

TRIBULATION AND RESTORATION IN THE END TIMES

Be prepared with truth, for the tribulation and spiritual conflict accompanying the end times are at hand. "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might...Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth..." Eph 6:10, 14.

PREPARATION FOR WHAT IS TO COME IN THE LAST DAYS

The generally accepted model of the last days is that there will be a time of tribulation followed by the rapture of the saints. There is little emphasis on the overthrow of Antichrist and the restoration of the Church.

There are three main occurrences that bear witness to the last days and the coming of the Lord.

1. There will be a Time of Tribulation – a time of great shaking of all worldly institutions, a world economic collapse, spiritual darkness, moral and ethical decadence, all manner of evil and violence, desolation, and a removal of all things man relies on instead of God.

2. There will be Increased Spiritual Warfare [Armageddon], in which Jesus and His prepared and anointed servants will be engaged in spiritual warfare against Antichrist and his army of evil spirits. Antichrist and his defilement of the world and the Church will be exposed and defeated.

"These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful." Rev 17:14.

3. The Church will be Restored. The Lord will return to a Church in which Antichrist's influence has been removed, and Christ's own authority is restored.

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish." Eph 5:25-27.

The Scriptures suggest that the three occurrences above will happen before Christ returns in the clouds, and that they will happen concurrently, and may overlap each other. Importantly, the restoration of the Church will precipitate the downfall of Antichrist. Paul prepared the Thessalonian Church by writing,

"Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped....Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know WHAT is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only HE, [the Holy Spirit] who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom THE LORD WILL CONSUME WITH THE BREATH OF HIS MOUTH AND DESTROY WITH THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS COMING. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth,

that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." 2 Thes 2:3-12.

Note these things from the above reading.

"WHAT is restraining," is the gospel truth that has restrained Antichrist and his deceptions from overcoming the Church and its growth in the world. When the word of truth is diminished by the absence of prophetic teaching, and undermined by false teaching and doctrines, there will be a ***"falling away,"*** with dwindling church growth.

"WHO now restrains" refers to the Holy Spirit, who is God's instrument in restraining Antichrist's influence. When the Holy Spirit's restraint of Antichrist's influence on the Church is taken out of the way, there will be an increase in ***"lawlessness..."*** with ***"all power, signs, and lying wonders,"*** and ***"all unrighteous deception."*** This will result in ***"the falling away"*** -- a time of disillusionment, with diminished individual commitment and church growth. God will send a ***"strong delusion"*** upon all those who ***"did not receive the love of the truth."***

All things are being controlled by God, and in this time of tribulation Antichrist and his working will be revealed when they are brought out into the open.

END TIME OCCURENCES VERIFIED BY OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

The prophets Isaiah, Zechariah, and Ezekiel, depict the same concurrent end time events -
- worldwide evil and darkness, spiritual warfare, and restoration of the Church.

ISAIAH

"So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun when THE ENEMY COMES IN LIKE A FLOOD, the Spirit of THE LORD WILL LIFT UP A STANDARD AGAINST HIM. The Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob," says the LORD."

Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For behold, THE DARKNESS SHALL COVER THE EARTH, AND DEEP DARKNESS THE PEOPLE; but THE LORD WILL ARISE OVER YOU, AND HIS GLORY WILL BE SEEN UPON YOU. The Gentiles shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your rising." Isaiah 59:18-60:1-3.

ZECHARIAH

Warfare

***"Behold, the day of the LORD is coming,
And your spoil will be divided in your midst.
For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem [the Church];
The city shall be taken...
Half of the city shall go into captivity,***

The Lord will enter into the conflict

***But the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.
Then the LORD will go forth
And fight against those nations,
As He fights in the day of battle.
And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives,***

Which faces Jerusalem on the east. Zech 14:1-3.

What is the significance of His feet standing on the Mount of Olives?

The Lord's feet standing on the Mount of Olives speaks of His presence in the power of His Spirit – not His physical presence. Similarly, God promised His spiritual presence and power to be with Moses on the rock in Horeb. ***“Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.”*** Ex 17:6.

The significance of the Lord standing on the Mount of Olives is that the **SPIRIT** of the Lord will return to the Church in the latter days, and it will be filled with His glory.

Restoration

“And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem [a type of the Church], half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea; in both summer and winter it shall occur. And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be --“The LORD is one, and His name one.” Zech 14:8-9.

EZEKIEL

Ezekiel prophesied that the glory of the Lord would depart from the temple, signifying the falling away of the Church

“Then the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim... And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain [the Mount of Olives], which is on the east side of the city.” Ezek 10:18, & 23.

Later Ezekiel had another vision in which he saw the glory of the Lord come back into the temple by way of the Mount of Olives. This speaks of restoration when the glory of Jesus Christ enters the Church in the last days.

“And the glory of the LORD came into the temple by way of the gate which faces toward the east. The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple. Then I heard Him speaking to me from the temple... And He said to me, “Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet [His spiritual presence], where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever.” Ezek 43:4-7.

These prophetic visions portray the glory and power of the Lord departing from the Church, and returning in the end times. Ezekiel goes on to prophecy that the glory of the Lord will not be restricted to the Church. Rather it will flow out as a river of living waters, giving spiritual life, power, and health, to all that it touches.

“Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the front of the temple faced east... Then he said to me: “This water flows toward the eastern region, goes down into the valley, and enters the sea. When it reaches the sea [the nations], its waters are healed. And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes. It shall be that fishermen [evangelists] will stand by it from En Gedi to En Eglaim; they will be places for spreading their nets. Along the bank of the river, on this side and

that, will grow all kinds of trees [ministries] used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, BECAUSE THEIR WATER FLOWS FROM THE SANCTUARY [the presence of God]. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine. Ezek 47:1-2 &7-12.

OVERCOMING THE POWER OF ANTICHRIST AND HIS INFLUENCE IN THE CHURCH

Spiritual Warfare in Heaven and on Earth

In the nineteenth and twentieth chapters of Revelation, John presents two accounts of the battle between Christ and Antichrist, one vision depicting the conflict in heaven, and the other a corresponding battle on earth.

ON EARTH

“They [those under the control of Satan] went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city [the Church]. And fire [judgment from God] came down from God out of heaven and devoured them [brought them to nought].” Rev 20:9-10.

The Church will be besieged by the forces of Satan. This is a spiritual war where the deceptions of the powers of darkness are overcome by the sword of truth, wielded by those anointed by Christ with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth.

IN HEAVEN

“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war... He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron.” Rev 19:11-15.

The two accounts above describe the same battle, the first from an earthly perspective, and the second from a heavenly perspective. What happens in the conflict on earth has a direct bearing on the overthrow of Antichrist and his angels in the heavenlies. As Christ's followers wield the sword of truth and the authority of the name of Jesus, Antichrist's influence over the Church is greatly diminished. The end result is that Antichrist is defeated, and he and the False Prophet are cast into the Lake of Fire.

BY THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS COMING

The apostle Paul sheds more light on the downfall of Antichrist in his letter to the Thessalonians.

“And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.” 2 Thess 2:8.

The last part may be better translated, “...will consume with the spirit of His mouth and bring to nothing by the manifestation of his appearance.” It is not that His coming will be accompanied by such a brilliant display of power that Antichrist capitulates. When Christ's spirit enters the Church, it will be imparted to His servants, who will dismantle Antichrist's influence in the Church by the following means.

- **The sword of truth proceeding from His mouth** – in reality, by the mouths of His anointed servants, who in effect become His mouth. It is essentially the Lord who overcomes.
- **The manifestation of His appearance.** Whereas Antichrist's coming is ***“with all power, signs, and lying wonders,”*** the appearance of the Spirit of the Lord in His Church will be manifested by a release of Holy Spirit power and truth, reversing the ***“desolations of former generations.”*** Isa 61:4.

“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water...” Isa 35:5-7.

BE PREPARED FOR HIS COMING

Although the signs of His coming will be apparent to those who are pre-warned and prepared, those in the world will be so preoccupied with the business of modern living that they will be blind to what is happening spiritually.

“And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all... Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.” Luke 17:26-28, &30.

He Will Come as a Thief

Jesus warned us to be watchful, and diligent in our spiritual walk.

“Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.” Rev 16:15.

“Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.” Rev 3:3-4.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’”

“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.” Matt 25:1-13.

In this parable, the ten virgins are Christians, the oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit whilst their lamps symbolise their bodies, created as a vessel to be inhabited by the Holy Spirit. **“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?”** 1 Cor 6:19.

The wick is a symbol of our spirits, through which we receive and transmit the Holy Spirit. In trimming the lamps, the wicks were cleansed from soot – in this case a symbol of our flesh.

Before the Holy Spirit can be received and transmitted through us in individual ministries, the flesh has to be “put on the cross.” As a general principle in receiving the Holy Spirit, the fullness of the Spirit is in proportion to the degree that God has been able to eradicate the flesh with all of its self-oriented motives.

In the parable of the ten virgins, the Lord said to the foolish virgins who had neglected being filled with the Holy Spirit, ***'assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'*** We may therefore conclude that knowing the Lord, and He knowing us, is dependent on our being filled with the Holy Spirit. This is also fundamental to all genuine ministry. Jesus said to those who had ***“prophesied in His name, cast out demons in His name, and done many wonders in His name,”*** ***'I NEVER KNEW YOU; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'*** Matt 7:22-23. That is His attitude to works of the flesh, done by self-initiation and self-effort, excluding Christ altogether.

In being prepared for the tribulation that is to occur during the end time, it is important to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and receiving His anointing to serve the Lord.

When God commissioned Joshua and Zerubbabel to restore the temple, a type of the Church, He said,

'Not by might nor by power, BUT BY MY SPIRIT,
Says the LORD of hosts. Zechariah 4:6.