

3 Significant Events That Must Happen Before Our Lord Returns

Note: For part one of this article, [click here](#).

Again, we must ask “How soon is ‘soon’?” Is there a prophetic sequence or significant signs which can help us clarify God’s timetable for these end-times events and His promised second coming?

The Season of God’s Wrath

The Bible refers repeatedly to a future, end-times season of God’s wrath on the ungodly as the Day of the Lord (Joel 2:11; Amos 5:18).

A literal interpretation of Revelation 16 reveals that this long-prophesied, judgment season of God is different from the tribulation vengeance and persecution of the Antichrist (Rev. 6:1-6) and the Great Tribulation (Rev. 6:7-11).

Jesus taught that these tribulation events conclude before the “gathering of the elect” (Matt. 24:29-31, Rev. 6:9-11) and the wrath of God (Rev. 6:12-17, 8:1-5, 9:13-21). This season is also called the Great Day of His Wrath, The Terrible Day of the Lord or the Bowl Judgments of God and it will rapidly end Satan’s rebellion.

The Pre-Wrath Return of Jesus

Revelation’s mysteries are summarily linked to our Lord’s Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24. Comparing the scroll and seven seals of Revelation 6 with the revealed events or features of Matthew 24, one finds these subjects in this sequence: the beginning of birth pangs, the Great Tribulation, the gathering of the elect and the wrath of God.

Again, the eschatological teaching of Jesus in Matthew 24:29-31 clearly places the timing of the great harvest of God's chosen ones after the tribulation and just before the wrath of God being poured out on His enemies from something like bowls or vials (Matt. 24:48-51).

Likewise, comparing the cosmic calamities of these verses and the synoptic scriptures of Mark 13:24-27 and Luke 21:25-28 with Revelation 14:14-16, one notes that earth's harvest or "gathering together" of the saints occurs "after the tribulation." Do you also see the timing and stated correlations with the "catching away" or "rapture" as revealed in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18?

Why is This Important?

This is important because each individual member of the body of Christ who is diligently preparing for the Bridegroom's coming must prepare him or herself to stand strongly against the inevitable persecution of believers by a wicked society, the Antichrist and Satan (-12) in the last days. In fact, Paul and Peter urged believers to consider it a privilege to suffer for the sake of Christ and to do so with prophetic and persistent perseverance.

For well over a century, most evangelical Protestants have been taught a pre-tribulation theory of deliverance for believers before the days of persecution—and even beheadings—by the unholy trinity of Satan, the Antichrist and the false prophet. Some well-meaning advocates insert this doctrinal paradigm into every passage they can, and when one won't logically or literally fit, they carefully skip over it or assign it to a different "dispensation" of God's dealings with man.

The Noble-Minded Bereans

After Paul and Silas escaped from religious zealots in Thessalonica, they went on to the Macedonian town of Berea,

where he found “fair-minded” Jews in the synagogue there who received his teachings eagerly and were “daily examining the Scriptures, to find out if these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

In a similar way, we should always seek to understand the context of any scriptural passage and any obvious figurative language. Then, we should allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. The best way to interpret the Bible is to understand its pages literally, except those passages which obviously communicate figurative significance. As one Bible scholar has said, “Where the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, we need seek no other sense.”

As the “time of the end” draws closer, biblical predictions will become clearer and our understanding will increase (Dan. 12:4). While one might speculate on various implications that can be found for teaching an “imminent” return of Jesus Christ, where He could come “at any moment,” this prophetic teaching-point is not specifically taught in any Scripture. Rather, a literal, comprehensive study of the Bible clearly points to certain signs, or events, which must occur before our “coming King” comes.

3 Significant Events before the ‘Coming of our Lord’

For instance, in 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul told the confused believers that there must first be a significant apostasy (falling away) of insincere believers and then “the man of lawlessness” will be unmasked or revealed (2 Thess. 2:1-2, MEV) before we are “gathered together” at “the coming of our Lord.”

Second, that can’t happen until “he who now restrains” steps aside and, third, releases the “son of destruction” to begin his devilish deeds (2 Thess. 2:3-8). He will begin by displaying himself as “god” in a rebuilt temple of Jewish worship and sacrifice, which will have to be built first.

So, in this one passage (2 Thess. 2:1-8) are three significant

events that must occur before our Lord Jesus returns.

Living in the Last Days

As we live in these last days, we are not only told to look for His appearing (1 Thess. 1:10), but we are to also love His appearing (2 Tim. 4:8), while “hastening the coming of the day of God” (2 Pet. 3:12, NKJV). It seems that the timing of our Lord’s return is related directly to the spiritual condition and committed activity of the church and its members individually (2 Pet. 3:10-11)!

The Christian life is a walk or a journey of spiritual progress: hearing God’s Word, trusting its promises and applying it through faith-filled obedience. In these last days, may we continually increase our scriptural readings, teachings and witnessing of our “soon coming King,” until that day when, as Dottie Rambo wrote, “We shall behold Him, face to face, in all of His glory!” {eoa}

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