



A BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE END TIMES

Week 19: Understanding the Rise of the Antichrist, Part 1

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Review:

- A. Last week's lesson was, 'Barely Clinging to Hope.'
- B. We are following a general trajectory that takes into account both events in their proper order, and a certain sequence in Scripture. Last week's lesson was about the tension we feel as we wait for "our blessed hope," the Rapture. **(Cf. Titus 2:13)**
- C. We looked at the life of John the Baptist and the questions he faced as he waited for something he had placed expectations around.
- D. The takeaway for us was gaining the understanding that Jesus said He would come at a time we "think not."
- E. I offered to you that it made best sense to think of this phrase in terms of a timeframe when we have become worn, discouraged, and full of questions. "To think not," is a phrase used when we have become worn out, discouraged and full of questions. It is when we begin to something hoped for us not going to happen. (Just like John the Baptist in prison).

I. RISE OF THE ANTICHRIST: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- A. Today, I want to begin the process of studying the rise of the antichrist. This will likely take several weeks of study.
- B. To do this - let's read a text in **Daniel 9:24-27** where we find some foundational information concerning the period of history we are in right now; the era between Daniel's 69th and 70th weeks.
- C. Here, Gabriel is explaining something to Daniel.
 1. He tells Daniel that 490 years of future history, are set aside by God to give specific attention to Daniel's people and their holy city.
 2. These weeks are blocks of 7 years each. They all began with the "*issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem*"
- D. A study of past historical events gives us 20/20 perspective. We can identify now when this decree was issued.
 1. In terms of our own calendar, this was the decree by Artaxerxes to "rebuild and restore Jerusalem" on March 5, 444 BC. As our own calendar would see it.
 2. The book of Nehemiah is about this decree and what happened after it was given.
 3. This was the date of the "starting gun." This is when Daniel's 70 weeks began.
 4. This makes March 5, 444 BC as being the date that started the first 483 years, or the first 69 weeks.
- E. Those 69 blocks of seven years each, or 483 years, have already taken place.

1. They ended exactly on the first Palm Sunday, when Jesus Christ rode triumphantly into Jerusalem, just as **Daniel 9:25** defines it.
 2. Those things are now past, and there were very precise prophecies that were fulfilled during that time.
- F. The last of the 70 weeks lies in front of us still. It is a future time also comprised of seven years, known as The Tribulation.
1. There are many precise prophecies that will be fulfilled in that forthcoming time too.
- G. Until that block of 7 years arrives, we also understand that there is a somewhat undefined period of history that exists between the end of the 69th Week and the onset of the 70th Week. We are in that period of history right now.
1. We don't know it's precise length. The Bible does not tell us.
 2. Most reasonable assumptions identify this timeframe as being the Church Age. That being the case, it is likely a timeframe of roughly 2,000 years, as we already know from our study.
 3. It is a timeframe within which we can see and understand "*the times and the seasons*" as the Day of the Lord draws near (**Cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:1 – Paul instructs the church that they are supposed to discern end-time developments during this period**)
- H. **Daniel 9:26** outlines three specific things that take place during this undefined period of history, and as I stated, we note a fourth as well:
1. The Messiah will be cut off. *We know this is the crucifixion of Jesus Christ*
 2. The Church Age begins. *(This is not in the Daniel text, but we have placed this event here as part of our own study).*
 3. The City of Jerusalem and the temple will be destroyed.
 4. There will be a characterization of this time by "wars and desolations."
- I. The Scriptures make the case that these events take place consecutively and with greater lapses of time between them.
1. Whereas the crucifixion of Jesus Christ happened just days after the end of the 69th week. The beginning of the Tribulation happens multiple centuries after the destruction of Jerusalem.
- J. So again, we don't know EXACTLY how long this period of time between the 69th and 70th weeks will be, however, we are equipped to recognize it, and we can see the fulfillment of prophecy within it.

II. THE EVENTS OF THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM AND THE TEMPLE.

- A. We know the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple took place in 70 AD under the Roman General, Titus.
1. There are many historical verifications of this time and of the specific events that took place.
 2. Jesus spoke expansively of this event in **Matthew, Mark, and Luke**.

- B. Let's now focus once again on the significant phrase which describes the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in this passage. *"The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary."*
1. We know – in the larger sense – that this is a reference to the antichrist and to Rome. However, let's acknowledge a few important points here:
 - a. The antichrist is the ruler who will yet come. He is the same figure as "the little horn" back in **Daniel Ch. 8**
 - b. We also understand that the empire in power at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem was Rome.
 - c. In the general perspective, we can conclude already that the future and final antichrist will emerge from the Roman Empire.
 - d. We also know from a careful analysis of the History of the Roman Empire, that it never really went away.
 - e. It morphed into the Holy Roman Empire which was headquartered in Constantinople (Istanbul), Turkey.
 - f. It then became the Holy Roman Catholic Empire, and then ultimately became the Catholic Church.
 - g. Today, that institution wields massive global influence today and is headquartered in The Vatican, which is the world's smallest nation.
 - h. We know from a careful analysis of Scripture, that the Roman Empire will prominently assert itself once again in the future, albeit in a different form than in the past.
 - i. This is clear in **Daniel Ch. 2** as well as in our current text here in **Daniel Ch. 9**.

Teacher/Author Disclaimers:

1. I do a lot of studying and reading and writing on prophetic matters.
 - The themes of Biblical prophecy are something I am very passionate about.
2. Now, that does not make me an authority on any of it.
 - However, I would consider myself as someone that has much more than a casual interest in these matters.
3. I deeply respect the well-meaning ideas and opinions of other excellent teachers and authors on these issues, and I say nothing today, or at any other time past or future, with the intent to invite any form of argument or conflict.
 - However, I have found a number of such people to stop short of taking the full counsel of God's Word into account.
 - Some of these people draw their conclusions on a limited assessment of the facts.

C. Here's an example of what I mean:

1. Some say the empire which destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, was Rome, and that Rome will "revive" once more to be the final global empire.
 - a. That's mostly true, but both the Scriptures and history DO teach that the Empire of Rome never went away.
 - b. I do not believe it will be revived in a future form the same way it was known to be in the past.
 - c. It is already part of our lives today in the Roman Catholic Church and in the power and influence of the pope and The Vatican. These influences are increasing in our time and are quite godless.
 - d. The misguided passions of the leadership of the Catholic Church are increasingly secular, heretical, and all about globalism.
 - e. They find more in common with the fascist progressive left and a borderless one-world government than they do with anything contained in God's Word.
 - f. This is all out in the open now. Basically, they have nothing consistent with the truth of God's Word.
 - g. So, Rome doesn't need to "revive," as some suggest, to come back. It's persisted in one form or another since its beginning, and we are wisest to see the dynamics this way.

D. Here's another example of some people getting close to the mark, but missing it in my opinion.

1. They say the antichrist will come from western Europe since **Daniel 9:26** connects the Empire of Rome with this future ruler. (At least this is the prevailing opinion that is offered).
 - a. For some reason, the people who say this have either overlooked the Eastern Roman Empire which persisted well after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, or they dismiss it intentionally.
 - b. They fail to recognize that it was the Eastern Roman Empire which persisted long after the western leg fell.
 - c. It is the Eastern Roman Empire in which the present-day Roman Catholic Church found its early force and beginnings.
 - d. While the Roman Catholic Church is now headquartered in The Vatican, this is the form of the Roman Empire which continues today, and that is an important fact to consider.
 - e. So, the antichrist is not limited to coming from the region of the Western Roman Empire. The Eastern Empire is also an option that must be considered.
 - f. In fact, the Eastern Empire is the region that **Daniel 8:8-10** speaks of when it specifies the territory that "the little horn" will come.
 - g. I wrote a two-part article series on this topic. You can find those two articles on my website, "thewordwithsteve.com" under the title "*Who is Daniel Chapter 8 Talking About?*"

- h. But let's do our part today to be diligent with the Scriptures and to probe this matter further.
 - It is my position that the antichrist who is the *"ruler who will come"* is from the Eastern Empire of the Roman empire.
 - I believe the details of **Daniel 9:26** reveal this, and I believe other parts of Scripture indicate the same thing.
- E. QUESTION: Who exactly were the troops that conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the temple in 70 AD?
1. We know already that they were "Roman troops" under the leadership of the Roman General, Titus. According to the historical records, Titus initially sent in 600 soldiers to test Jerusalem's defense.
 - a. This almost proved fatal to Titus. He was nearly captured as a result.
 - b. His decision after that point was to utilize the full force of the Roman military – including the auxiliary troops (that's IMPORTANT) – to assault the city.
 - c. This raises another related question: ***"What do we know of these auxiliary troops and their role?"***
 2. It is well-documented in the historical records, that many of the legions of Rome around the time of 70 AD were non-citizens of Rome.
 - a. These were troops which were comprised of conquered peoples.
 - b. They were made of non-citizens, or "provincials," from all the regions and places Rome had conquered and had gathered into its territory.
 - c. This element of the Roman Army constituted up to 30% of the attacking forces which besieged Jerusalem and the temple.
 - d. Various historians of that time, including the Jewish historian, Josephus, and the Roman historian, Publius Cornelius Tacitus, carefully document this fact.
 - e. They clearly spell out the various legions within the Roman Army, the designated name of these legions, and who was part of each.
 - f. We learn as we unpack this information, that there were many Syrians, like those that comprised the 12th legion. Various other Arab legions and troops were also a part.
 - g. This should not surprise us as this event took place in that part of the world.
 3. Furthermore, the destruction of the temple and how that happened are recorded in great detail by historians.
 - a. I was tempted to read quotes from these individuals, but they are wordy and written in a way that is characteristic of that time.
 - b. However, they all assert that it was the middle-eastern troops that carried out the physical destruction of the temple, and in the process, ignored some of the commands of General Titus.
 - c. As the historians spell the events out, the Arab contingents (and I quote from Publius Cornelius Tacitus): *"...hated the Jews with the unusual passion of neighbors."*

- d. Josephus specifically documents that General Titus did not want to burn the temple, however we now know, that did not happen, he wanted to preserve it as a prize for Rome.
- e. However, the Arab troops were inflamed with hatred for the Jews and disobeyed his orders.
- f. (Following is a quote from Josephus about this specific issue)

“Titus supposing that the house itself yet be saved, he came in haste and endeavored to persuade the soldiers to quench the fire. Yet were the regards they had for Caesar, and their dread of him who forbade them, not as hard as their passion and their hatred of the Jews, and a certain vehement inclination to fight them. ... And thus was the holy house burnt down, without Caesar’s approbation.”
- g. Now, we could go on and on here about the interesting details of the historical record, but what’s the big takeaway for us here and now?

4. Historical Record Takeaways:

- a. First, in the greater picture, it was Rome that destroyed Jerusalem and the temple.
 - It was done under Roman military command and under the resources of that empire.
 - That should do away with ridiculous conspiracy claims that Obama is the antichrist, or President Trump, or that John F. Kennedy will return from the dead as this final apocalyptic world leader.
 - Bottom line: the antichrist will be directly associated with the empire of Rome.
- b. The second takeaway is many troops from within the Eastern Roman Empire took part in the destruction of Jerusalem.
 - Again, according to historians, it was these troops who were directly responsible for the burning of the temple – even against orders.
 - This should give us at least some pause and reflection when we consider our text which states *“...the people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.”*
 - There is a connection made between the constitution of these Roman legions and this future leader.
- c. The third takeaway is these sorts of conclusions align with the balance of Scripture.
 - We find this position is suggested elsewhere in Scri, that it is from the Eastern Part of the Roman Empire that the antichrist will emerge from.

F. Let’s look at some examples of this third takeaway:

- 1. First, there is the passage I mentioned earlier in **Dan 8:8-10**. Here are the Cliff Notes from that section of Scripture:
 - a. The antichrist (AKA “the little horn”) will come from one of the four divisions which came from Alexander the Great’s Empire.

- h. That part is the Seleucid Dynasty, which comprised northern Syria and parts of that territory known as ancient Assyria.
 - i. It is from that place that the “little horn”...*grows in power to the south and to the east;*” these directions move towards “*the Beautiful Land*” (Israel).
 - j. As a type, or a shadow, of this precise situation, we see later in **Daniel Ch. 11** that considerable attention is given to the historical leader, Antiochus Epiphanes.
 - k. He was a Seleucid Dynasty leader who gives us a template, again, a ‘type,’ of much we can expect to see in the future antichrist. I believe this is why Daniel discusses him in such great detail.
 - l. He was also from this precise part of the world.
 - m. This supports the first part of Scripture that also supports what **Daniel 9:26** suggest.
2. Other parts of Scripture are less specific than this Daniel passage, but they compel the same conclusions:
- a. The Antichrist is represented in **Revelation 13:2** as a leopard, with the feet of a bear, and the mouth of a lion.
 - This symbolic imagery comes from **Daniel 7** where the Empire of Babylon is pictured as a lion, the Medo-Persian Empire is depicted as a bear, and the Macedonian or Greek Empire of Alexander the Great is described as a leopard.
 - So, once again, the main focus is on that part of the world, most of which concerns the region which ultimately becomes the Eastern Empire of the Roman Empire.
 - b. **Micah 5:5** discusses an end time prophecy, and it refers to “*the Assyrian*” invading the Land of Israel.
 - Many scholars feel this is a reference to the Antichrist.
 - c. **Isaiah 10:12, and 14:25** are two more references which, when seen collectively, seem to suggest a future connection between the antichrist and the territory of Assyria (and there are others....)
 - d. And let’s not forget the overall “Gentile Connection” as part of our assessments here.
 - This part of the world where these ancient empires dominated, and we’ve mentioned these a few times here, is Gentile as opposed to Jewish.
 - Two more reasons to think about the “Gentile” factor:
 - First, the fact that the Antichrist is a Gentile ruler is one of the points of **Revelation 17:9- 11**.
 - This passage says that the Beast is an eighth king, and one of “seven prior kings” (**17:10**), thus, a Gentile ruler.

- Second, the antichrist rises up out of the sea (*Cf. Revelation 13:1-2*).
- In prophetic passages of the Bible, the sea is an image of the Gentile nations.
- And so, together with the symbolic imagery of the antichrist, these texts portray the antichrist as a Gentile from that specific part of the world.
- NOTE: I see no reason to conclude from this that the antichrist will be Islamic.

CONCLUSION: We've only looked high-altitude here. But, I believe the best case the collective Scriptures make is a case for the antichrist being both Gentile and from that part of the world known as northern Syria / ancient Assyria. This is a position which is supported by the surprising details contained within the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD.