

# The End: Evil Reigns

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This morning, we're continuing our message series on the end times. Last week, we learned of the first event that will occur at the end times; the rapture of believers.

Our focus then becomes split as events simultaneously occur in heaven and on earth.

Last week, we learned of the bema seat judgment where believers receive their rewards for the good deeds done with good attitudes and right hearts from God Himself. We also learned of the great wedding that occurs between Christ and the church and the great feast that occurs at that time.

This week, we're going to focus in on the events which occur during that same seven year period on earth.

Unfortunately, this is not a time of celebration and rejoicing for those left behind during the rapture. Many times, we feel as if though we are experiencing hell on earth. We feel as if though we are suffering under great tribulation. However, even the worst day suffered by any of us during these current days is nothing in comparison to the troubling days of tribulation that will occur following the rapture. The tribulation is a part of the era commonly referred to as the Day of the Lord where God's judgment and wrath are poured out and evil is punished once and for all.

We understandably struggle with why a good and loving God would bring such terror on His creation. However, we are also reminded that God is a just God who does not administer revenge, but delivers perfect justice. He waited patiently, desiring all to repent and turn to Him and accept His salvation. However, these people foolishly rejected this free salvation much to their shame. In fact, even during the tribulation, salvation is still available to any who repent and receive it.

## **2 Thessalonians 2:1-4**

1 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, 2 not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord has already come. 3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. 4 He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

We see that even in the early church, much like today, rumors that the end had come existed. This passage gives us another hint at what will occur at the end.

We discussed last week what it might be like following the rapture. With the church gone from the earth, the lawless one referred to here in the scripture is not longer restrained. Right now, we are the light of the earth that pushes back darkness. Just as darkness cannot overcome light, we cannot be overcome by the kingdom of darkness. However, when the light is raptured and taken into heaven, the kingdom of darkness will prevail.

In fact, this tragic and confusing world-wide event of the rapture seems to set the perfect stage for this man, the antichrist, to rise up and assume world-wide power. We see that the antichrist will set himself up in God's temple. Rightfully dubbed the lawless one, he will oppose everything that is called God or worshiped. This indicates opposition not only of the one true God, but also all other religions and beliefs that we find across the globe. We do see, however, that there is a focus during these times of Israel and rising up in direct opposition of Christ. He will proclaim that He, Himself is God. In fact, we'll see that in many ways, he will imitate Christ and His works. Since he will set himself up in God's temple, many will be easily deceived and believe the antichrist to be the Messiah and savior that Jesus is.

This will be an area where evil reigns. To better understand how these end time events will take place, we must have an understanding of how the enemy works and what evil is.

First of all, we must know who the enemy that scripture speaks of is; Satan. For time's sake, we won't go into the full details, but most of what scripture reveals about Satan is found in Ezekiel 28, Isaiah 14, and Revelation 12.

Satan is not an equal with God, in fact, Satan is a guardian cherub created by God. He became prideful because of his great beauty and his wisdom became corrupted by it. He thought himself to be equal to God. Revelation 12 speaks of a great war that broke out in heaven as a result of this, Satan and the angels that chose to follow him (believed to be a third of them) were cast down to earth, where they are now. In this chapter, he is referred to as the dragon, the serpent, the devil, and Satan. He is pictured as an enormous red dragon with seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns on each head. His purpose is to lead the world away from God just as he led the angels away from him so many centuries ago, now called demons. He and his fallen angels wage war against us who keep God's commands and hold fast to their testimony about Jesus.

This should bring great clarity in our lives. We are fully engaged in a spiritual war. We testify about Jesus and remain obedient to God's commands and because of this, Satan and his angels actively wage war against us.

**1 Peter 5:8**

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

His choice weapons are deceit and trickery. Jesus said that His native language is to lie. Jesus came to be the way, the truth, and the life; Satan chooses to steal, kill, and destroy.

However, the way that Satan works isn't as we tend to think. We tend to think that God's kingdom and Satan's kingdom of darkness are polar opposites with nothing in common.

Although true, that is not by any means the way in which Satan portrays his kingdom.

Throughout scripture, we see Satan tempt mankind using the very word of God, but distorting the true meaning of it. He masquerades himself as an angel of light; a wolf in sheep's clothing. He encourages us to do good things, but with wrong motives or in the wrong ways. He gains a foothold in our lives, then leverages it to have a stronghold over us to use and manipulate us; and we usually do not even realize that he has done it.

Take the pharisees for example. They were the most godly people of Israel who followed the word of God perfectly. They lived their lives in devotion and dedication to Him. They claimed to be following the heavenly Father and sincerely and wholeheartedly believed it, yet Jesus told them that their father was Satan.

He is the master of deception. An example is that a demon once followed Paul shouting to everyone that he was a servant of God telling them the way to be saved. Paul freed her from this evil spirit, but this type of thing should help us to better understand how the enemy works and deceives people. When we see the way that the media portrays the kingdom of the enemy now, they portray him doing all sorts of evil and unthinkable things. We know the truth, however. The enemy does not work in this way by any means. We would never think that a demon would go around drawing people to Paul to learn how to be saved, but one did just that. He is the master of deceit.

Now with a bit more of an understanding of evil and the enemy, we can better understand the events of the end times and why so many are led astray once the enemy raises to power.

One of the last things that we would think that the enemy would do is to enter into a covenant with God's people and that Israel would ever enter into a covenant with the antichrist himself. However, we know from Daniel 9, that he will indeed create a seven year covenant with Israel, but then break it after three and a half years. At that time, the sacrifice and offerings at the temple will be put to an end he will place a statue of himself in a wing of the temple, which has been labeled the 'abomination that causes desolation' causing great insult to Israel.

God reveals Himself as the trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. During the time of tribulation, an evil triad raises to power on the earth consisting of Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet imitating the trinity.

For time's sake, we won't go into the full details of the great revelations given to Daniel, but God had given Daniel a vision containing four beasts pertaining to the end times and the antichrist, which was also mirrored in a dream which King Nebuchadnezzar had of a statue, and we find the interpretation of Daniel's dream in Daniel 7. I encourage you all to read through the rich prophecy found in the book of Daniel, though.

**Daniel 7:15-27**

15 "I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me. 16 I approached one of those standing there and asked him the meaning of all this.

"So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: 17 'The four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth. 18 But the holy people of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever.'

19 "Then I wanted to know the meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws—the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. 20 I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell—the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. 21 As I watched, this horn was waging war against the holy people and defeating them, 22 until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the holy people of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed

the kingdom.

23 “He gave me this explanation: ‘The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. 24 The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. 25 He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time.

26 ““But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. 27 Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.’

This time, times and half a time is believed to be the first 3 and a half years of the seven year tribulation; interpreting that the ‘time’ is one year. Translated, that would be one year, two years, then half of a year.

We know that this beast was shown to Daniel in a prophetic sense regarding the end times because it appears again in Revelation 13. We see again that he will rule for 3 and a half years with more certainty of translation this time. This time, we also see a bit more detail about how this beast will rule.

### **Revelation 13**

1 The dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. 2 The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. 3 One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast. 4 People worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, “Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?”

5 The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months. 6 It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. 7 It was given power to wage war against God’s holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. 8 All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb’s book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.

9 Whoever has ears, let them hear.

10 “If anyone is to go into captivity,  
into captivity they will go.

If anyone is to be killed with the sword,  
with the sword they will be killed.”

This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God’s people.

11 Then I saw a second beast, coming out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. 12 It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. 13 And it performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people. 14 Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. 15 The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. 16 It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on

their right hands or on their foreheads, 17 so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name.

18 This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666.

Now, there has been much discussion and speculation about who this world ruler might be whose number is 666. In any case, we know that this beast is symbolic of the leader of a great kingdom and worldwide leader. We know that this ruler demands to be worshiped by all people with the penalty of death for refusing to do so. This leader also will control all trade and commerce so that no one can buy or sell unless they have his mark on their forehead or on their right hand.

Here we clearly see this evil triad at work. The antichrist will be empowered by Satan, the dragon which was hurled down to earth as we find in Revelation 12. The false prophet performs many miraculous signs and wonders; even healings, which will fill the world with wonder. This is also confirmed in:

## **2 Thessalonians 2:9-12**

9 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, 10 and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

We are also reminded from Daniel, that this leader and his kingdom's time of glory is limited and will come to an end as there is only one everlasting kingdom which rules over all, which is God's alone. Revelation 12 reveals that Satan also knows that his time is short, so he holds nothing back during the time of tribulation in order to be worshiped as God and to deceive all people.

Yet, the people during this great time of tribulation are presented with the good news of the gospel and warned not to worship this beast nor accept his mark. Even in the midst of the tribulation period, God still is calling out desiring all to repent and be saved; wanting none to perish.

## **Revelation 14:6-11**

6 Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. 7 He said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.” 8 A second angel followed and said, “‘Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great,’ which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.” 9 A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand, 10 they, too, will drink the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name.”

Next week, we're going to learn of the severe torment which is endured during the three judgments brought upon the earth and its inhabitants during the time of great tribulation. This morning, I want to leave us with a bit of encouragement. It is critical for us to have a thriving relationship with God. It is critical for us not only to read and know the Bible, but to also receive the direct revelation of what was written and why from the author Himself. Once we know the truth and have dwelling within us the Spirit of truth, we will not be as easily deceived by the enemy. We also fully engage in the warfare surrounding us by proclaiming this truth and snatching people out of the grip of the enemy and setting them free from the stronghold that he has over them. Let us not become weary in doing good, but to rest in the strength of the Lord and overcome Satan with the truth of our testimony about Jesus! Let us be ready in and out of season always prepared to tell people the reason for the hope within us!