

# Parousia

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## The Meaning and Significance of *Koloboo* In Matthew 24:22

Rev. Charles Cooper

“And unless those days had been **cut short**, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be **cut short**.”

With this verse from the Olivet Discourse, the Lord Jesus concludes His discussion concerning the nature of the “Great Tribulation” — the *Second-half of the Seventieth Week of Daniel*. Matthew 24:15-21 details for the reader the awfulness of the second half of the last seven years of human history as we know it. It specifically will be a time of incomparable tribulation.

Jesus indicated that this period will be inaugurated by the “**abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel**” (Matt. 24:15). However, Jesus does not indicate how long this time of *great tribulation* will last. Every indication in Daniel’s prophecy is that three and half years are decreed for “the little horn’s” reign of terror (Dan. 7:25, 9:27). This is consistent with the Revelation of Jesus to John that says that the Beast will persecute the Saints for 42 months or 1,260 days (Rev. 13:5). Thus one is correct in concluding that Daniel’s prophecy, the Olivet Discourse, and the

Revelation of Jesus to John are all referring to the same time frame. Therefore, in what sense will the second half of Daniel’s Seventieth Week be “*cut short*?”

A translation of the Greek in Matthew 24:22 reads “**those days were shortened. . . those days will be shortened. . .**” In both instances *those days* are the subject of the verb. The Greek says literally, *those the days*. It is *those the days* that are shortened. The demonstrative pronoun *those* refers to the tribulation days of verses 15-20. Pronouns are used to break up the monotony caused by using the same words over and over again. In which case our sentence would read: *And unless the days of great tribulation were shortened, no flesh would be delivered; but for the elect’s sake the days of great tribulation will be shortened*. H.E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey write in *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* that the function of the demonstrative pronoun in Greek is “to call attention with special emphasis to a designated object” (p. 127). The reader must

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understand that the days of great tribulation received special attention from God for the elect's sake.

In the Gospel of Mark, the Olivet Discourse is repeated but with variations from Matthew. A literal translation of Mark 13:20 is **"the Lord shortened the days . . . He shortened the days."** While Matthew indicates that those days will be shortened, Mark tells us that the Lord is the one who shortens the days. The differences are matters of style, but the theological significance is the same. The emphasis is definitely on *the days of tribulation* and what happened to them.

The verb *koloboo* is used in these parallel passages. It means "to curtail," "to shorten," and "to dock." It is found only one other

time in Scripture — in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament (LXX). The Greek lexicon suggests both a literal and figurative usage in the Bible. It suggests that the end-time reference in Matthew and Mark should be taken figuratively. However, for the reference in the LXX (II Samuel

4:12), a literal usage is suggested. There is no question that in II Samuel a literal amputation of the hands and feet occurred. But in Matthew/Mark, the decision is not so clear cut. Between the Second Century BC and the Second Century AD, there are five extant occurrences of a form of *koloboo* outside the Scriptures.

Diodorus of Sicily, a Greek historian, used *koloboo* to describe what happened to a woman caught in consenting adultery; her nose was cut off or amputated. Similarly, Epictetus speaks of a man who lost his nose as having been amputated. Polybius refers to wars in which men's hands and feet were amputated. Aristotle used a form of *koloboo* to refer to the short footedness of seals. While in Hermas Vision, *koloboo* is used to describe rocks found to be too short for a building project. Thus, in both the biblical and extrabiblical sources (except for Hermas Vision and Matthew/Mark) *koloboo* refers to the literal amputation of either the nose or hands and feet.

In all cases, with the exception of Aristotle, where the word is used a reduction in size or shape of the original has occurred. There is no grammatical, historical, contextual, or theological reason to maintain a figurative interpretation in Matthew 24:22. Those who take it figuratively do so to maintain a theological system that is biblically invalid. Therefore, we conclude that Matthew/Mark is referring to a literal amputation of *the days of tribulation*. Thus *the days of tribulation* will not last the full three and a half years. The kingdom of Antichrist will last for 1,290 days (Dan. 12:11), but his ability to persecute the people of God with physical death will not.

Those who hold to a pretrib rapture insist that God cannot change his decree. They would say that the use of the aorist tense in Matthew 24:22 indicates that the decision concerning the length of tribulation was made in eternity past and therefore cannot

be changed. They would argue that the three-and-a-half-year time frame is too precise not to be taken literally. They also write that God limited the persecution of Antichrist to three and a half years — what they say Jesus meant by "cutting short" those days. If God had allowed the persecution to run longer, no flesh would be delivered. Thus God amputated the days of tribulation.

Moreover, they insist that Daniel's portrayal of an angel (12:7) raising his hand to heaven and swearing that the time of persecution would be three and a half years makes it impossible for God to cut short *the days of tribulation*. Such a view insures the Beast a literal three-and-a-half-year reign starting from the midpoint of Daniel's last Week. In other words, Israel will be persecuted to the very last day of tribulation by Antichrist. A pretrib rapturist would teach that the Seventieth Week of Daniel ends with the battle of Armageddon, which is the last act of God before the Millennial Reign of His Son Jesus.

However, Prewrath rapturists would argue that on three occasions in Revelation the reign of Antichrist is interrupted. Revelation 16:10 indicates that the kingdom of the Beast will become full of darkness by the pouring out of the fifth bowl judgment. The result is a distress so awful that God is blasphemed by the Beast and his kingdom constituents. Regardless of one's time frame, the fifth bowl judgment of God is before the battle of Armageddon. How long before Armageddon the fifth bowl occurs is not indicated, but

**The Lord will shorten the days of tribulation.**

certainly it would have to be within the three-and-a-half-year time frame of the pretribulation rapturist. *The days of tribulation* of Antichrist would most assuredly be cut short by the fifth bowl judgment. For after the fifth bowl judgment, the Beast does not persecute the people of God, but prepares for the battle of Armageddon, (Rev. 16:11-16; Rev. 19). Secondly, there is the case in Revelation 8:12. There the literal day itself is cut from 24 hours to 16 hours by the fourth trumpet judgment. This is before the battle of Armageddon. No matter how one figures it, three and a half years would be a shorter period if eight hours of every day are lost. Lastly, Revelation 6:12-17 outlines the sign and beginning of the eschatological Day of the Lord. The sign of the Day of the Lord is a blacked-out sun, a shaded moon, fallen stars, and heavenly disturbances unparalleled in human history (Joel 2:28-32, Isaiah 13:6-10, Zephaniah 1:14-18). The Lord Jesus reported that the sign of the Day of the Lord would follow *the days of tribulation* (Matt. 24:29). Therefore, these three events must follow Antichrist's persecution. No indication is given as to how long the lights will be out. It most certainly will not be business as usual; the persecutors will become the persecuted. Once again the Beast's reign is interrupted.

There is a biblical precedent for God decreasing the amount of time for a specifically decreed period of judgment. I Chronicles 21 exposes us to King David's failure and subsequent judgment by God for numbering Israel. God's judgment on David for his disobedience was one of three choices: three years of famine, three months of subjugation to Israel's enemies, or three days of plague and destruction by the angel of the Lord throughout the land of Israel. David, driven by his knowledge of the mercies of God, entrusted himself to the judgment by the hand of the Lord. The result: the plague killed 70,000 men of Israel and the angel of the Lord began the destruction of Jerusalem but was stopped by God long before the total destruction of the city. We are not told how long this destruction lasted, but God did indeed cut short the punishment; He shortened, or amputated, the time decreed for the judgment. Similarly to Matthew 24:22, God's decision to stop the destruction flowed out of His mercy.

In the miracle of Hezekiah, God not only extended His decree concerning Hezekiah's life span, but caused the sun to move both forwards and backwards from its original setting to prove His Word. Here we have the opposite of *koloboo*. The point is that God

can change His plans regarding any individual, nation, or the whole world. God can add to or subtract from His eternal decree. God was not offering an empty threat when He told Moses, "I will strike them with pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they . . .," in Numbers 14:12. He could have done exactly what He said.

The Lord will amputate the days of tribulation with the Day of the Lord beginning with God's deliverance of the righteous; fol-

lowed by His protection of the unsaved remnant of Israel and Judah; and culminating in the punishment of the Dragon, the Beast, the false prophet, and all who received the mark of the Beast.

It is no surprise that God would show mercy to His people during *the days of tribulation*, depicted by the Bible as the worst period the world will ever know. The granting of mercy when man does not deserve it is the story of the Bible. Praise God for his mercy. It endures forever.

## The Lighthouse Alliance Prophecy Conference

Saturday, April 19th

8:30 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

Columbus, Ohio

The Lighthouse Alliance will conduct a prophecy conference at the **Haimler Center**, 1421 Morse Road, in Columbus. Pastor Roger Best will give a biblical overview of end-time events, and Dr. Larry Bates will speak on the world's effort for a "new order" as well as what is happening to our monetary system and the federal reserve's influence on it. The conference is open to all, and a free will offering will be taken. Books, tapes, and study resources will be made available for you to examine and purchase. Call (800) 627-5134 for more information or to register. See you in Columbus!



# Ministry in India

God is using *The Sign*, by Robert Van Kampen, in unusual ways around the world to awaken the church and to encourage believers to search the Scriptures concerning end time events.

Pastor Roger Best had the privilege of conducting a prophecy conference in Secunderabad, India during the third week of February. Missionaries have not been allowed in India since 1968 and yet the church is alive and growing in this land that is so in bondage to false religion. The trip was arranged by Pastors Stephen and David Bandela of the Star Ministries, India. (We first met these fine pastors and their families while they received training at The Master's Mission in Robbinsville, North Carolina.) In addition to speaking in churches on Sundays, a special four-day conference was held at the Telugu Baptist Church with sessions at 10 A.M. and 7 P.M. Rev. G. Sampurnarao of Star Ministries served with great effectiveness as our translator. Many of the people speak and understand English; however, the native language is Telugu.

We were greatly impressed with the great desire on the part of the people and pastors to understand the Word of God. To stand for Christ in this dark land requires a commitment that we in America know very little about. We met Christians who have been alienated from their families because they have trusted Christ. The people have very little of this world's goods and yet they are rejoicing in Christ and have learned to be content. On Sunday morning people packed into a small room and sat on a concrete floor for a three-hour service eager to be taught the Word of God!

Pastors that attended the conference testified to its effectiveness: "Many have come from America preaching about the second coming of Christ, but finally God has sent someone who has shown us what the Word of God says about the second coming."



*Top: Phillip and Stephen Bandela*

*Middle: A 17-year old girl who has been ostracized by her family because of her stand for Christ.*

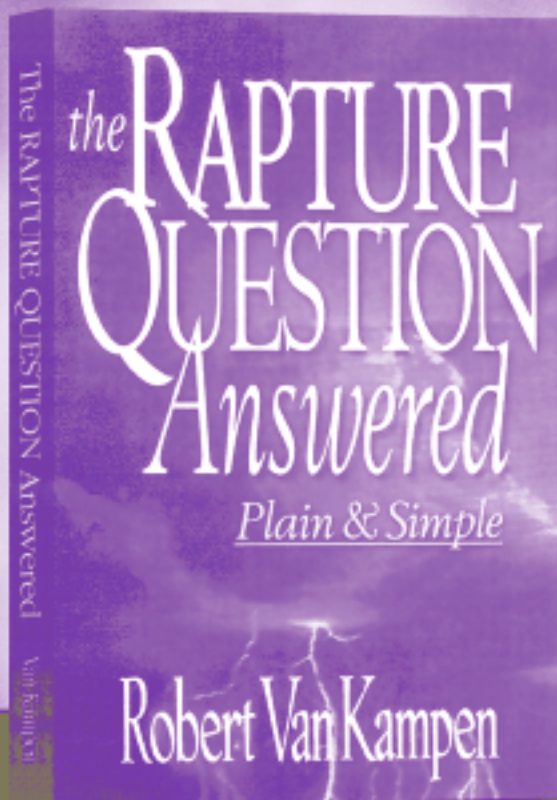
*Above: The church in Secunderabad.*

*Below: Pastors G. Sampurnarao and David Bandela baptizing a convert.*





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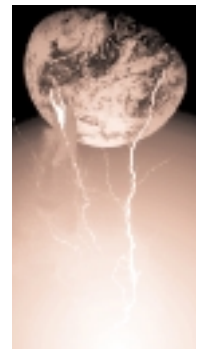
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**A**s we stand on the threshold of a new century, interest in the end times is increasing. And everyone who professes Jesus Christ as Lord must come to terms with a series of critical questions: How should Scripture be understood when it speaks of Antichrist — literally or allegorically? And if Antichrist and his persecution are for real, then will the church have to undergo this terrible time of persecution, or will she be removed—raptured—before this great tribulation begins? Most important, if the church will experience the time of great tribulation yet to come upon the whole earth, who is the source of this wrath —God or Satan? And, lastly, what has God promised to and for the faithful during this time of testing?

Pre-trib, partial trib, mid-trib, and post-trib are various explanations for when Christ will return. But, for years,

these positions have been unconvincing and confusing. The result: when it comes to dealing with end-time prophecy, many Christians have decided that it is easier to remain ignorant about the timing of Christ's return than to try and understand the issue. Yet the truth of the matter is this: Scripture is a lot clearer than many have been led to believe.

The Bible has the answers, plain and simple. *The Rapture Question Answered, Plain and Simple* points readers to those answers in a readable, lay-level style that does not sacrifice the importance of scholarship, but is soundly founded upon it. In fact, this book takes a confusing subject and presents it in a logical, biblical way with such simplicity that the reader will walk away convinced in his or her own mind. Talk about must reading! This is do or die!



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## Letters

**Just a few of the hundreds of letters that we've received at The Sign Ministries.**

*The Sign* is the most concise book on end-time events I've ever come across. I've done a lot of advertising for *The Sign* and have received favorable and not-so favorable responses. I look forward to receiving more resources on the prewrath position.

**J.M., NORTH CAROLINA**

How many times have you read or heard, "It is a great book"? Within about four to five years after graduating from Moody Bible Institute I realized that the

prewrath position was the only end-time position that the Bible supported.

**E.O., TEXAS**

I did enjoy reading the first edition of *The Sign*, with such clear synthesis of Old and New Testament prophecies. I would be grateful for any updates or additional information you have since the book was printed.

**D.V.S., WALES, UK**

I really thank the Lord for His wonderful grace to us, especially in our daily walks of life. I received your *Parousia Magazine*. Thank you for your eagerness to research more insight regarding the future events, but I believe this is the Lord's guidance that this magazine is sent to other countries for pastors and laymen.

**Pastor C.G., PHILIPPINES**

I used to be a "die hard" pre-trib with all other positions unbiblical. After much study and prod-

ding by the Holy Spirit, I changed my position. Since then I had to resign from the mission board I was with and write to my supporting churches to let them know of my change. As of right now I am open to what God wants me to do. The one thing that has confounded me through all is the response from the men who hold to God's Word as their final authority.

**M.G., FLORIDA**