

Last Days - Part One

The Antichrist

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Daniel 9:27

And He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations He shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

When the Antichrist arises, he is going to make a covenant with the children of Israel. Before the overtaking of abomination even takes place, this man, who will become Antichrist, will make a covenant with the children of Israel for a seven year period of time.

In the midst of this week (or week of seven years), he is going to break his covenant, and then the abomination that maketh desolate is going to be set up.

The Abomination of Desolation

II Thessalonians 2:3,4

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

The Antichrist will set himself up in the temple of God. He will pose and exalt himself against all that is called God so that he, posing as God in the temple, will show himself as being God.

Now, all this pertains to Israel. It is in Israel that the Antichrist is going to set himself up as God in the temple.

Here is what Jesus told the Jews about this while He was here upon the earth:

John 5:43

I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.

When the Antichrist comes, he is going to exalt himself and come in his own name. The Jews will receive and accept him, while they rejected Jesus when He came in His Father's name.

Nigh unto 2,000 years ago, the Jews rejected Jesus Christ. They didn't want anything to do with Him. They spurned Him. Yes, they turned down the Son of God: the One whom God sent to be their Saviour, their Redeemer, and their King.

They rejected the very Son of God and were dispersed among the nations.

When Antichrist comes, he is coming in his own name and the Jews are going to receive him.

This is quite an event, when you think of it. Just picture the Jews one of these days setting a man up as their Christ, establishing him as the Messiah.

In the midst of this seven year period, when Antichrist goes on to set himself up in the temple as God and begins his blasphemous work against all that is called God, the Jews are going to reject him. They are going to see what they have done in accepting him and realize their mistake.

This is why they are warned to flee when they see this abomination, because right at this point all hell is going to break loose in the Middle East!

A Remnant

Matthew 23:37-39

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Around the middle of the tribulation period, the children of Israel are going to be brought to an awakening and realize the mistake they made. They will receive Antichrist, finally reject him, and then turn to receive Jesus Christ. There's going to be a strong remnant of the children of Israel who will turn to accept Jesus as the Christ, as their Lord and Saviour.

The Kingdom Age

At the end of the age, Jesus Christ will return unto them in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And there, in the holy land, He will fight the great Battle of Armageddon against all the wicked forces of the world.

Then He is going to establish His kingdom, ruling and reigning upon the earth in this present world. He will rule from the throne that will be established in the land of Israel as the throne of David.

Entire World Affected

Bible prophecy is centered around the Holy Land. As it affects the nation of Israel, so will it affect the entire world.

Jesus taught us very strongly what these events would be like. One warning He gave was to the whole world, not just to the land of Israel:

Matthew 24:21

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

The Lord makes this very clear: It is a time of tribulation such as the world has never seen. It will be a time when the world will go through a battle that will look like nobody will be left alive, like the entire world will perish. This period, called the Great Tribulation, is going to be a terrible time.

Now, all of this is coming upon the world because of the antichrist activity.

Let's put the two together for a moment to get a clearer understanding:

- We have all of this activity of the Antichrist that we talked about concerning the super church which will appear in the last days;
- Then we have all this antichrist activity that will appear concerning Israel in the last days;
- When you combine all of this activity together, you see a total picture of what the end of the age is really like.

What does all this mean to us?

What does it mean to the true church?

What does it mean to the true child of God?

We've gone a long ways down the road in our study, but we still have a ways to go before we get down to the crux of the matter as it pertains to the church of Jesus Christ.

When Will the Rapture Take Place?

Will the church have to go through the great tribulation?

Will the church be taken out of the world ahead of it, in the midst of it, or after it?

There are schools of thought for all three points of view, but we want to look into the Word for ourselves.

First of all, I'm going to tell it to you like this: The Lord said of that day and hour knoweth no man — Mark 13:32

We can look further in the Word, though, and see what time and season it will take place in general — I Thess 5:1

Enoch as a Type

As we look back to the days of Noah, we find a man named Enoch.

Genesis 5:24

And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

Now, Enoch stands out as a type of something. He is a type of the church being raptured out of this world. He was translated; he walked with God and God took him.

I Corinthians 15:52,53

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be

raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

We look at Enoch, and he certainly fits the type of what Paul taught us concerning the rapture. One thing we have to say is this: If Enoch is a type, then he is a type of the church being taken out of the world. And if so, we have to look and note when he was taken:

During the flood? In the middle of the flood? Before the flood? Or after the flood?

Note that the flood is like the tribulation when the wrath of God is poured out upon the earth.

As we examine the Word, we can see that it is clearly indicated that Enoch was taken out of the world long before the flood. As a matter of fact, it was 669 years before the flood.

We can look at Enoch as being a type of the translation of believers. He was a believer in the Antediluvian (pre-flood) Age, being taken up to be with the Lord before the wrath fell.

Now, if Enoch is a type, then the type itself tells us that the rapture will take place prior to the great tribulation period. It tells us that the church won't see the tribulation, that it will be caught out of the world a considerable time before that event ever takes place.

We have to look a little further, though:

Matthew 16:17,18

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

. . . *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* That's a powerful fact. The church is going to face some battles — and I want you to know that the church has already faced some fierce battles — but praise God, though there are battles, the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church.

Now, we want to compare that Scripture to antichrist activity.

Overcome or Not Overcome?

Revelation 13:6,7

And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

Here the Scripture would tell us that the Antichrist had power over the saints. He has power over them to overcome them as well as having power over all kindreds of the earth, and tongues, and nations.

In light of this, we must further compare Scripture.

One Scripture says that the church won't be overcome, while another Scripture says that saints will be overcome.

Now, we can't have it both ways, can we? In other words, we can't be the victorious church (that is, the overcomer, who can't be overcome by Satan) and then turn around to be overcome by Satan. That would be contradictory!

Realize that one passage is talking about the church and the other talks about the saints. That's where the difference lies.

When Jesus said He was going to build His church on this Rock and hell would not prevail against it, He meant it! The Word of God stands sure. And, since the Scriptures can't be broken, we can be sure that hell cannot prevail against the church.

Oh, the devil may fight against the church, but he cannot prevail against it. I can't find anywhere where the church, itself, was conquered or defeated. So, I've got to begin to conclude that the saints referred to here are in an age other than the Church Age.

That's a big statement and I'm not stating it loosely. We'll dig into it and try to find out who these saints are, where they come from, where they go, and what their end is.

Great Tribulation

Now, let's find out who these saints are who were persecuted during the time of great tribulation upon the earth.

Daniel 7:18

But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.

We find the saints are referred to here, and the time referred to is the time when the kingdom would be established.

Daniel 7:25

And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

This verse speaks of the little horn, the Antichrist, persecuting the saints. These are the saints, therefore, who will be on the earth during the reign of the Antichrist.

The reign referred to here is limited to a time, and times and the dividing of time.

What does this refer to prophetically?

A time is a year; times are two years; and the dividing of time is half a year. Thus, a total of 3 1/2 years is mentioned when the saints would be given into the hands of the Antichrist, to do whatever he would to them.

Daniel 12:1

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

Here we find saints are referred to as Daniel's people. Michael the archangel will come and stand up for them here at this time of trouble, which is the same time Jesus mentions in Matthew 24 when He speaks of the abomination of desolation. He said there will be great tribulation at that time such as never was.

Well, Daniel called it *a time of trouble*, and Jesus called it *great tribulation* — these are one and the same. At that time, many of the children of Israel will be delivered who were found written in the book.

Daniel 12:10

Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.

During this time many will be purified, made white. In other words, the trial — or tribulation — will have some bearing upon many being purified and brought forth to victory.

Martyrdom

John's revelation showed forth what will take place at the end time during the seven seals. In the fifth seal we find a great time of martyrdom.

Now, in heaven there are a great group of martyrs from the Church Age. These have already gone on to be with the Lord and we find them here crying out:

Revelation 6:10,11

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

We are told that the martyrs in heaven were to rest a little season. There was something they had to wait for: their fellowservants and brethren who must also be killed.

Yes, there will be a great time of martyrdom during this fifth seal. But who are these who will be killed?

Revelation 7:9,10

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

An angel standing by began to put the thought into John's mind who these saints were and where they came from.

Tribulation Saints

Revelation 7:13,14

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

These saints are referred to here as saints coming out of great tribulation: saints who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb during this time of tribulation. In other words, they came out of antichrist activity, during the time when he will be upon the earth.

The First Resurrection

Revelation 20:4

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Here John is talking about the first resurrection and of the resurrection of the souls who had been martyred: the residue of all who would have their part in the first resurrection.

Now, we want to note that Jesus is the firstfruits of resurrection.

I Corinthians 15:20 & 23

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept . . . But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming.

We can see that Jesus had the firstfruits; the Bride also has fruit in resurrection; and here the martyred saints at the end of the age also had part in the first resurrection. They were brought up last — the resurrected who had been martyred. We want to take note of this.

These were those who refused to worship the beast, refused to worship Antichrist or take his number. They had utterly stood and refused right down the line, and they were martyred because of their refusal.

Now, because they had made themselves clean in the blood of the Lamb and had remained true to the Lord — to the point of being martyred for their faithful stand — they were deemed worthy of resurrection.

And, before the Kingdom Age has actually begun, they are brought forth to rule and reign with Christ during that time.

Well, we have traced these saints a long ways in the Scriptures. One thing we definitely found out about them is that they had been martyred for their refusal to compromise and give in.

Mystery Babylon

Revelation 17:6

And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

We refer to this woman as Mystery Babylon. She is identified as the super church that will emerge at the end of the age and be involved in antichrist activity.

We look at this and see she is drunken on the blood of the martyrs (the blood of the saints).

Now, we have taken the time to identify these saints: They are found at the time of the Kingdom Age, during the period preceding of 3 1/2 years. And we find here that it is this woman, Mystery Babylon, who is drunken with their blood.

We follow it on down and find that this woman is Rome: the headquarters of the world dictator and the ecclesiastical headquarters of the world church as it emerges in the last day.

Yet, we must look farther to see there are other things that point this out even more clearly.

We talked about the beast rising to persecute the saints: *And it was given unto him to make war with the saints and to overcome them . . . Rev 13:7.*

Revelation 13:5

And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

Forty and two months equals the Antichrist reign of 3 1/2 years. He will make war with the saints during that time — those saints in Revelation 7 who came out of great tribulation.

Well now, we put the whole story together and see that those saints are tribulation saints. They have stood up to Antichrist. They have been martyred for having the testimony of salvation and for refusing to compromise.

But we still have to look deeper into the Word to gain a full understanding of the matter.

A Warning is Given to us

Luke 21:34

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

Here Jesus is talking about that day, that period of time at the end of the age. He speaks of that period of time when the Lord will call, but many won't be ready; many will be taken up with the cares of the world; many will be off eating, drinking, and giving themselves in marriage, right up to that day. And it will take them unawares: just like the days before the flood, and the days of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Remember how the Lord warned us that they were eating and drinking and giving in marriage, right up to the day that Noah entered into the ark? They were giving no thought to being ready for the flood.

Well, Jesus gives us this warning in Luke to take heed that we not be careless like they were. Then He goes on to talk about that day:

Luke 21:35

For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

What is a snare? It is a secret device to trap something unawares. We used snares to catch rabbits. When you looked, if the rabbit had sprung the snare, you found him hanging in the tree you had bent over. You either caught the rabbit in the snare or he escaped from it.

Now, this text tells us, that day will come as a snare on all that dwell on the face of the whole earth. It won't matter who it is: a churchy person or a worldly person, a young person or an old person, middle-aged or baby. It won't matter!

That day is going to come as a snare upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth — without exception. It's going to be a snare unto those who are called saints as well as unto those who are sinners. This is what Jesus implies here.

But He gives a warning while there is time:

Luke 21:36

Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

Here is what Jesus says to the Bride: Watch! We are warned to watch and pray, to keep our soul right with the Lord, to live in victory, and not get all taken up with the things of the world. Yet this is where many lose sight of Jesus.

When Jesus was in Gethsemane, He told His disciples to watch and pray with Him for one hour. Then He went yonder and prayed until He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood.

When He came back to the disciples, they were sound asleep. They were supposed to be watching, supposed to be praying: but they were sleeping!

Jesus woke them, and said:

Matthew 26:41

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Your flesh is weak. Inside you say, *I'm going to make heaven. I'm going all the way with the Lord.* But when it comes to the old man, you find a great weakness: You find something always tugging to pull you back. Listen, you need the determination to rise above the flesh, and to watch and pray as Jesus told you to.

Now, what are you going to be counted worthy of? Heaven? Jesus said that you should watch and pray that you may be counted worthy: worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass.

Notice that it says, counted worthy to escape, not worthy to be caught.

The earth is headed for trouble. The tribulation is down the road. The end of the age is at hand: The signs all point to it. And this gives us all the more reason to watch and pray.

How can anyone escape when it's going to come as a snare upon ALL that dwell on the earth?

There is only one way we can escape that terrible time of tribulation that is coming. I'm going to be frank with you about this.

We must be ready WHEN Jesus comes. We must be ready WHEN that door is open. We must be ready WHEN the Bridegroom comes to take His Bride away.

Jesus is going to take His Bride out of this world. He's not going to leave her behind to suffer that kind of tribulation at the hands of brutal Antichrist. No, He's not. He's going to catch His Bride away.

But we've got to be ready for that hour: We've got to watch and pray.

The Church of Philadelphia

Revelation 3:9,10

Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

I am going to keep you *from* the hour. The Lord didn't say He would keep you *IN* it. No, He said He was going to keep you from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

Read that carefully!

Revelation 3:11

Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

Here, Jesus speaks about His coming and about our escaping something. We are going to escape that time of antichrist activity upon the world, when Antichrist is going to have the power to make war with everyone in the world, even with the saints of that day (the tribulation saints). Those who don't make the rapture will be around to face that activity.

Now, where do you stand today? Are you really living for the Lord with your whole heart? Are you walking with Jesus in righteousness from day to day?

Or are you one who plays church? One who is concerned but not serious? One who is involved but not too deeply? You're there — but you're on the borderline.

I want to encourage you to take the words of Jesus to heart. He wants you to make it. He wants you to be ready, not because of any works of righteousness that you do but because of His grace.

Surrender your life to Him and let Him have His way. Take the warnings of the Lord seriously. Watch and pray that you be counted worthy of the rapture. Yes, watch and pray that you will be kept from the hour of temptation, by being raptured out of the world ahead of the antichrist activity.

God is warning you today not to allow that day to come upon you as a snare. Get down to business with the Lord. Don't play games any longer. My, everlasting life is at stake. If you play around, you'll be left behind to face a day of darkness and trouble such as the world has never seen.

The Church of Laodicea

This church gives us a type of what the last day church would really be like:

Revelation 3:14,15

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

The first of the seven churches, the church of Ephesus, had left their first love. Jesus warned them to return and repent, or He would come and remove their candlestick right out of the holder. They would be done away with permanently.

But we find a different warning is given to the lukewarm church of the Laodiceans:

Revelation 3:16

So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

The Lord warns that He will spue this church out of His mouth! You can't stand it when a drink becomes lukewarm — neither cold nor hot — and you don't want to swallow it.

Well, Jesus is using this as an illustration to show us why this church is unacceptable. *I can't stomach it. I can't drink it because it's lukewarm.* Something has to happen to this church if they are going to be acceptable, something to change them.

Revelation 3:17

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

Here we see their state: They thought they were the rich, affluent church of this generation; but the Lord saw them as being poor and miserable and naked. He said they were wretched and blind.

Let's put this all together now in our minds and try to grasp the Lord's counsel to this church:

Revelation 3:18

I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

The Lord is counseling this church to buy of Him gold tried in the fire. They are going to be put to the test, and those who would buy this gold would find they were rich.

He went on to encourage them to be clothed with white raiment that they would be clothed, and to anoint their eyes with eyesalve that they could see.

Revelation 3:19

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

The Lord offers repentance to this church, but He also tells them they would go through some fiery trials; they would go through the fire.

Now, is this church going to miss the rapture? Is it going to be left behind? Are the Laodiceans, as a type of lukewarm believers, really going to be left behind to face tribulation and trouble such as the world has never seen?

Well, all the warnings of Jesus were telling us to watch and pray that we would be counted worthy to escape all those things which are coming upon the earth. We see that if we are counted worthy, we can escape. And Jesus will keep us from that hour of temptation.

Achan

Let's look at a typical story of someone who went back and got involved in sin: Achan. He was one of the Lord's own, right up there with the rest.

When Joshua marched around the walls of Jericho, God gave the children of Israel explicit warning not to touch anything of that city. It was a curse. If they did take of the cursed thing then they would bring sin upon the camp!

Well, the city was conquered and Achan went over the rubble into the city with the rest. As he went, he coveted an old Babylonian garment, 200 shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold. He took those things and buried them in his tent.

Achan had sinned and he brought defilement upon the entire army of Israel.

Joshua realized something was wrong when his army went up to conquer the little city of Ai. They were confident they would find victory after their victory in Jericho, but instead they fled before the enemy.

Joshua wondered why the Lord hadn't blessed as He had in conquering Jericho. And the Lord revealed to Joshua that Achan was the hindrance, because he had sinned and brought sin into the camp.

Well, they finally took Achan and his family and burned them with fire, getting the sin out of the camp.

Joshua 7:26

And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day.

The Valley of Achor

The Valley of Achor represents something: It is the place of a fiery purge. When you see that name, know it reflects a time of purging from sin by fire.

We find the prophet Hosea picking up this name. He wrote about Israel and her backsliding, her whoring and going away from God, and He tells what the Lord would do to recover her.

Hosea 2:14

Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.

The Lord was going to bring her into the wilderness. Israel is going to fulfil what Hosea illustrates here. During the great tribulation she is going to be led into the wilderness where the Lord will speak comfortably to her.

Hosea 2:15

And I will give her her vineyards from thence, *and the valley of Achor for a door of hope* [italics mine]: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

What kind of door of hope could this be? Here Israel is backslidden, whoring after other gods, and God says He will lead her into the wilderness to purify her.

Now, what about the Laodicean church? It has some relationship with the Lord. He told them to buy of Him gold tried in the fire.

Does all of this reflect that the Lord is going to give unto Israel — unto the church that is left behind when the rapture comes — the Valley of Achor for a door of hope?

Is the fiery judgment of God going to go to work to purify them that they also may go on to salvation? Is the chastening hand of God going to be that strong?

We have to realize that, at the end of this present age, the fiery trial is coming. It will be a time of trouble such as the world has never seen. The Valley of Achor will engulf the whole world, and many will be purified and made white during that time — see Dan 12:10.

You know, as well as I do, that the fiery trials of the Christian faith are to purify us. Peter said, in I Peter 4:12, not to think it strange concerning the fiery trials which would try us. We are all familiar with those fiery trials, aren't we?

To many, it's done the job: they've been purified through those fiery trials. But others have played church, not letting the work be done and accomplished in them. Oh, they had the trials, but they didn't let them produce the purification they were intended to bring.

Where are you today? If you have been indifferent and hypocritical, quit playing around, and be sure that you're ready for the rapture.