

COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE

(1) The Great Tribulation

We are, at this very moment, living in the time of the “great tribulation” (Matt. 24:21). This Matt. 24 discussion begins with this question: *And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?* (Matt. 24:3). (See also: Mk. 13 and Luke 21). Since we are in the time of the “great tribulation”, this means that Satan, the “abomination of desolation spoken by Daniel the prophet”, is now standing in the “holy place” (Matt. 24:15), and “Jerusalem” has been “compassed with armies” (Luke 21:20). That Satan would one day “stand in the holy place” was prophesied also in 2 Thess. 2:4: “Who [Satan] 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, shewing himself that he is God” (See also: Isa. 14:12-15). The reference to his sitting “in the temple” is a commentary on the “abomination of desolation” standing in the “holy place”, or, as we read in Mark 13:14, “where it ought not”.

(2) The Old Testament church – a lesson for the New Testament church

The Old Testament passages that are parallel to the passages of section 1, direct us to study the biblical history of Israel and Judah, the Old Testament people of God, the “church” (Acts 7:38). We need to study this in order to understand how God is going to deal with the church in the New Testament era. Such passages serve to forewarn the true believers living in these days, of a most horrific event, the Great Tribulation (See, 1 Cor. 10:6- 11):

...O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps. (Ps. 79:1)

But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name, to defile it. (Jer. 32:34)

...Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? (Ezek. 8:6; See also: 5-18)

In Daniel 8 and 11, we read of a prophecy uttered against the New Testament church:

Yea, he [Satan] magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. (Dan. 8:11)

And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate. (Dan. 11:31)

Christ in Matt. 24 reaffirms that the prophecy of Dan. 8 and 11, is to take place sometime in the future, in New Testament era:

*...and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, **These shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*** (Mat. 24:1b, 2)

*When ye therefore shall see the **abomination of desolation**, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place* (Mat.24:15)

A look into Daniel 12, especially 12:9 and 12:11, tells us that the reign of Satan in the “temple of God” is to occur in the last of the latter days of the New Testament era, and more specifically, during the time of the Great Tribulation:

*...And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end...And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the **abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.***

(3) The Believers must flee the Holy Place, which is now defiled

What are God's instructions to the believers when these horrific spiritual events are taking place? “*And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies...Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto*” (Luke 21:20, 21). In these passages, Mat. 24, Mk. 13 and Luke 21, the terms “holy place,” “house of God,” “sanctuary,” “Israel,” “Jerusalem,” and “Judaea” refer to the people of God as a congregation:

...and lest wrath come upon all the people: but let your brethren, the whole house of Israel... (Lev. 10:6c)

...the LORD said...I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever...But if ye shall at all turn from following me...Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house...will I cast out of my sight... (1 Kin. 9:3, 6a, 7b)

And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD said, In Jerusalem will I put my name. (2 Kin. 21:4)

So, the command of Luke 21:21 (See also: Matt. 24:16-18; Mk. 13:14-16) is alarming for the true believers; because God is teaching here that not only will Satan be allowed entrance into and rule over the corporate, visible assembly, but that upon such an occurrence, the believers are to “flee” from this body or congregation.

(4) The Light of the candle is removed

The following ominous expression in Jeremiah 25 was given as a prophecy to the Old Testament corporate church. It also told them that they were to be captured by the Babylonians, and serve them 70 years (officially beginning with the death of Josiah in 609 BC).

*...thus saith the LORD of hosts; **Because ye have not heard my words... I will take from them the voice of***

mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle...and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. (Jer. 25:8, 10, 11)

A very similar prophecy is found in Revelation 2:5, concerning the church at Ephesus: *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*

According to Matt. 5:15, the “candlestick” (*luchnia*, from *luchnos*, which is rendered “candle” or “light”) is that upon which is placed the lit “candle,” that it may give “light unto all that are in the house”. Further, in Rev. 1:20, the statement: “the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches”, demonstrates that a “candlestick” is a figure for an assembly, or a church, that is recognized of God. Finally, we learn that the chief function, or characteristic expected of a God-ordained assembly is that of Gospel witness: “*And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days...These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth*” (Rev. 11:3, 4). Therefore, the removal of the “light of the candle,” or the “candlestick,” is a reference to a church that no longer has the ability to witness. *It is a dead organism.*

In both Jer. 25 and Rev. 2, the eventual fulfillment, as well as the initial reason for the prophecy, was due to spiritual apostasy (“Because ye have not heard my words”, “Remember...from whence thou art fallen”). The apostasy affected the nation of Judah, and the congregation of the church at Ephesus. In both instances, God had given warning in advance. We find another version of this prophecy in Leviticus 26:

And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me...I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you. And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours. (Lev. 26:27, 30, 31)

(5) Jacob flees to Egypt

God applies the phrase, “great tribulation” (*thlipsis megalē*), rendered, or translated “great affliction” in Acts 7, to the events surrounding Jacob's migration to Egypt during the time of the famine:

Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance. (Acts 7:11)

Jacob's eventual departure from Canaan, the Promised Land, was 215 years after God's promise to Abraham that Canaan would be an EVERLASTING POSSESSION to his seed. It was an unthinkable action for a descendant of Abraham, to leave, to forsake the inheritance given by GOD. Yet we read: “*So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers*” (Acts 7:15). In Jeremiah 16, God makes reference to the Promised Land as that which Israel defiled, establishing the relationship between the House that they defiled (Jer. 32:34; Ezek. 5:11; Dan. 11:31) and the Land:

And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double; because they have defiled my land, they have filled mine inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable things. (Jer. 16:18)

The point should also be made that the primary cause driving the forced-departure from Canaan was that of severe famine. Having noted that God refers to that event as the time of “great affliction [tribulation]”. We wonder if famine of any sort is to be experienced during the time of the great tribulation in the New Testament era. We find this prophecy in the book of Amos:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it. (Amos 8:11, 12)

(6) The Eternal Church, the Bride for whom Christ died

Of course, these things that we have been talking about do not mean that somehow, God would forsake His people. What is the identity of His people? They are those for whom Christ came: “...and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). Christ is the Savior of this “body” (Eph. 5:23c). It is this “church”, or body, which Christ “loved...and gave himself for...” (Eph. 5:25). It is the “sheep” for whom the “good shepherd giveth his life” (John 10:11). NOT Old Testament Israel and NOT the New Testament churches.

God’s people are they whose “names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20), they who are the “vessels of gold and of silver” made unto “honor,” not the “vessels of wood and of earth” made unto “dishonor” (2 Tim. 2:20; see also: Rom. 9:21-26). The Elect of God are they that have the name of God and the city New Jerusalem written upon them (Rev. 3:12). In fact, New Jerusalem itself is a figure which points to the Bride of Christ (Rev. 21:2), and the “wife” of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7). This church is the eternal “tabernacle of God...with men” (Rev. 21:3b). This is the eternal church, comprised only of those who experience the “first resurrection” (Rev. 20:5, 6).

(7) The Church of the Firstborn

Hebrews 12 sets apart the eternal body of Christ: *But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant....* (Heb. 12:22-24a)

As seen in the previous references in Revelation, the “heavenly Jerusalem,” by definition, is the opposite of the “Jerusalem which now is” (See: Gal. 4:25). All the “children of promise”, belong to the “Jerusalem which is above” – she being the “mother of us all” (See: Gal. 4:22-31); these are not “born” after the flesh,” but “by promise” (Gal. 4:23).

(8) Judgment is to the Jew first

The bible teaches that the Jews were a people unto whom were “committed the oracles [sayings] of God” (Rom. 3:1; See also: Heb. 4:2, 6). Before any other nation, the descendants of Abraham were set apart and given God’s testament, His word. Christ, too, came first to the Jews; and this pattern was followed even after the cross:

Then Paul and Barnabas...said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. (Acts 13:4; see also 3:25, 26; 17:1, 2)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (Rom. 1:16)

Because of the Jews’ “first” position as regards to God and His word, the Bible teaches that they are those God will “first” judge:

Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; (Rom. 2:9)

So too, we are living in a time when we are witnessing God’s preparation for the Last Day, as God will no longer put up with the sins of the “great house” (2 Tim. 2:20), those to whom God’s word was first given in the New Testament era. Indeed, He is judging “between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats,” “between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle” (Ezek. 34:17, 20), for she who ought to be the “virtuous woman” (Prov. 31:10), “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any other such thing...holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27), has become as “women that break wedlock” (Ezek. 16:38). Indeed, her “sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities (Rev. 18:5):

For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? (1 Pet. 4:17)

And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem...and smite...Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women...and begin at my sanctuary. (Ezek. 9:4-6)

(9) The warning is for the church

Ezekiel, was a prophet, who was called of God to warn “NOT...a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, BUT...the house of Israel” (Ezek. 3:5). In Ezek. 5:5, God tells us that He has Jerusalem in mind - “This is Jerusalem” - and He declares that He will “do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all thine abominations” (Ezek. 5:9). Now look again at Mat. 24, where the Lord Jesus, speaking of the Great Tribulation, declares, “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Mat.24:21). What is the cause? Ezekiel 5:9 told us that it was “because of all thine abominations”. What are the “abominations” God has in view? These verses describe the nature of Jerusalem’s abominations:

And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness ...and my statutes more than the countries that are round about her: for they have refused my judgments and my statutes, they have not walked in them...Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, am against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations. (Ezek. 5:6, 8)

As we compare Ezekiel 5:9 with Matthew 24:21 there is a similarity between the sins of “house of Israel,” or, “Jerusalem”, and the sins of the churches and congregations during the Great Tribulation of the New Testament era.

(10) God’s judgment is upon the entire visible church

Would the House of Israel take heed? Can we say that Judah knew what her end would be? 2 Kings 20 is yet another example of such a warning:

And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD. Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house...shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. (2 Kings 20:16, 17)

God goes on to tell us, how the house of Israel would react: “But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted” (Ezek. 3:7). Could it be that “all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted”? Jeremiah 9:26 identifies the house of Israel with the heathen nations, emphasizing the complete, nation-wide corruption of the people called by the name of God:

Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all that are in the utmost corners... for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart. (Jer. 9:26)

Israel and Judah - together the “church” of the Old Testament era - were utterly destroyed by the Assyrians and the Babylonians, respectively. They were destroyed utterly because they were utterly corrupt. This complete destruction is echoed in the New Testament. In Matt. 24:2 (see also Mk. 13:2) where we read the following:

...See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

Not one stone, our Lord declares – will heed the warning and “Come out of her” See: Rev. 18:4 and Luke 19:44.

Published by Martin Lee
who is also solely responsible for the content.

MartinLee153@GMail.com / Ph: +1(408)741-5342 USA
www.ChristianBibleInfo.com

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