

History of the End

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This article appeared in the 2021 Fall issue of *Fulfilled!* Magazine

IN THE TWO PREVIOUS articles we sequenced and documented the historical fulfillment of the Great Tribulation, Abomination of Desolation, the Zealot rebellion, and the Man of Lawlessness. This article picks up where we left off, and deals with the Parousia, *resurrection* of the dead saints, *bodily change* of the living saints, and their *gathering* together to be with Christ in heaven forever afterwards.

‘Cutting Short’ the Great Tribulation

The outbreak of the rebellion “cut short” the Great Tribulation *for the sake of the elect* (Matt 24:22), allowing some of them to live until the Parousia and be gathered to safety by the angels before the wrath of God was poured out on their persecutors (Matt 24:31; 1 Thess 4:17; 5:9; 2 Thess 2:1).

The rebellion forced both Jews and Romans to turn their attention away from killing Christians, and toward fighting their war with each other. This was the *relief* from tribulation that Paul promised (2 Thess 1:7; 1 Thess 1:10; cf. 2 Peter 2:9). But there was no relief for the Jews—their tribulation had only just begun, and it rapidly intensified into the *wrath outpouring* (2 Thess 1:6-10). Thus, it was the persecution of the elect that was *cut short*—NOT the wrath outpouring.

The Parousia

The beginning of the rebellion also set the stage for the *Parousia*. Since Christ was supposed to come “immediately after” the tribulation was *cut short* (Matt 24:29-30), and since the tribulation was cut short at the *beginning of the rebellion*, it means that Christ must have come “immediately after” the outbreak of the rebellion. And that is exactly what we find in the real history. The rebellion began on May 12th, AD 66. *Four days later* the angelic armies were seen in the sky above Judea. Josephus reports:

“Not many days after that feast [Passover, Apr 10, 66], on the twenty-first day of the month Artemisius [May 16, 66], a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared. . . . For, before sunsetting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities” [Josephus Wars 6.296-297 (6.5.3)].

This appearance of the angelic armies in the sky occurred only four days after *Eleazar b. Ananias* began the rebellion and took control of the temple. That was definitely “immediately after” the rebellion began. And the presence of the *angelic armies* in the sky above Judea signaled the arrival of Christ and the

beginning of His Parousia to *rescue His saints* and *pour out wrath* on His enemies. This occurred just before sunset on Artemisius 21st (May 16th) in AD 66. Thus, Josephus gives us *the exact day and hour* when the Parousia began.

Resurrection, Bodily Change, and Rapture

Since the outbreak of the rebellion *cut short* the great tribulation on the elect, it enabled some of the elect to *remain alive until the Parousia*. And during the Parousia three marvelous events occurred:

Resurrection of the dead saints (1 Cor 15:20-23, 52; 1 Thess 4:16)

Bodily change of the living saints (1 Cor 15:51f; 2 Cor 5:2ff; Phil 3:21; 1 John 3:2; Rom 8:11, 23)

Catching up of both groups of saints to be with Christ forever afterwards (Matt 24:31; John 14:3; 1 Thess 4:17; 2 Thess 2:1)

Apostle Paul provides all of the information needed to *sequence* these three events. For example, in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 Paul states that “*in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet*” the dead would be *raised imperishable*, and the living saints would be *changed* into their immortal bodies. And in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 he states that the dead in Christ would *rise first*, then the living saints would be *caught up together with them* to meet Christ in the air where they would remain forever afterwards.

These two passages not only *sequence* those events, but also show that all three events occurred together in tight succession (“*in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet*”). Thus, the living were changed at the same instant the dead were raised, and then both groups were caught up together to be with Christ in the unseen realm above.

But **when** did these three events occur? Josephus again supplies the critical info for that, even providing *the exact day and hour* when they occurred:

. . . at that feast which we call **Pentecost [the day]**, as the priests were going **by night [the hour]** into the inner [court of the] temple . . . to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, “*Let us remove hence*” (Wars 6:299-300 [Whiston ref. 6.5.3]).

According to Josephus, two weeks after the angelic armies were seen in the sky, the priests in the temple on the Day of Pentecost heard a *great multitude in the unseen realm* departing from one place and going to another. That was when the dead saints were *raised* out of Hades.

Notice what those priests *experienced* in the temple on the day of Pentecost (May 30th, AD 66). It was all *hearing* and *feeling*—with *no visuals*. The priests *heard* what was said, but *did not see* those who were

speaking. This means that the “great multitude” whom the priests heard were in the UNSEEN realm. This raises some very interesting questions:

Who were these folks in the unseen realm?

From what place in the unseen realm had they come?

To what place in the unseen realm did they go?

The fact that those people were in the UNSEEN realm drastically limits the possibilities of their identity. What large group of people in the UNSEEN realm would be leaving one part of that realm for another part, and why? *It was the resurrected saints exiting Hades and going straight to heaven without coming back into the SEEN realm on earth!*

And since this was the resurrection of the dead saints out of Hades, then it was also the very “*moment in the twinkling of an eye*” when the living saints were “changed” into their immortal bodies (1 Cor 15:52; Phil 3:21), and then “*caught up together*” with the resurrected saints to meet Christ in the UNSEEN realm above (1 Thess 4:17), to remain with Him forever afterwards.

Silence After the Parousia

That explains why there was such a *silence* and *absence* of true Christians after AD 66. After the *Neronian persecution* began in August of AD 64, all mention of Christians and their activities *vanished from the historical record* until ca. AD 90, twenty years later. There were no more inspired documents written, and no evidence of any missionary activity.

It appears that most of the true Christians were killed in the Neronian persecution (AD 64-66), while the survivors went into hiding until the Parousia, at which time they were *relieved* of their tribulation, and *taken to heaven* before the wrath was poured out on the Jews.

There is no record of Christians participating on either side during the Jewish-Roman war. Nor are there any true Christian writings after AD 70 which *document the fulfillment* of the BIG THREE eschatological events (Parousia, Resurrection, Judgment), or which *set the record straight* when second-century churchmen started saying that the big three eschatological events were still future.

In short, true Christians were *nowhere to be found* after the outbreak of the Zealot rebellion in AD 66 (see Hans Conzelmann, *History of Primitive Christianity*, 18, 111). Nor did they reappear in the historical record until the 90s. Patristic historians pinpoint when this *disappearance* of true Christians occurred:

If we actually map out the [real] history of the first century, following 70 AD . . . then there arises an *obscure dark period* . . . when we are not sure exactly what was going on *between 70 AD and 90 AD* (Wayne McCown, lecture at Northwestern Seminary, Rochester, NY, Sept. 16, 2004; emphasis added).

Thus, at the very time when the history of Josephus is replete with voluminous details about the Jewish War, information about the apostolic church vanishes “without a trace” (Hans Conzelmann, *History of*

Primitive Christianity, 18). Oliver J. Thatcher calls it a very “strange silence” (*The Apostolic Church*, 271-272).

And that silence is exactly what we would expect to find if all the living and remaining saints were caught up to heaven at the Parousia. But it is NOT what we would expect if any of those pre-70 saints remained alive on earth after AD 70. Surely they would have *mentioned the fulfillment* of the big three eschatological events, and would have *set the record straight* when second-century churchmen started claiming that those events were still future. Instead, all we have is *deafening silence*. They were *silent* because they were *absent*. ✝

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