



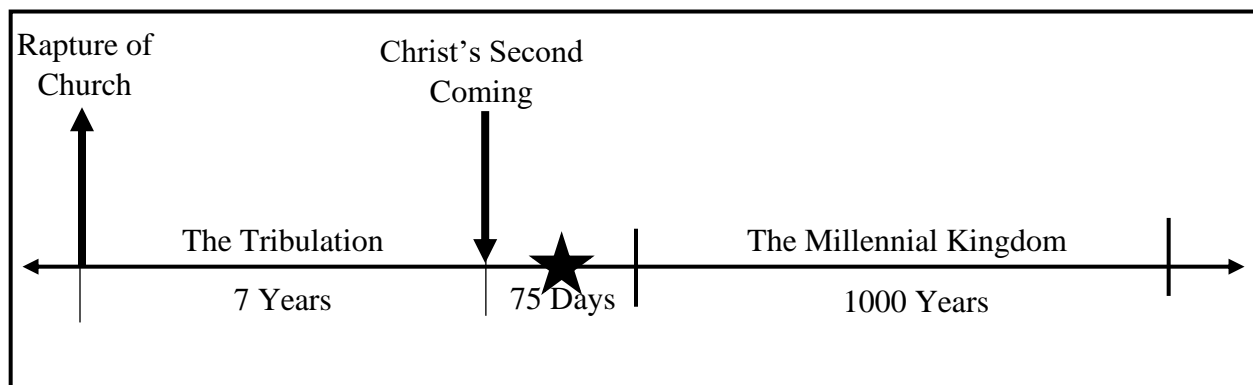
Eschatology – A Study of the End Times

Lesson 21: The Time Before the Millennial Kingdom

Introduction

The seven-year tribulation will come to an end at the campaign of Armageddon where Christ will return to defeat the antichrist and his armies. A remnant of Israel will also turn to Christ at that time (Zech. 12:10) and be saved, fulfilling the prophecy of Romans 11:26–27. After the campaign of Armageddon there will be some events that take place before the beginning of the millennial kingdom where Christ will rule and reign on His throne. In this lesson, we will look at what takes before the beginning of the millennial kingdom.

Timeline of End Times



A 75-Day Transitional Period¹

There are some key verses that tell us about an interval that separates the end of the tribulation period from the beginning of the millennial kingdom. The key verses are found in Revelation and Daniel.

Revelation 11:3: And I will grant *authority* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.

¹ The following is adapted from *The End Times in Chronological Order* by Ron Rhodes.

While it is debated as to whether the two witnesses appear during the first half of the tribulation or the last half, they appear for 1,260 days. These days are equal to three and a half years.

Revelation 12:6: Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

Israel will flee to the wilderness and be protected during the last three and a half years of the tribulation which equals 1,260 days.

Daniel 12:11: From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, *there will be* 1,290 days.

Daniel gives a different number of 1,290 days. He is speaking about the image of the antichrist that had caused the abomination of desolation at the midpoint of the tribulation. Revelation 12:6 says Israel will be protected for 1,260 days, but the image of the antichrist will be removed 30 days later at 1,290 days. Therefore, we conclude that Christ will return at 1,260 days, ending the tribulation period. The abomination which makes desolate will be removed from the Jewish temple 30 days after the tribulation ends.

However, an additional 45 days must also be added to the prophetic timetable because of what Daniel says at the end of his book.

Daniel 12:12: How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days!

The 1,335 days minus the 1,290 days means another 45 days are added to this period. If we take the 30 days from Daniel 12:11 and the 45 days from Daniel 12:12 (30 + 45), then we conclude that there is a 75-day interval between the end of the tribulation and the beginning of the millennial kingdom.

What takes place during the 75-day period?

There are some key events that most likely take place during this interval of 75 days.

First, the antichrist and the false prophet will be cast into the lake of fire. Revelation 19:20 says, “And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.” Apparently, these two men don’t die, but are miraculously transformed into their eternal form and will be the first to arrive in the eternal lake of fire.

Second, Satan will be bound and thrown into the abyss during the 75-day period. He will be in the abyss until the end of the millennial kingdom. While the lake of fire will be Satan’s ultimate destination, he will spend one thousand years in the abyss before he is finally thrown into the lake of fire. His binding will happen during the 75-day period. Revelation 20:1–3 says,

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he threw him into the abyss, and

shut *it* and sealed *it* over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.”

Third, Old Testament saints will be resurrected from the dead during the 75-day period. Isaiah 26:19 says, “Your dead will live; their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, for your dew *is as* the dew of the dawn, and the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.” Daniel also speaks of this event in Daniel 12:2, “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt.”

Fourth, tribulation saints who died during the tribulation period will be resurrected from the dead. Revelation 20:4 says, “Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I *saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”

Fifth, the judgment of the Gentile nations, also called the sheep and goat judgment, will take place during this 75-day period. The nations are comprised of sheep and goats, representing the saved and the lost among the Gentile nations. These Gentiles will be judged for their treatment of Israel during the tribulation period. According to Matthew 25:32, believing Gentiles will be intermingled with unbelievers and will require separation by a special judgment.

Some interpreters have argued that this judgment is the same as the great white throne judgment in Revelation 20:11–13, a judgment that takes place at the end of the millennial kingdom. However, a comparison of the Matthew judgment and the Revelation judgment makes this impossible.

<u>Sheep and Goat Judgment (Matt. 25:31-46)</u>	<u>Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15)</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occurs at the second coming • Occurs on earth • Includes sheep, goats, and the brothers • Based on treatment of Christ’s brothers • The righteous enter the kingdom, and the unrighteous are cast into the eternal lake of fire • No resurrection is mentioned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occurs after the millennial kingdom • Occurs at the great white throne • Includes the unsaved dead of all time • Based on works • The unsaved dead are cast into the lake of fire (none of the saved are present) • The unsaved dead are resurrected to be judged

During the tribulation period, people will not be able to buy or sell unless they receive the mark of the beast. Christians will not take the mark of the beast. Therefore, they will need to act

sacrificially and take care of each other. Matthew 25:31–46 gives the details of the judgment which hinges on how one treated “these brothers of Mine” (Matt. 25:40).

Who are these “brothers of Mine?” Some argue for these brothers being only the 144,000 Jews who are saved during the tribulation period. However, we can broaden it to include any Christian during this period who will be hungry, thirsty, without decent shelter or clothing, sick, imprisoned, and alienated away from society during the great tribulation period. The Christians will take care of other Christians during a time of great economic distress showing that they belong to Christ (Matt. 25:35–40).

All of those sheep, who belong to Christ, will be blessed (Matt. 25:34; Dan. 12:12) and will enter into the millennial kingdom. These saved Gentiles, along with the saved Jews, will not have resurrection bodies. They will enter the kingdom in their mortal bodies and continue to have babies throughout the millennial kingdom.

Sixth, the judgment of the Jews will take place during the 75-day period. Ezekiel 20:34–38 says,

“I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out; and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face. As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you,” declares the Lord God. “I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; and I will purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they will not enter the land of Israel. Thus you will know that I am the Lord.”

This judgment is still future and will take place at the end of the tribulation when all of Israel will be gathered to the land for judgment. Those who have placed their trust in Christ will be allowed to enter into the kingdom and enjoy the blessings of the new covenant. Those who are rebellious will be judged for their sin and banished to everlasting punishment.

Seventh, it is most likely that the marriage supper of the Lamb will take place during the 75-day period (Rev. 19:7–9). The relationship between Christ and the church is pictured by a marriage (Eph. 5:22–33). Christ is the Bridegroom (Matt. 9:15; Mark 2:19–20; John 3:29), and the church is the bride. The church is regarded as a virgin bride awaiting the coming of her heavenly Bridegroom (2 Cor. 11:2). While the bride waits, she keeps herself pure, unstained from the world (Rev. 19:7–9).

As we saw in lesson 11, Hebrew weddings which consisted of three phases:

1. The marriage was legally consummated by the bride and groom’s parents, after which the groom went to prepare a place to live in his father’s house. This was the betrothal period.
2. The bridegroom came to claim his bride at an unannounced time.
3. There was a marriage supper—a feast lasting several days.

As individuals come to salvation during the church age, they become a part of the church, the bride of Christ. This is the betrothal of the church to the divine Bridegroom.

When the Bridegroom comes to claim His bride at the rapture, the church will be taken to heaven, the Father's house, where He has prepared a place to live (John 14:1–3). The actual marriage ceremony takes place in heaven sometime after the rapture, but before the second coming.

After the ceremony, there is a marriage supper that lasts several days, and even up to a week. This supper will apparently take place during the 75-day period. Some Bible interpreters believe this celebration will last throughout the entire millennial kingdom.²

Application:

1. Praise the Lord for His protection. Christ will take care of His enemies and will give them what they deserve.
2. Praise the Lord for His grace and mercy. As the bride of Christ, we will get to enjoy the marriage ceremony and the supper, not because we deserve it, but because of God's grace and mercy.

² John MacArthur states, "Betrothal in eternity past, presented in the Father's house since the Rapture, the church is now ready for the wedding ceremony to begin. That ceremony will coincide with the establishment of the millennial kingdom, and stretch throughout that thousand-year period to be finally consummated in the new heavens and new earth (cf. Rev. 21:1–2)." (John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Revelation 12-22* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2000), 203.)