

Before The Lord Returns

Considering the coming days

Introduction

The plan and purpose of the Lord at the end of this age is to be found in scripture. It has to be our guide as we observe the events that are now unfolding upon the earth, events that are now unfolding and broadcast every day on the News.

Satan, however, has, endeavoured to confuse our understanding of prophecy of scripture and men have interpreted the scriptures without the Holy Spirit, so that many conflicting interpretations of what lies ahead may be found. So it is that we need to ask for the spiritual understanding and discernment that only the Holy Spirit can impart and look to Him, the Holy Spirit, who Jesus told us would "tell of things to come." (John 16:13)

We know that certain understanding was sealed until the time of the end - (Daniel 12:4) - but as we draw near to the end of the age let us be ready for increased revelation. What past generations have failed to understand is now being revealed.

It is only the 'sons of light' who will be ready for the Lord's Second Coming, for the 'Day of the Lord' will not come upon *the world* as a "thief in the night." It is the true church that are the 'sons of light and the sons of day' (cf. 1 Thess. 5:1-7) and for us the Lord's return will not be as a thief. The sons of light who walk in the will of their Heavenly Father with Jesus as their one and only Head are the true Church and it will be their end time ministry to preach the gospel of the Kingdom for a witness to all nations, as mercy is offered to this increasingly wicked world before the Judge comes to catch away His saints before the wrath of God comes on the sons of disobedience who have not accepted the call into His Kingdom. (cf. Matt. 24:14)

False Prophecies

Satan has done all he can to confuse our understanding of the end of the age for it is at the end of this age that his defeat comes. One of Satan's deceptions is the false expectation that the Lord could return for His church at any moment and certainly before the prophesied time of great tribulation. But scripture clearly speaks of the events that must occur before the Lord returns.

Weighing Prophecy

True prophets might warn of events before we reach the very end of this age but so can the false prophets. Satan does not rely on only one trick! We therefore need discernment that only the Holy Spirit can impart to us. We need to always look to the Holy Spirit as our Guide and Teacher. He has been given to us as our Helper and He is within every believer who has been born again of the Spirit. Having the Greater One in us we can test the spirits to see if what we hear is from a spirit of error or the Spirit of Truth. (cf. 1 John 4:1)

When false prophets and false teachers come let us not be shaken but have our faith clearly resting on what is written, that which we have been told by Jesus and all the prophets of old.

There are many more recent voices that have prophesied of coming events that others add to with wrong understanding. And we need to take care because even a correct prophecy can be wrongly interpreted. It has always been so. Speculations abound. Men take notice of astral events and interpret them wrongly. Satan causes confusion by bringing forth interpretations of such signs in the heavens to cause true signs to be ignored. Many are led into having wrong expectations.

Often it is only with hindsight that we recognise the true hand of God on events that have transpired and realise just what He was saying. We need to watch without carnal speculation. We need to be asking the Lord to give us an ear to hear what the Spirit is saying. It is by the anointing within we can 'know' truth and error. (1 John 2:27)

Let us be honest about that which we are unsure of and let us ensure prophecies are in line with scripture. The scriptures are our safeguard.

We must also not place true prophesied events in a wrong time frame, another trick Satan is expert at getting us to do. We are not to expect Millennium events in this age, for example. May the Lord give us wisdom from above to do just this and spiritual understanding so we are not led astray. (cf. Phil.1:9 and Col.1:9) Let us ask for this.

Peter wrote, "No prophecy of scripture is a matter of ones own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by and act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." (1 Peter 1:20-21) Let us not despise prophecy but rather be assured that we have not been left without knowing what God is going to do. Amos prophesied, "Surely the Lord does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets. (Amos.3:7)

Prophecy of Scripture

So we can be assured of the nearness of the Lord's second coming by looking at what prophecy of scripture tells us and recognising the signs of the times. There is an order to events that precede Jesus' second coming. Until we see these prophesied events unfold do not let us be shaken as the Church in Thessalonica was, that the Day of Christ - His second coming and 'our gathering together unto Him' - had already come. (cf. 2 Thess.2:1-2) So what does scripture say?

The Great Tribulation and the Wrath of God.

One of the biggest errors in prophetic understanding is that the 'great tribulation' and the 'wrath of God' are the same event when in reality they are two very separate events. The time of 'great tribulation' and 'the wrath of God' are never used interchangeably in scripture because they are two completely separate events. The 'great tribulation' precedes the 'wrath of God'. The 'great tribulation' is a time when Satan has great wrath. The 'wrath of God' equates to the 'Day of the Lord' that the Old Testament Prophets spoke of as bringing judgement on all nations from God. The 'great tribulation' refers to the time immediately preceding Jesus return to catch away His saints, the church, when Satan has great wrath because he knows his time is short. (Rev.12:12)

Satan has done his utmost to stop the church realising she is still here during the 'great tribulation'. Paul taught that "God has not destined us for wrath," (1 Thess.5:9) but this is not the 'great tribulation'. It is after the 'great tribulation' that Jesus comes in the clouds with His angels to gather His elect: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (cf. Matt.24:21 and Matt.24:29-31)

We see that before the wrath of God Jesus returns in the clouds with His angels to gather His saints - the Church. Jesus does not return to the earth. This comes after the 'wrath of God', 3½ years later.

Preceding the 'great tribulation' scripture tells of other prophesied events. Let us consider these and so discover where we are in God's timescale and plan.

Prophesied Events To Come - In Reverse Order

- **Jesus Comes For His Church on the Day of the First Resurrection** - We clearly see that it is after the great tribulation that Jesus comes to catch away His church. Jesus said, "Just as the lightning comes from the East, and flashes even to the West, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.... 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 the sky and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with great glory, and He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds; from one end of the sky to the other." (Matt.24:29-31)

"Behold He is coming with the clouds and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so, Amen." (Rev.1:7) Jesus first comes in the clouds with His angels to catch away His saints, the church, those who remain until His coming, but also those who have fallen asleep.

Paul writes, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." (1 Thess.4:15-17)

NB Later the Lord returns after the wrath of God to the earth with His saints, not His angels, to reign for 1000 years. But before Jesus returns in the clouds (but not to the earth) with His angels for the saints, therefore, we must see the great tribulation.

- **The Great Tribulation** - We see that before the great tribulation we must see the abomination spoken of by Daniel - "Then there will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall and unless those day had been cut short, no life would have been saved, but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short." (Matt.24:21) "Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." (verse 16) "There will be a time of distress such as has not occurred since there was a nation until that time." (Dan.12:1)

We see that Jesus returns immediately after the great tribulation but before we see the great tribulation we must first see the 'abomination of desolation' spoken of by Daniel. Jesus clearly gave us the order of events that precedes His second coming

- **The Abomination of Desolation** - Jesus said, "When you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place (let the reader understand) then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains... then there will be tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world." (Matt.24:15,16 &21) Daniel prophesied, "On the wing of abomination will come one who makes desolate" - **the antichrist**. (Dan.9:27) "Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress and do away with the regular sacrifice and they will set up the abomination of desolation." (Dan. 11:31) "From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1290 days. How blessed is he who attains to the 1335 days!" (Dan.12:11&12)

When the abomination of desolation is set up we see that the 'regular sacrifice is removed'. We can speculate where the 'holy place' is but it is considered by most to be the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, that place where Antiochus Epiphanes carried out just such an abomination in 167/8BC long before Jesus spoke of it yet being future. Antiochus Epiphanes profaned the temple in Jerusalem and dedicated it to Olympian Zeus and offered a pig on its altar.

Daniel, however, speaks of a future event that Jesus said was yet to come. Jesus referred the reader to Daniel's prophecy. (Matthew 24:15) Daniel tells us more. He spoke of a 'little horn - a king - arising in the future, who will remove the regular sacrifice and throw down the Sanctuary.

- **The Regular Sacrifice Is Removed** - Daniel prophesies, "A rather small horn" - *the antichrist* - will grow "exceedingly great towards the south, toward the east, and towards the Beautiful Land," the Beautiful Land being Israel. This small horn, "magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the Host," and "removed the regular sacrifice from Him and the place of the sanctuary was thrown down." (Dan.8:8-11)

Paul also speaks of this event when the "man of sin, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God." This 'man of lawlessness' is the one, Paul says, who "the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming." (2 Thess.2:3,4&8) The coming of Jesus to the earth with His saints is described in the Revelation where Jesus, "with a sharp sword from His mouth," smites the nations and has the beast thrown into the Lake of Fire. (Rev.19:15&20)

- **At The Appointed Time** - Daniel says it is at the 'appointed time that "the king - *the antichrist* - will do as he pleases and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god, and speak monstrous things against the God of gods... He will show no regard for the god of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor shall he show any regard to any god, for he will magnify himself above them all. (Dan.11:36&37)

This king is in battle after battle until the end, for the king of the South will collide with him and the king of the North will storm against him. He will enter the Beautiful Land and many countries will fall..."yet he will come to his end and no one will help him." (cf.Dan. 11:38-45)

- **A little Horn Will Arise** - This king, that we often refer to as the '*antichrist*', is also described as 'a little horn', a 'little horn' that will arise, "insolent and skilled in intrigue and his power will be mighty, but not by his own power, and he will destroy to an extraordinary degree and prosper and perform his will. He will destroy mighty men and the holy people, and through his shrewdness he will cause deceit to succeed by his influence, and he will magnify himself in his heart, and he will destroy many whilst they are at ease. He will even oppose the Prince of princes." (Dan.8:23-25) This little horn "possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great threats." (Dan.7:8) This little horn is described as 'the beast' in the Revelation, and obtains the same end: "I kept looking because of the sound of the boastful words which the horn was speaking; I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and given to the burning fire." (Dan.7:11)
- **From Among Ten Horns** - This 'little horn' arises from amongst ten horns pulling three horns out by the roots. From the beast with ten horns, "a little horn came up among them and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it." (Dan.7:8)
- **Also Out Of Four Horns** - Daniel also prophesies that it is in the place of a large horn that was broken come "four conspicuous horns towards the four winds of heaven, and out of one of them comes a rather small horn." (Dan.8:8&9) Despite the 'little horn's' beginning being described differently in Daniel 8 it goes on to the same end as the 'little horn' of Daniel 7. It would seem these 'little horns' refer to the same 'king' - *the antichrist*.

In Daniel 8 Gabriel gave Daniel explanation regarding the ram and the he-goat. Gabriel said of Daniel's vision of the Ram and the He-goat that it, "pertains to the time of the end." (Dan.8:17) Some consider it refers to Alexander the Great's attack on Persia but clearly it refers to the time of the end. The ram with two horns, with one longer than the other, the longer coming up last, butting westward, northward and southward. Daniel then saw a male goat coming from the west "over the

surface of the whole earth without touching the ground, the goat having “a conspicuous horn between his eyes.” (cf Dan.8:3-5) The goat shatters the ram’s two horns and throws it to the ground but as soon as it was mighty “the large horn was broken and in its place there came up four conspicuous horns towards the four winds of heaven.” (cf.Dan.8:7&8) It is from these four horns that the antichrist arises.

So we must see this battle first, before we see the ‘little horn’ that arises from the four horns that arise from the he-goat with one large horn. It is out of these four horns the ‘little horn’ arises. Gabriel explains that the ram is Media and Persia which today are known as Iraq and Iran.

Gabriel also tells us that the he-goat is Javan. (Dan.8:20&21) Most bible translations refer to Javan as ‘Greece’ the Hebrew word which equate to western Turkey today. Most Bible maps will depict Javan as lying in Western Turkey.

So we can look for the rise of a large horn, a dictator in modern day Turkey. Are we about to see end time prophecy beginning to be fulfilled?

Conclusion

In conclusion we can be assured that certain prophesied events must be seen before Jesus returns for His church - His Bride that is His body.

We must see a large horn - a king - arise in Turkey and a war between Turkey and Iran. Out of Turkey will come four horns and out of them comes a little horn, the antichrist, that will set up the abomination of desolation that Jesus told us to look for.

It is after abomination of desolation is seen standing in the holy place, as prophesied by Daniel, that Jesus told us would come great tribulation, “such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world, nor ever shall.” (Matt.24:21)

It is then, after the great tribulation, that Jesus returns for His elect, His true church which is His body, the dead in Christ first rising from the dead at the first resurrection, all to be caught up to be with Christ in the air.

After the church is caught away in the clouds the wrath of God is poured out on those who remain upon the earth. The church is not destined to wrath although she has been through the great tribulation.

After the wrath of God the church - the saints - return with Jesus riding upon a white horse to rule and reign on earth with Him for 1000 years.

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(For more understanding see “Trying To Understand The End of The Age and The Ages To Come” in the booklets section of the website.)