

What On Earth Is Going On Matthew 24:15-24; Daniel 9:26-27 “The Day of The Lord (Part 1, The Tribulation)”

Introduction

It seems that you cannot turn on the evening news these days without hearing some liberal politician talking up the benefits of “open borders” or a “global economy”. Nationalism is beginning to fade away into globalism. So many are under the false assumption that a one world government would “fix” everything that is wrong with this wicked world. Their argument, albeit a specious one, is that if there were no borders or governments to divide us, then the world would come together in harmony and unity of purpose. After all, many of the world’s governmental systems are corrupt, and therefore, a great number of the earth’s population is oppressed. While I do agree that many of this world’s governments are corrupt, who’s to say that a global government wouldn’t be equally as corrupt, or even far worse than any of the governments in existence today? I would argue that a global government would have far less accountability, and therefore, would be the most evil of all empires. I base this assumption not on mere speculation, but upon solid Biblical fact. In the last days, there will be a one world government, and according to the authority of scripture, it will be evil and wicked to its very core. In fact, it will be a government run by no other than Satan himself, who will give dominion to his puppet ruler, the Antichrist.

Just as The Godhead is made manifest in the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), Satan will set up his one world government with an abominable counterfeit “trinity” of his own. It will be comprised of Satan, The Antichrist (The “Beast” in Revelation 13:1), and The False Prophet (The “Beast” in Revelation 13:11). This trinity of evil will rule the world during the seven year period known as the Tribulation, or, as The Old Testament calls it, The Great and Terrible “Day of The LORD” (Isa 2:12, 13:6; Ezek 13:5, 30:3; Joel 1:15, 2:1, 11, 31, 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Zeph 1:7, 14; Zech 14:1; Mal 4:5). Satan will do everything that he can in those days to terrorize the elect, but God will use this time to make one final appeal to whosoever will turn to Christ for salvation. Those who refuse this final offer of redemption will be destroyed. Just as He did in the days of Noah, God will violently purge the moral filth that has so thoroughly corrupted His creation. The Day of The LORD will be seven years of literal hell on earth.

One might ask the question, “Why would The LORD draw out His wrath for such a long period of time?” After all, could He not just destroy the world suddenly and spare the wicked from this prolonged torment of seven years? First of all, seven years is nothing compared to the eternity of torment that awaits the wicked forever in hell. And secondly, to think that God is being cruel here is to miss the very purpose of The Tribulation period. It is a last chance for Israel to accept Christ as their Messiah. The Prophets spoke of a time that Israel would see the error of her ways and would turn to The One that they had rejected to be saved (Jeremiah 30:7; Zechariah 12:10). Even Paul tells us that after the days of the Gentiles, all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:25-26). It is The Tribulation, the “time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jeremiah 30:7), that will cause the nation of Israel to reject the Antichrist and turn to Christ! Not only will Israel be saved, but a multitude of Gentiles will also be led to Christ by the preaching of the 144,000 Jewish “preachers”, who will be called and “sealed” during the tribulation period (Revelation 7:4-9). God is a God of mercy and unfailing love, that is why He will go to such great lengths to get His people to turn away from their sins and be saved! The Tribulation is not an act of cruelty, it is in fact a final act of mercy. For the very same reason that a loving father will discipline his children to keep them from going down the wrong path, God will severely punish this world in order to save many (Revelation 7:9-17).

The tribulation itself will be divided into two parts: the first three and a half years are called “The Tribulation”, and the last three and a half years are known as “The Great Tribulation”. Today we will examine the first three and a half year (Tribulation) period. We will see what scripture tells us about the beginning of the Antichrist’s rule upon the earth. So let us begin our study today with three elements of The Tribulation period: The Antichrist, The Armies Around Jerusalem, and The Abomination of Desolation.

The Antichrist

The Bible calls him “the man of sin” and “the lawless one”. He is the Antichrist who will rise to power after The Church has been raptured. While we do not know the identity of this wicked man that will come to rule, we know much about him from scripture. We know that he will blaspheme God (**Revelation 13:6**). He will claim to be God (**2 Thessalonians 2:3-4**). He will be able to perform miracles to convince the world that he is God (**2 Thessalonians 2:9-12**). He will be assassinated and come back to life (**Revelation 13:12**). He will rule the world (**Revelation 13:5-7**) and will control the entire world economy (**Revelation 13:16**). He will make a covenant with the Jews, even rebuilding their temple, only to break his covenant at the end of the first three and a half years of the tribulation period. Then he will set up an image of himself in the Temple and demand that the Jews worship him (**Daniel 9:27**).

This man will be the very embodiment of Satan. Just as Jesus was God incarnate, the Antichrist will be Satan incarnate. He will rise to power from what is now the shattered remnant of The Roman Empire (Europe), forming a confederation made up of ten European nations. The beginning stages for this was set in 1958 with the Treaty of Rome and has continued to this day. The European Union established it's own currency in 1999 (The Euro) and the union currently has 28 member states. However, there is now more and more talk of different member states withdrawing from the union as was recently demonstrated with the departure of Great Britain in 2016. By the time the antichrist assumes control, the union will consist of only ten nations (**Daniel 7:7-8, 20-25**). Remember that we studied last week that he cannot come to power while The Church remains upon earth (**2 Thessalonians 2:7**). It is the presence of The Holy Spirit within the Church that now restrains the revealing of the Antichrist. But, after the rapture, he will be loosed upon a world powerless to restrain him.

He will begin his rise to power by being a consummate politician, pretending to be a great friend of the nation of Israel. What he will actually be doing is setting up the dominos so that he can achieve world power. His reign will begin in Europe, but in order to gain control over the earth, he must first create a scenario which will bring about a great war. This will easily be done by rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem. Now for a little history lesson. Just as Jesus predicted in **Matthew 24:2**, the temple in Jerusalem was utterly destroyed by the Romans in 70AD. By 136 AD, The Jews had been completely banished from their homeland, and the nation of Israel was no more. The Jewish people were scattered throughout the earth. This exile lasted for 1800 plus years until in 1948, when the Jewish state of Israel was re-established and the Jews began to return to their promised homeland. The Ottomans (Modern day Turkey) had controlled this region since the sixteenth century, but lost claim to it as a result of siding with the Germans in World War I. A Jewish scientist named Chaim Weizmann helped Great Britain win the war by discovering the chemical compound that led to smokeless powder used to make rifle and artillery shells of the British. As a result of his discovery which led to the defeat of the Germans, Weizmann was granted a “favor” by the British. His only request was for his people (the Jews) to have their homeland restored. A sentiment was growing around the world at the time to restore Israel, because of the influence of The Church! Isn't it amazing how God works all things together for the good of His people (**Romans 8:28**)? Israel was re-established in 1948 just as Ezekiel had foretold would one day occur in his prophecy of the “valley of the dry bones” (**Ezekiel 37**). A nation that was “dead and buried” was suddenly resurrected back to life!

This “resurrection” of Israel was absolutely essential to set up the rise of the Antichrist. Why? Because Israel had to be restored, before the Antichrist could come along and broker his phony “deal” with them. And what will that deal be? He will rebuild their beloved Temple in Jerusalem, and THAT will bring about a serious conflict in the middle east. Why? Because right now, standing upon the Temple Mount in Jerusalem is the blasphemous Muslim shrine called “The Dome of The Rock”. It is from this place that the Muslim's believe that Mohammed ascended into heaven. Imagine the fury of the Islamic world when the Antichrist allows the Jewish state to tear it down?! All hell will break loose. And that will be exactly what the Antichrist wants!

The Armies Around Jerusalem

Jesus said in **Luke 21:20**, **“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.”** This is to serve as a warning to the Jewish people in the tribulation period that terrible times are upon the horizon. When the Antichrist allows the Jews to tear down the Dome of The Rock and replace it with their Temple upon the Holy Mount in Jerusalem, the Muslim world will be driven insane with rage. We need only to look around to see just how volatile the Islamists become when they perceive any insult to their religion, or its false prophet. They will long for the destruction of the Jewish state (most already do, but are afraid to act upon it). Unable to enlist the assistance of the Antichrist, who is allied to Israel, (but will hold back from getting involved to his own advantage), they will petition any ally that will come to their aid. The **book of Ezekiel** tells of a confederation of nations that will seek to destroy Jerusalem.

In **Ezekiel 38-39**, the prophet speaks of an alliance of armies that will come and besiege the land of Israel. It is a coalition of some very unlikely partners, which many Biblical scholars believe to be Meshek (Turkey), Persia (Iran), Cush (Ethiopia), Gog (Russia) and Put (Libya), plus Magog (all the countries ending in “stan”: i.e. Afghanistan, Pakistan). Notice that this is an alliance made up of most of the Muslim world and Russia. I personally believe that this league of nations will be led by the Iranians. Until recently, Russia had few ties with Iran, but in the past few years they have become close allies and trading partners. The Iranians, who believe themselves to be a superior master race, have been calling for the destruction of Jerusalem for decades. The only thing that has kept them from attacking is Israel's close relationship with the U.S. Up till now, the Iranians haven't relished the thought of an all out war with the U.S. and Israel, for both countries have a nuclear arsenal. This is why the Iranians are so bent upon acquiring nuclear weapons for themselves. Anti-Semitism is on the rise world wide, including here in America. But who keeps this tide of anti-Israeli sentiment at bay? The Church, that's who. But remember, when the tribulation period comes, The Church won't be around to take a stand on Israel's behalf. The anti-Semitic forces will become emboldened to strike, but God will still be in control.

As it stands today, Russia is becoming more and more involved in the geopolitical landscape of the middle east. It makes perfect sense, therefore, that Russia would align itself with the Muslim world to eradicate Israel, if it proved to benefit the financially unstable Kremlin economically (don't forget all that oil). Ezekiel prophesied that these nations would come together and be drawn into battle much like a fish is hooked and reeled in to their own demise (**Ezekiel 38:4**). God will draw this unholy alliance to Jerusalem and then miraculously destroy its armies (**Ezekiel 38:19-23**). This massive defeat will completely shift the balance of world power to the Antichrist, who will no longer have any need of the Jews. He will be the ruler of the entire world and will break his covenant with Israel. By the midpoint of his seven year covenant with the Jewish people (**Daniel 9:27**), the Beast will do the unthinkable in all of Israel. He will enter the newly constructed Temple and demand to be worshipped as God!

The Abomination of Desolation

At the midpoint of the tribulation, the Antichrist will have no further use for his treaty with the Jews. By then, He will have won over the whole world with his ability to do false miracles, and his military prowess will make him appear to be unstoppable. Though some will try. The Antichrist will be assassinated by being shot in the head. But to the shock and amazement of the whole world, Satan will raise him from the dead (**Revelation 13:3, 12**). At that point, millions will receive his mark upon their hands, or foreheads. Those who refuse it will be unable to make a living or even buy the food they need to live. The power and authority given to the Beast will allow him to crush any and all who offer resistance.

Severe persecution and execution will be the only alternative for refusing the mark of the Beast (**Revelation 13**). Many will refuse him, however, and turn to Christ to be saved, but they will be martyred for their decision. The Antichrist will be joined by his false prophet, the third person in this trinity of evil. The false prophet will set up an image of the Antichrist in the newly constructed Temple of the Jews. The beast will demand that all the earth worship the image or be executed. This is what the prophet Daniel calls “The Abomination of Desolation” (**Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15**). This image of the Antichrist will actually appear to be alive and will even be able to speak (**Revelation 13:15**). Millions of people will bow down before the image of the beast, or they will die. Jesus warns the people of Jerusalem to flee when

they see these things, for the worst is yet to come (**Matthew 24:16-21**). For what is to follow will prove to be the darkest days in the history of the world, known as The Great Tribulation.

As we read these things from The Holy Scriptures, it is understandable that we feel an incredible sense of dread, but Jesus has commanded us not to be afraid. These things also *MUST* happen before His kingdom will come upon the earth. God always has been, and will still be, in control during the tribulation. As for me, I am thankful that The Church has not been appointed to suffer this terrible wrath that is to come (**1 Thessalonians 5:9; Revelation 3:10**). I am thankful that I am sealed and protected by The Holy Spirit of God (**Ephesians 1:13**). However, I am saddened for those who have refused to believe.

There are many foolish people in this wicked world. Some have even said that they will wait and turn to Christ once the rapture occurs, and the tribulation begins, because *THEN* they will know that all these things are true, and the second coming of Christ is eminent. What they do not understand is that the tribulation is NOT a second chance for those who have rejected Christ, all the while knowing that He IS LORD. Paul tells us that those who have received the message of the gospel, and knowingly refused it, will not be saved like those who will come to faith during The Great Tribulation. He warns us that because they knew better, and yet refused to heed the truth, that in those days God will send them a powerful delusion, so that they will believe in the lying wonders of the beast, rather than accept the truth of Jesus Christ (**2 Thessalonians 2:11**).

Simply put, if you hear the preaching of the gospel and decide to reject it, even though you know it to be truth, then there will be no hope for you after the rapture of The Church. You will have squandered your chance. The tribulation period is an opportunity only for those who have been blind to the truth of the gospel, such as the nation of Israel, and the many others who have ignorantly followed false gods and religions because they were deceived. Forget about what the "Left Behind" books say! Today is the day of salvation (**2 Corinthians 6:2**). I don't know about you this morning, but I for one am not willing to risk it. I will be ready when He calls for His Church. Will you be ready? Do not put off the most important decision of your life. Surrender yourself to The Lord Jesus Christ, and escape the wrath that is to come.

And ALL of God's people said... TRUTH!!!