be the peace agreement the world has championed for.

It makes more sense, in light of the ["Great Middle East War,"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/middle_east_war.php) that the confirmed covenant in Daniel could actually be the land covenant that God made with Abraham ([Genesis 17:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2017:8&version=NKJV)). Israel's borders would become similar to the borders of the kingdom during David's reign in the Old Testament. ([Click here](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/middle_east_war3.php#expansion) for maps.) If the "covenant with death" is actually the Abrahamic land covenant, then division of the land will probably take place later in the Tribulation during the conquest of the antichrist prophesied in [Daniel 11:29-45](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%2011:29-45&version=NKJV).

As an interesting aside, the antichrist will be unable to conquer current day Jordan ([Daniel 11:41](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%2011:41&version=NKJV)). Later, we will see that God will supernaturally protect a Jewish remnant during the second half of the Tribulation in Petra, which today is in Jordan. In other words, the antichrist will conquer all the land Israel gained in the ["Great Middle East War,"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/middle_east_war.php) except for the current area of Jordan, where God will protect the Jewish remnant.

**God will send a strong delusion to those that rejected Christ:**

After the rapture occurs, people will clamor for answers to this supernatural event and the earth-shaking events that follow. The Bible says there will be great signs and delusions to deceive those who reject the truth. In other words, for those people who choose to reject the truth, God will harden their hearts, just like He did to Pharaoh ([Exodus 4:21](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=exodus%204&version=NKJV)). God will do this by allowing deceptive signs that unbelievers can physically see and easily believe because they didn't trust in Him by faith. Like Pharaoh, they will make up their mind to reject the truth, and God will simply give them over to their foolish disbelief:

[***2 Thessalonians 2:9-12***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Thessalonians%202&version=NKJV) ***- The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.***

Jesus tells us that these signs and wonders will be so great as to "deceive, if possible, even the elect" ([Matthew 24:24, Mark 13:22](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php#signs)). Later, we will see that the "elect" are Jewish. It doesn't seem likely that the Jewish remnant would easily be deceived, as they will have to trust God's Word to flee to safety in the first place ([Matthew 24:16-19, Mark 13:14-17](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php#flee)). In fact, the Lord said that the signs will be so convincing, that if not for their faith and heeding God's Word ahead of time, believers would likely be swept away by the deception too.

There are several theories about what some of these deceptive signs and wonders might be. The most probable in my view is when the antichrist, or beast is mortally wounded, but later healed:

[***Revelation 13:3***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation13A.php#3) ***- And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.***

The second beast, known as the false prophet of the antichrist, will do great signs and wonders to persuade the world to make an idol of the first beast and worship it:

[***Revelation 13:11-14***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation13B.php#11-15) ***- Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.***

The passages below show that the antichrist will apparently die from his mortal wound, but come back to life, returning from the bottomless pit:

[***Revelation 11:7***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation11B.php#7-13) ***- When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.***

[***Revelation 17:8***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation17.php) ***- The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.***

Satan cannot counterfeit a resurrection because only God has that power ([John 11:25](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2011:25&version=NKJV)). Therefore, it seems probable that God will resurrect the antichrist, but the antichrist will take the credit, hence being a lie ([2 Thessalonians 2:9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Thessalonians%202:9&version=NKJV)).

Some believe the "strong delusion" is that demonic beings arrive on the scene at the beginning of the Tribulation purporting themselves as aliens. Can you imagine how difficult it would be to not believe the lie, if physical alien beings arrived in space ships with convincing deceptive answers to disappearance of Christians in the rapture? The Bible does say that Satan is the prince of the power of the air ([Ephesians 2:1-2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%202:1-2&version=NKJV)). The many documented incidences of UFO and alien abductions that are on the rise these days, along with the decades of public conditioning for such a scenario, give some credence to this theory. If this scenario plays out and the "aliens" come with spiritual answers for the supernatural occurrences, I could see how the masses could easily be lead into the global cult the Bible calls "Mystery Babylon," which we will touch on next.

Scientific delusions are possible too. Scientists have spent the last several decades building a particle accelerator called the "Hadron Collider" in Switzerland. There are a few concerned scientists who protested, claiming that this atom smasher could potentially make microscopic black holes. I imagine that after the rapture happens, these same scientists could blame the Hadron Collider for producing black holes that sucked up the missing people. I don't think this idea would last very long with all the "signs and wonders" going on, but it could initially lead people in the wrong direction.

Another recent craze and possible delusion is the Mayan Calendar. The Mayan Calendar ended at the same time our solar system came into alignment with the galactic plane in December 2012. Some scientists predicted an increase in tectonic activity, extreme weather, and possibly even a reverse in our magnetic poles in the years surrounding the alignment, which reminds me of the birth pangs described in [Matthew 24](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/olivet2.php#birth). So you can see that if the rapture occurs within a few years around 2012, people could easily be deluded by either the scientific explanation for what is happening, or get drawn into some "New Age" cult that develops around the Mayan Calendar.

**The Babylonian religion will rise:**

The supernatural signs and wonders will not only be deceptive, but also give rise to a global cult. I believe the supernatural war of [Ezekiel 38-39](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/gog_magog.php) will occur soon after the rapture, possibly at the beginning of the Tribulation, as I discuss in the ["Gog and Magog War"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/gog_magog.php) study. There will be no such thing as an atheist after this supernatural war.

Islam will be severely judged, since many of the members of the confederacy of the ["Gog and Magog War"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/gog_magog.php) are Muslim nations who will be left to reconsider their belief system. Many will find their answers in the truth of the Gospel and get saved ([Revelation 7:9-17](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation7B.php#9-12)), but many more will be swept away and deceived by the signs and wonders, as we saw in the last section.

[Revelation 17](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation17.php) shows that a harlot called "Mystery Babylon" rules during the first half of the Tribulation. Throughout the Old Testament, we see that a "harlot" was someone who sought after foreign gods, instead of the "One True God." Therefore, the harlot in the Tribulation is a religious system that follows after a false god, or gods. To further understand what this religious system is, we need to go back to [Genesis 10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2010&version=NKJV), to the account about the mighty hunter named Nimrod, who built and ruled over Babel, the city later known as Babylon.

Turning over to [Genesis 11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2011&version=NKJV), we see that the people of this city tried to build a tower to the heavens. The reason the people built the tower was because they wanted to make a name for themselves. God had commanded them to spread out and fill the earth in [Genesis 9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%209&version=NKJV). Instead they decided to stay in one area. By making a name for themselves with the tower, the people shook their fists at God in rebellion. This original Babylonian system was simply the gathering of the people under the leadership of Nimrod to do their own will and not God's will. To stop the rebellion, God confused their language and forced them to scatter over the earth, which He had commanded them to do in the first place.

Historical accounts tell us that Nimrod's wife, Semiramis, believed that after Nimrod died people should worship him as a god. When her son Tammuz was born, Semiramis claimed that he was supernaturally conceived and people worshipped both Tammuz and his mother as gods. This was the beginning of idolatry and mother/son worship, which resonates within many of the ancient religions of the past as well as many religions today - even in the Roman Catholic Church.

Some Catholics make Mary more prominent than Jesus by praying to, or even worshiping her. Interestingly, even the Muslims have a special reverence for Mary, as they believe Jesus was a prophet. There are also many "New Age" cult groups that worship the earth as a goddess. The point here is that the Babylonian system that started under Nimrod, will come full circle as the religious system that Satan uses to deceive the masses at the beginning of the Tribulation, and most of the world religions could be brought together under the shared belief that Jesus was born to a virgin, or a goddess.

[Revelation 17:6](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation17.php) tells us that the harlot is "drunk with the blood of the saints... and the martyrs of Jesus." Apparently, followers of the "Mystery Babylon" religion will consider anyone that doesn't join them a traitor, or infidel worthy of death. The Muslims already believe that, but Christianity has also had an ugly history of killing those who would not convert to their religion. A strong delusion will surely come at the beginning of the Tribulation that will bring all faiths together and cause the followers of the new religion to insist that all should convert or die.

Amazingly, many of the faiths of the world are already trying to find common ground for peace and understanding. Some believe that world peace is impossible without peace between all religions first. Interfaith conferences and events are rapidly on the rise. Many accusations have come against churches, or other religious groups that refuse to join in these activities of being intolerant, extreme, or hateful. Ironically, the religious system that will rise out of this growing movement at the beginning of the Tribulation will be all of those things.

**God's judgment begins:**

Before God's judgment begins, there is a scene in Heaven with a scroll that has seven seals on it ([Revelation 5](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation5A.php)). Curiously, John begins to weep because he thinks there is no one worthy to open the scroll. What is in the scroll that would cause John to weep?

In Jeremiah we read about the prophesied exile of Israel to Babylon. Before the exile, the Lord told Jeremiah to buy a field from his cousin. The exchange occurred as follows:

[***Jeremiah 32:10-15***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah%2032&version=NKJV) ***- And I signed the deed and sealed it, took witnesses, and weighed the money on the scales. So I took the purchase deed, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open; and I gave the purchase deed to Baruch the son of Neriah, son of Mahseiah, in the presence of Hanamel my uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses who signed the purchase deed, before all the Jews who sat in the court of the prison. "Then I charged Baruch before them, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Take these deeds, both this purchase deed which is sealed and this deed which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may last many days." For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land."'***

So we can see that this sealed deed was a "purchase deed" to the land. Being the next of kin, Hanamel was able to buy the land so that he or another relative could claim the land back after the exile. Similarly, Adam was given the earth to rule over. But after the fall, God revoked the "purchase deed" to the earth and Adam lost his dominion. Jesus, being the only next of kin to Adam who was sinless, paid for the "purchase deed" with His own blood. That is why Jesus is the only one worthy to take to scroll and open it, to redeem both the earth and men back to God ([Revelation 5:9](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation5A.php#9)).

Over the course of the book of Revelation, we find that opening this scroll will ultimately redeem the earth from it curse. However, each broken seal results in judgment from Heaven. Once Jesus reaches the 7th Seal, seven more judgments come, called the Trumpet judgments. After the 7th Trumpet, seven more judgments come, called the Bowl judgments. In other words, the Seals of the "purchase deed" of the earth contain all the judgments described in Revelation. It is important to note that Jesus Himself breaks each Seal. Therefore, Jesus is the one administering judgment through the catastrophes described throughout Revelation. After the judgments are over, Jesus returns to redeem and reclaim Earth, which Adam lost at the fall in Genesis.

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of the Tribulation is to punish Israel's iniquity and God's enemies. Punishment comes through the judgments in Revelation. Also, recall that the dispensations of grace and judgment cannot work concurrently. The following verses confirm why the Church is not on Earth while God is pouring out His wrath:

[***Romans 5:8-9***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%205&version=NKJV) ***- But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.***

[***1 Thessalonians 1:9-10***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Thessalonians%201&version=NKJV) ***- For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.***

[***1 Thessalonians 5:9-10***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Thessalonians%205&version=NKJV) ***- For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.***

[***Revelation 3:10***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation3A.php#10) ***- Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.***

[***Psalm 27:5***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2027&version=NKJV) ***- For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock.***

[***Isaiah 26:20-21***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2026&version=NKJV) ***- Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past. For behold, the LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth will also disclose her blood, and will no more cover her slain.***

[***Zephaniah 2:3***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zephaniah%202&version=NKJV) ***- Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD's anger.***

To summarize, God has promised His people that they will "be saved from wrath," He "delivers us from the wrath to come," He "did not appoint us to wrath," He will keep believers "from the hour of trial" that will test everyone on Earth, He will hide believers in the heavenly tabernacle in the "time of trouble," believers will be hidden until the "indignation has passed," where the Lord will "punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity," and believers "will be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger." It cannot be any clearer - the Church will be in Heaven during the Tribulation, while God is pouring out His wrath on Earth.

Some people try to categorize the judgments in Revelation as "man's wrath" versus "God's wrath," instead of all being from God. As pointed out earlier, the sealed "purchase deed" holds all the judgments in Revelation. Jesus, who is God, personally breaks all the seals. Therefore all the judgments are the wrath of God. While the "wrath of man" is the cause of many of the sorrows in this world, the Bible teaches that God can use man to carry out His wrath. The passages below clearly show that God has and will carry out His judgments through men:

[***Habakkuk 1:5-6***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Habakkuk%201&version=NKJV) ***- "Look among the nations and watch - be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days which you would not believe, though it were told you. For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, a bitter and hasty nation which marches through the breadth of the earth, to possess dwelling places that are not theirs."***

[***Revelation 17:15-17***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation17.php) ***- Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.***

**The 5th Seal martyrs:**

Let's take a moment to further discuss the difference in how God deals with the Church in the "dispensation of grace" versus the believers in the Tribulation. Recall, the blood of Christ has [reconciled and sanctified the Church,](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture.php#reconciled) making us righteous before God. There is no need for the Church to make "reconciliation for iniquity" in the "dispensation of grace" like Israel in the "dispensation of judgment" ([Daniel 9:24](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%209:24&version=NKJV)). This does not mean that God does not punish the Church at all. In fact, the Bible teaches that God will chasten believers as a loving father who corrects his children:

[***Hebrews 12:6-7***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews%2012&version=NKJV) ***- "For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?***

Just as being disciplined by parents is uncomfortable or painful, chastening from the Lord is no different. However, During the "dispensation of judgment" believers are not chastened, or simply martyred for their faith like many Christians today - God will give them over to unrestrained evil who will seek to exterminate them all:

[***Revelation 6:9-11***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation6C.php#9-11) ***- When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.***

[***2 Thessalonians 2:7***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Thessalonians+2&version=NKJV) ***- For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.***

[***Daniel 7:21-22***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel+7&version=NKJV) ***- "I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom."***

[***Revelation 13:7***](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation13A.php#7) ***- It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.***

It is interesting to note, Jeremiah prayed to see vengeance on those who tried to kill him, and the Lord answered this prayer, as He will the martyred saints' prayer under the altar:

[***Jeremiah 11:19-23***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah%2011&version=NKJV) ***- But I was like a docile lamb brought to the slaughter; and I did not know that they had devised schemes against me, saying, "Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be remembered no more." But, O LORD of hosts, You who judge righteously, Testing the mind and the heart, Let me see Your vengeance on them, For to You I have revealed my cause. "Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the men of Anathoth who seek your life, saying, 'Do not prophesy in the name of the LORD, lest you die by our hand' - therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Behold, I will punish them. The young men shall die by the sword, their sons and their daughters shall die by famine; and there shall be no remnant of them, for I will bring catastrophe on the men of Anathoth, even the year of their punishment.' "***

On the other hand, during the ["dispensation of grace,"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture.php#grace) Paul admonishes believers to show love to our enemies:

[***Romans 12:19-20***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%2012&version=NKJV) ***- Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."***

Imprecatory prayer, or prayer calling for judgment, is not found in the New Testament, except for in the book of Revelation, which covers the "dispensation of judgment." The ["dispensation of grace"](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/rapture.php#grace) is over before the martyred saints ask the Lord to vindicate their death. The fifth Seal is judgment against the "earth dwellers" over the course of the Tribulation, with vengeance specifically taken against Babylon the harlot religious system ([Revelation 19:1-3](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation19.php)) and Babylon the city ([Revelation 18:10, 20](http://www.trackingbibleprophecy.org/revelation18.php)).