

"At the Last Trumpet"

Sane and Sensible Perspectives on the Last Days

The "last trumpet" should be the last word on when the Rapture will take place. In the crazy mixed up world of Biblical interpretation, even this clear, seemingly unmistakable sign has been misunderstood. Fortunately, nothing clears confusion better than letting the words of scripture speak for themselves. This passage is a trumpet call to a sane and sensible interpretation of the timing of the Lord's Return.

29 "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 heaven, and the powers of the heavens

will be shaken. 30 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, 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. 31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Matthew 24:29-31 ESV



A Blast Heard Round the World

Right here in the 31st verse of Matthew 24 Jesus states that "a loud trumpet call" will announce His Return. Can anyone doubt that this "loud" blast will be heard world-wide? If Jesus is coming secretly for His elect to whisk them away to safety, why all the fanfare? In fact, this trumpet blast is like the herald that announces a king's entrance. By the time Jesus approaches the earth, all eyes will be already on Him. According to this text, we will clearly see the "sign of the Son of Man" while He is still in the air. Everyone on earth will see this sign. Then, we will hear the trumpet blast that heralds His arrival, giving proper dignity to so momentous an event.

This sign could also be translated as His "miraculous" or "wondrous" appearance, coming as He will be "on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." So, unmistakable and unavoidable will this sight be that even those who have not been eagerly looking for His appearing "will mourn" when they see Him. The unsaved and the unrighteous will mourn because they will have realized too late that their time is up. There is no opportunity left for them to repent. But for those of us who will be longing for sight of Him (and for His rescue), our hearts will rejoice.¹ The loud sound of the trumpet will shock and terrify those who are unready, but it will greet our ears with joyful exhilaration. Here is where the true "rapture" of believers begins.

Not only will we be waiting to hear that heavenly herald, but a host of angels will also be on the alert. This trumpet blast signals that the time has come for them to gather His elect "from the four winds." Where are the four winds which encompass "His elect"? They cannot be in heaven. Winds and weather change are a thing of the earth realm. In heavenly previews, the Word



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shows us “a sea like glass” where no shifting currents of air or water ripple its surface. Not only that, but calling them the four winds signifies north, east, south and west—the four quarters of the earth that our winds travel toward. This can only mean that these angels have been sent to gather the elect of Jesus who are still on the earth. This is not some rag-tag, half-saved group born of the Tribulation with no seasoned believers to shepherd them, but His “elect.” These are the “chosen ones” who have stood faithfully against everything the devil and the antichrist have thrown at them.

The Trumpet and the Tribulation

What else does this passage show us of the timing? In verse 29, we see that this sign of the Son of Man arriving comes “after the tribulation of those days.” This is none other than that “great tribulation” which Jesus described in verse 21, the tribulation that is so terrible that if the days were not cut short, “no human being would be saved.” This is the tribulation which we all wish we could avoid! Nevertheless, Jesus is telling us right here in Matthew that He doesn’t come for “His elect” before the tribulation, but afterwards. His elect are still on the earth doing all that they can by prayer and grace to remain faithful under the most severe trial His believing Church has ever had to undergo.

A further question concerns the trumpet call itself. Since the passage doesn’t say exactly, are we correct in supposing that this trumpet blast is indeed the “last” trumpet? This can easily be clarified by referring to Paul’s teaching. He wrote to the Corinthian church that the dead in Christ (those who abide “from one end of heaven to the other”) will rise first and accompany the Lord as He descends to earth. Then, we will be “caught up together with them” in the air—just as Jesus describes in the passage from Matthew explored above. The elect on earth and the elect in heaven meet the Lord in the sky. Note that Paul fully expects many of us to still be alive and on the earth. We will indeed rise, but he wants us to know that the dead will be the first to rise on that great Day.

For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 ESV

The Last Trumpet at Last

All of this happens “with the sound of the trumpet of God.” There’s our heavenly herald. But is this the last trumpet? It certainly is! Paul made it unmistakably clear when he wrote the Thessalonian church about this same event. He told them that we will not all “sleep,” meaning that not all of us will have died and be in heaven. Many believers will still be on the earth, but we will all “be changed.” By no effort of our own and in “the twinkling of an eye” a tremendous change will occur. The dead will be raised, and we will be changed with them “at the last trumpet.”

Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 ESV

Let's abandon once and for all the foolish, false hope of a pre-trib rapture. We will rise. We will be changed. We will meet the Lord in the air. But the dead in Christ will rise before we do and that will only happen when the last trumpet sounds.

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Scripture and Footnotes

¹ The victor's crown of righteousness is now waiting for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on the day that he comes, and not only to me but also to all who eagerly wait for his appearing. 2 Timothy 4:8 ISV



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