

# Prophecy of the Second Coming of Christ — Matt 24:29-31

The apostle Paul makes a wonderful statement about the Corinthian believers that no serious Christian should ever forget (1 Corinthians 1:4-8). He said that he was thankful for them in a variety of ways. One of those ways was that they were constantly, expectantly waiting for the revelation of Christ, that is, the second coming of Christ. All believers should follow their example also by praying that the Father's kingdom come very soon (Matthew 6:9-10). So, are you eagerly, expectantly, waiting for the second coming of Jesus Christ? I am reminded that in the epistle to Titus, Paul says believers should be "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus" (Titus 2:12). That is another reference to the second coming of Christ, and another reminder that one of the marks of true believers is that they have a strong desire for Christ to come soon. To the great joy of some Christians, they will see Christ when the rapture occurs prior to the start of the tribulation. For the believers who will be alive at the end of the great tribulation, their great joy will be to see Jesus arrive at His second coming. So, why are believers expecting Christ to return? The answer is that two angels told the apostles that Christ would return just as He had left, as recorded in Acts 1:9-11. In John 14:3, Jesus told the disciples that He would return. In Matthew 24:29-31, Jesus told Peter, Andrew, James, and John that He would come again. The promise of His second coming is also prophesied by several Old Testament prophets (Daniel 7:13-14; Joel 2:10-11; 3:16-17; Zechariah 14:1-8). So, the second coming of Christ has been known to Christ, the angels, the ancient prophets, the apostles, the early believers, and now believers today. This study is about the long-awaited second coming of Christ. Our study is based on Matthew 24:29-31; Mark 13:24-27, and Luke 21:25-28.

**Time of the Second Coming.** In the last three studies, we have been discovering a series of signs that will help us understand where we are in the timeline leading up to the second coming of Christ. Jesus provided these signs when He answered the question, "What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" He gave signs that occurred after He was resurrected, signs of events that would occur in the first 3.5 years, in the middle, and in the last 3.5 years of the tribulation.

Then the second coming of Christ will

occur. Matthew 24:4-31 provides the timeline from the Ascension of Christ to the Second Coming of Christ. This passage has been explained in the previous three studies. The first two verses of our study are Matthew 24:29-30. They reveal that the second coming will occur at the end of the tribulation. Verses 29-30 say,



Second Coming of Christ Will Be Seen Worldwide

**“But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the**

powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. Matthew 24:29-30 (NASB)

The passage says that the celestial lights will be turned out after the tribulation ends, and then the second coming of Christ will occur. He will be seen in the sky. That is a summary of these two verses. These verses are very important and amazing. So, we are going to examine them in more detail.

First, the Greek word that is translated as “immediately” is *eutheos*. The English word “immediately” implies a very short delay in time, but the Greek word simply refers to an event that occurs later. For example in Matthew 13:5, we are told that some seed was sown in rocky places, and it sprang up immediately.

“Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil.” Matthew 13:5 (NASB)

While the English word “immediately” usually implies seconds or minutes, it is obvious that seeds take longer to germinate and for the green shoot to become visible above ground. That helps us understand *eutheos*. Other examples where it is translated as a longer period of time are found in Galatians 1:16 and 3 John 14. So Matthew 24:29 tells that a short period of time will elapse after the end of the tribulation before several things occur.

**Lights Turned Off.** The second important detail is that the celestial lights will be turned off when Christ returns. In verse 29, we are told that after the tribulation, the light of the sun will become darkened. The Greek word for darkened is *skotizo*, which means “to cover with darkness.” That is, the sun will become dark. The meaning of “the moon will not give its light” clearly means that the moon will not be visible because it will not reflect any light from the sun since the sun will be dark. The meaning of

“the stars will fall” means the stars will be visible in the night sky. The message is that all of the lights in the sky will be turned off when the second coming of Christ occurs. That is the message of Zechariah 14:5b-8,

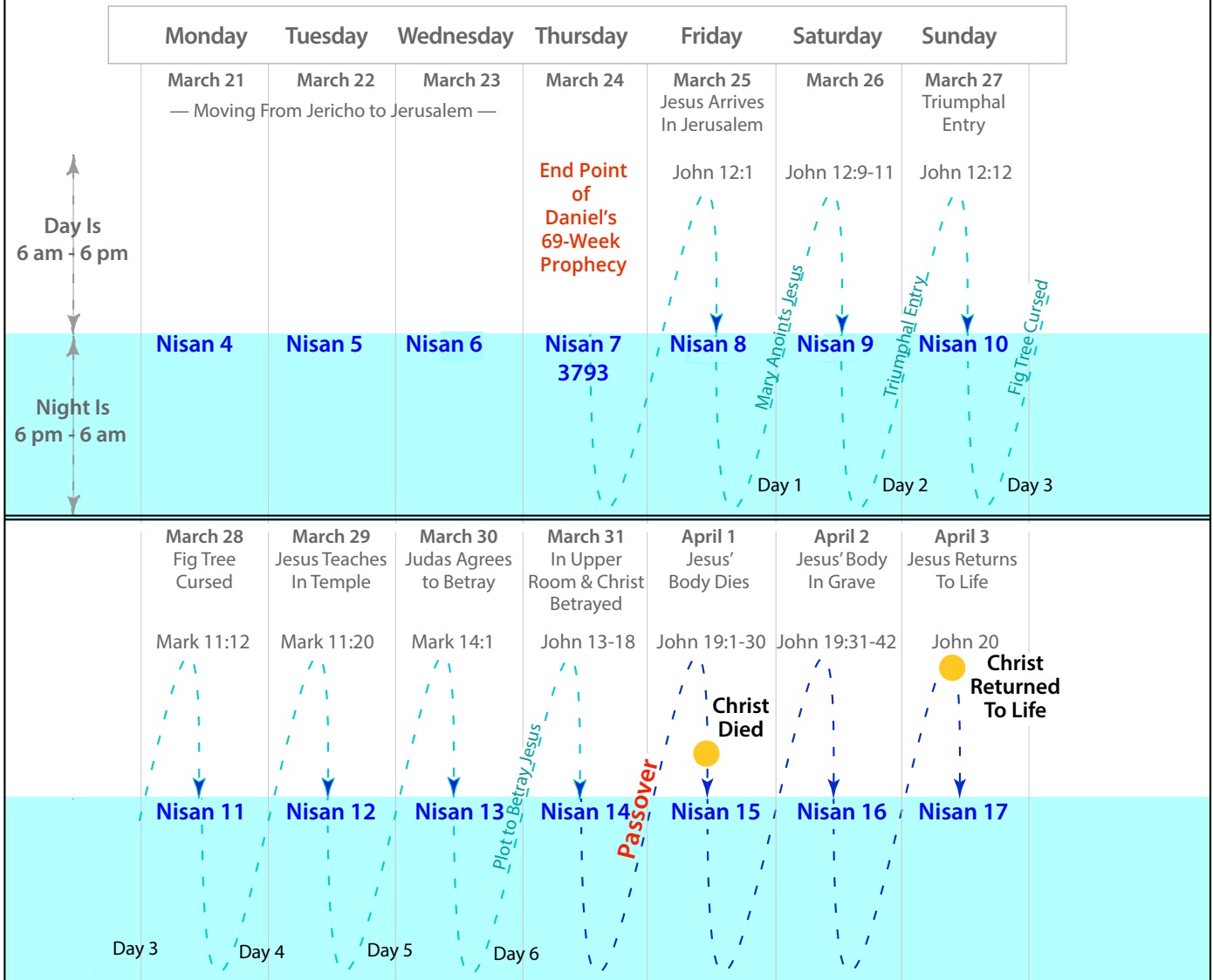
Then the LORD, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him! In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. For it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light. Zechariah 14:5b-8 (NASB)

The last part of Zechariah 14:5 describes the second coming of Christ. That description began in Zechariah 14:1. The last part of verse 5 agrees with Matthew 24:30-31. Now notice that Zechariah 14:6-7 tells us that when the second coming occurs, there will be no light, for the luminaries will dwindle. Then, at the end of verse 8, we are told the lights will turn back on. It is like a light switch. God will flip the light switch off when the second coming begins, and then He will flip it back on in the evening. That is, the world will be in darkness when the Second Coming of Christ occurs. We are also told the second coming will occur during the daytime..

**Heavens Shaken.** Matthew 24:29 states that “the powers of the heavens will be shaken.” Joel 3:12-16 provides insight into the meaning of this phrase. Verse 12 discusses the armies of the nations of the world at the Battle of Armageddon. Then the passage tells us that the armies will surround Israel, and Christ will come to rescue Jerusalem and defeat Israel’s enemies in the valley where the battle will take place.

Let the nations be aroused  
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, tread, for the wine press is full;  
The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great.  
Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!

## Last Week of Jesus' Life



For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.

The sun and moon grow dark

And the stars lose their brightness.

The LORD roars from Zion

And utters His voice from Jerusalem,

And the heavens and the earth tremble.

But the LORD is a refuge for His people

And a stronghold to the sons of Israel.

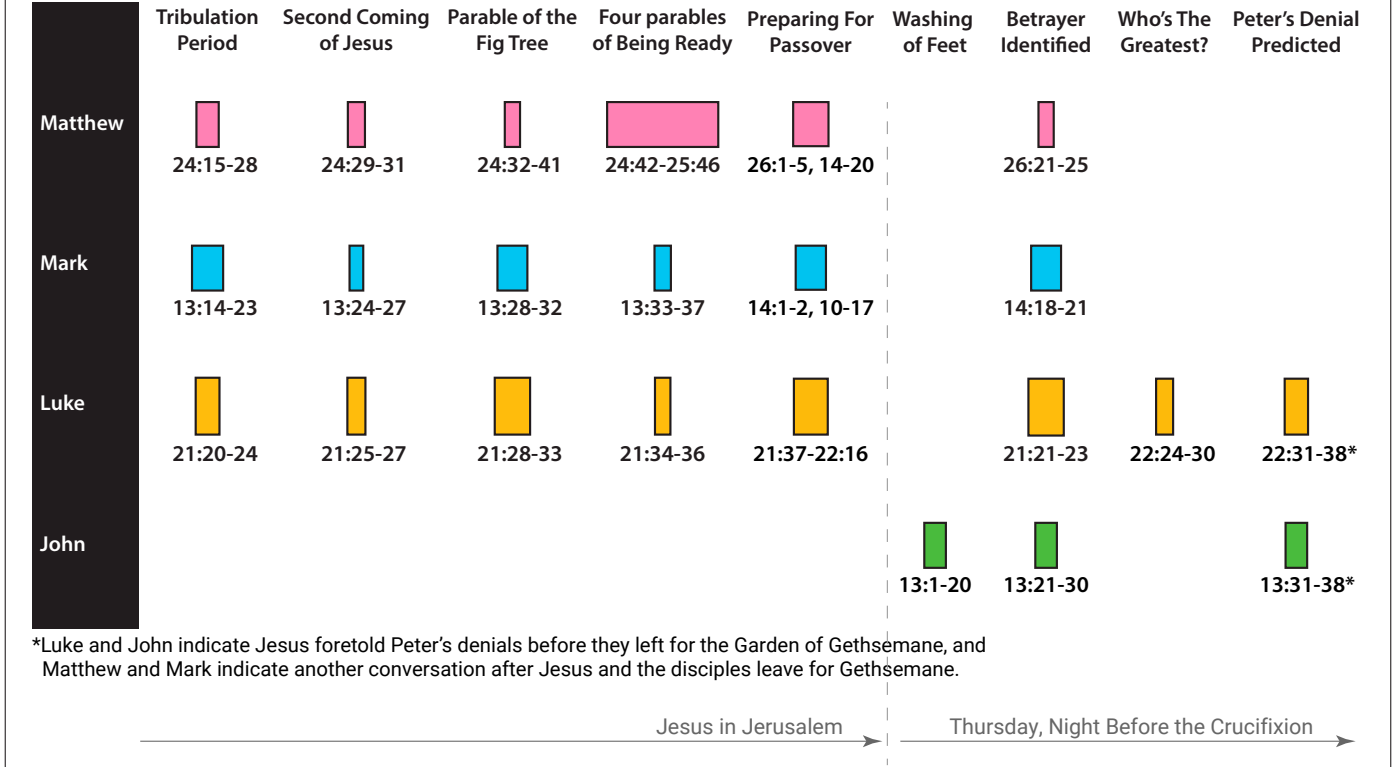
Joel 3:12-16 (NASB)

Then we are told God will flip off the lights in the heavens. When Christ descends upon Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:1-5), He will roar with His voice, and His wrath will pour forth (Isaiah 13:6-13). At that moment the heavens and earth will tremble or be shaken, and Jerusalem will be saved. This helps us to understand that “the powers of the heavens will be shaken” probably refers to the same event. All of the laws of the universe will be momentarily interrupted when Christ roars from Jerusalem.

**Sign of the Son of Man.** Matthew 24:30 states that “the sign of the Son of Man in heaven” will appear in heaven

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after the lights have been turned off. Some have understood the “sign” to be some kind of celestial event. But a celestial event cannot possibly occur since the sun, moon, and stars will be dark. The entire globe will be in darkness with no light from the sun, moon, and stars. Some claim that Flavius Josephus described a celestial event that was visible over the city of Jerusalem and some nearby countries during the Roman army conquest in A.D. 70. Even if Flavius Josephus is accurate, that is inconsistent with what Jesus described in verse 27, which tells us that when Christ comes, everyone will see Him. Now we are told the entire world will be in darkness. There are no historical records that record such an event. Others have suggested that the sign will be a cross, a rainbow, a group of angels, or a banner visible in the sky before Christ appears.

The Greek text supports the view that the sign of Christ’s coming is Christ Himself. John MacArthur states that “the sign of” is a Greek subjective genitive, which means that the

sign points to Christ. Christ is the sign.<sup>1</sup> When Christ comes in His deity and shekinah glory, visible around the earth, the sign will be Himself in all His glory. Dr. J. Vernon McGee stated that the “sign” will be God’s shekinah glory, which will be visible around the earth.<sup>2</sup> The truth is that Christ, when He comes in His shekinah glory, will be visible. Notice that Matthew 16:27 says,,

**For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.  
Matthew 16:27 (NASB)**

Daniel 7:13 and Matthew 26:64 state that He will come on the clouds. Acts 1:10-11 adds that just as Christ ascended,

<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur. Matthew 23-28. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary. Moody press. 1988. p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> J. Vernon McGee. Matthew through Romans. Thru the Bible. Thomas Nelson Publishers. 1983. p. 130.

so everyone will see Him descend from heaven.

The last part of Matthew 24:30 says, “The Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.” He will come with the power of a deity and His glory. He will come as king and set up His kingdom; His glory will be His shekinah glory.

**Second Coming of Christ.** So, why will the second coming occur? The Old Testament prophecies foretell that Christ will come to establish His promised kingdom for Israel. One of the most notable prophecies was given to King David. (2 Samuel 7:14-16). The prophecy is a promise that a descendant of King David would establish a kingdom that would endure forever. Ezekiel 34:11-28 records God’s promise that someday He will gather every Israelite from every nation back to the nation we call Israel. The promise includes the defeat of Israel’s enemies and protection for Israel. In addition, God has promised them that He will establish an eternal kingdom over which Christ will rule the world. The promise is repeated in Ezekiel 37:24-28 and again in Ezekiel 39:25-29. Zechariah 12-14 provides a high-level overview of the tribulation, the second coming of Christ, and the establishment of the millennial kingdom.

So, the second coming of Christ is actually the return of the Messiah to establish the kingdom that was repeatedly promised to Israel after it killed their Messiah in A.D. 33 by having Him crucified on the cross (Acts 2:22-24). Zechariah 12:10-12 is a very important passage. It reveals that when those Israelites who are alive at Christ’s coming see Him, they will recognize Him as the one they pierced. They will mourn, repent, and believe in Him. Romans 11:25-26 states that all Israel will be saved when the partial hardening ends. Zechariah 12:10-12 describes when that will occur—at the second coming of Christ, when they recognize Him..

We have already been told in Matthew 24:9 that the nations of the world will be anti-Semitic and will hate Israel. So, when Christ returns, He comes as their King and defender (Zechariah 14:1-7) and defeats all the nations of the world after Israel has experienced the Antichrist. Because Israel rejected Jesus Christ, God the Father will allow them to experience the Antichrist (Zechariah 11:15-17). Israel will have an incredible experience after two-thirds of the

Israelites have been slaughtered by the Antichrist in the great tribulation (Zechariah 13:8-9). When they see Christ, the one they killed, they will mourn when they realize that their Messiah, Jesus, has come to rescue to them. Zechariah 12:10-14 reveals that all Israelites will see Him, as well as the entire world. Israel will understand that the One whom they pierced is their Messiah.

It is important to realize that the second coming of Christ as King and ruler of the earth is primarily for Israel. Figuratively speaking, Israel will have their party, and every Gentile believer will be a guest. That is, every Jew and Gentile believer will be included. No believer will be left out.

Luke 21:25-28 gives every Jew and Gentile believer a wonderful insight into what will happen when it records these words of Christ.

*There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory. But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” Luke 21:25-28 (NASB)*

Revelation 19:11-21 gives us this wonderful vision of the second coming of Christ. It reveals He is God, King, and Lord. He will come as a victor, and the armies of heaven will join Him. Zechariah 14:5 says all of the holy ones will come with Him. I understand that to mean all the holy angels and the believers of all ages from the Old Testament and the church will come with Him. Revelation 19:11-21 describes the second coming of Christ. Notice that the saints of all the ages will come with Him .

*And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are*

a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great."

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. 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. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.  
Revelation 19:11-21 (NASB)

Every believer will come with Christ and be a witness of His righteous judgment and justice upon the antichrist, the false prophet, and the evil nations of the earth. Jewish and Gentile believers will never again be persecuted by the wicked.

**Angels Sent Forth.** After Christ arrives, Jesus told the four disciples that He will . . .

“. . . send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. Matthew 24:31 (NASB)

It is implied that this will occur after Christ has defeated Israel's enemies and won the Battle of Armageddon. Then Christ will send forth His angels with a great trumpet. There are three trumpets that will sound in relation to the tribulation. The first trumpet will occur at the rapture when the Lord Himself will shout with the voice of an archangel (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). This trumpet is also called the last trumpet (1 Corinthians 15:52) because it is the last trumpet of the church age. The second trumpet is found in Revelation 11:15. This trumpet is the seventh one in a series of plagues upon the earth. This helps us understand that the trumpet in Matthew 24:31 did not sound at the rapture nor in the middle of the tribulation. In addition, the tribulation began twenty-two verses earlier in Matthew 24:9. So, the great trumpet will not occur at the rapture or during the tribulation. It will occur after the tribulation. Therefore, this trumpet will be the third and last one connected to the tribulation.

When this trumpet sounds, it will signal the gathering of all the elect Israelites. The nation of Israel was scattered to various nations of the world as an act of judgment in 586 B.C. by the Babylonian Empire (Jeremiah 31:10; Ezekiel 6:8; 20:23; 22:15). This was due to their rebellion against God and their worship of false gods. Other passages in Ezekiel refer to the scattering of Israel as the nation being scattered to every wind (Ezekiel 5:10; 17:20-21).

I will spread my net for him, and he will be caught in my snare. I will bring him to Babylon and execute judgment on him there because he was unfaithful to me. All his choice troops will fall by the sword, and the survivors will be scattered to the winds. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken. Ezekiel 17:20-21 (NASB)

But God also promised Israel that someday He would

bring scattered Israel back to their land (Ezekiel 28:25; 34:6, 16; 36:19). In Ezekiel 37, God symbolically refers to Israel as a pile of dry bones in a valley. The passage is called the Valley of Dry Bones. Here is Ezekiel 37:7-11.

So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army. Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.'" Ezekiel 37:7-11 (NASB)

The message is that God promised to gather Israel from the four winds of the earth back to the land of Israel. Ezekiel 37-48 reveals that the gathering will occur after the Battle of Armageddon and during the millennial kingdom. The elect in Matthew 24:31 refers to the nation of Israel. The Jewish prophets prophesied that Christ, the Jewish Messiah, would rescue Israel from the nations of the world and establish a kingdom for Israel. Now we have a prophecy that God will keep His promise to Israel and gather them from every country (or the four winds) back to the land He gave them. This will occur so that they can enjoy the millennial kingdom.

In reality, the elect will include the Gentiles. They will also be gathered. Then the Judgment of Nations, also called the Sheep and Goat Judgment, will occur in preparation for the establishment of the millennial kingdom. The Judgment of Nations is described in Matthew 25:31-46.

**The Millennial Kingdom.** In Daniel 12:11-12, we learn that from the abomination of desolation to the end of the tribulation, that is, Israel's suffering, there will be 1,260 days. Then there will be an additional 30 days

after the end of the tribulation, during which the Sheep and Goat Judgment will separate the elect believers from the unbelievers. Only those who believe in Christ will be allowed into the kingdom. Verse 12 adds 45 days after the tribulation. Those extra days may be the time after the Sheep and Goat Judgment to the beginning of the millennial kingdom. Also, Daniel contains prophecies about the tribulation and the second coming of Christ. So, it appears that Daniel 12:11-12 prophesies about the Sheep and Goat judgment and the time to the millennial kingdom. Parables about the millennial kingdom will be given in Matthew 25:1-46.

**Conclusion.** Matthew 24:4-31 is a wonderful passage because Jesus gives us the sequence of events from the beginning of the tribulation through the second coming of Christ to the Judgment of Nations. He will describe the Judgment of Nations in Matthew 25:31-46. It is wonderful because it connects so accurately with Old and New Testament prophecies about the tribulation and His coming. Jesus described a premillennial view of the future. It is also called a dispensational view. As a result, every believer can and should watch for the signs Jesus gave us in order to know the proximity of the second coming of Christ. We are to watch and pray for Christ's return and the coming of the Father's millennial kingdom.