

## **Prelude to Christ's Return Pt. 2**

Mark 13:14-23 (10/18/15)

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I hope you wore your thinking cap this morning. If you came for a skyscraper sermon, one story after another, you've come to the wrong place. We're going to learn some eschatology, end times stuff, this morning. For full up-front disclosure, we as a church are pre-tribulational, pre-millennial in our eschatology. We believe the next big thing is the rapture of the church, and it could happen today. If it does, then this earth will be plunged into a seven year tribulation period. The last half will be an absolutely horrific time on this earth with evil running rampant, and will be ruled by Anti-Christ and his secretary of state, the False Prophet. But Christ will come, destroy His enemies, and set up his world-wide kingdom. But hold on to all that.

### **An Aerial Tour of the Bible**

The Smithsonian Channel has a really neat series of videos called Aerial America. For forty minutes a helicopter takes you over states or fascinating areas right in the comfort of your Lazy Boy! This morning I want to take us up in a simulated helicopter for about a two minute aerial view of the Bible time line.

First of all, you might draw a timeline on the back of your outline with eternity past (EP) on the left to eternity future (EF) on the right. Add on the left creation, Adam and Eve, sin, Noah and the flood, Abraham (2000 BC) and Israel with Moses at 1500, King David at 1000, and then the prophets with many promises to Israel about a coming Messiah and a glorious kingdom. Daniel would be around 500 BC. In Daniel 9 God gave us a time line for Israel of 490 years, which we will study this morning. Then you have that 400 year silent period, broken by the birth of Jesus, the cross, burial, resurrection and ascension of Christ (arrow up). Then you have something neither Israel nor the disciples ever saw, a long period of time called the Church Age. Christ sent His Spirit on Pentecost (arrow down) to empower His church. So far it's been 2000 years.

At some point, we don't know when, but maybe today, Christ will swoop down to earth's atmosphere (arrow down but not to earth) to snatch up (arrow up) all the believers dead and alive in the Church Age, called the rapture of the church. That begins a seven-year tribulation period divided in half, 3 ½ years each. The first 3 ½ years will be a false peace; the second 3 ½ years will be a time of unprecedented horror over the entire earth. Then Christ returns to earth from heaven (arrow down) to destroy the Anti-Christ and the armies of the earth who have gathered against Israel. Christ will set up the 1000 year kingdom (the Millennium) followed by the Great White Throne Judgment, a new heaven and earth, and then EF – Eternity Future. One of the things I love about history and the Bible is that you can see the big picture and it's all heading somewhere. God is in control. He is sovereign over all of world history and everything that happens fulfills His decree from eternity past (EP) to eternity future (EF)!

Now this morning we go back to Mark 13:14 where Jesus warns His people about this coming abomination of desolation. One thing you need to be aware of – Jesus is not talking about the rapture of the church in Mark 13. This is all about future Israel, her coming tribulations, and Christ's return to earth. We do not believe the Church has taken the place of Israel – known as replacement theology. We fully believe God is going to keep all His promises to Israel in the future. While Satan has tried to exterminate Jews from planet earth, God will see to it that this doesn't happen!

Now in verse 13 Jesus takes us right to the half point of the coming tribulation period.

### **Zoom in to the Abomination of Desolation – Mark 13:14**

*"But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." (ESV)*

Notice, you have a time element here; “When you see.” For the Jews, this will be a clear indicator that her Messiah is coming shortly. Check out verses 24 and 29 – again, this is for the Jews of a future time when they see this abomination of desolation. We are not looking for signs like this, although this world is becoming more rapture ready with every passing day. So be sure you are ready to meet your Lord in the air!

Now, what is this abomination of desolation? And notice the ESV uses the pronoun “he”, which is accurate. It is a person doing something that is a stench in the eyes of God and the Jews, something totally outrageous, something that causes some kind of desolation. We have to go back to Daniel the prophet to grasp what is going on here.

#### **Daniel’s 70 weeks of years – 490 years altogether – Daniel 9:24-27**

*24 "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place."*

Now this well may confuse us. First, a week represents seven years. So God revealed to Daniel a period of 490 years for his people Israel and his holy city Jerusalem. Sin will be dealt with, no more prophecy given, righteousness will cover the earth, and the temple will be anointed. But these 490 years are divided up and here’s where it gets tricky.

- Verse 25 is a decree to rebuild Jerusalem by Artaxerxes in 445 BC  
*So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a **decree** to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince.*
- Verses 25-26 adds up to 483 years climaxing in Christ’s crucifixion.  
*There will be **seven weeks and sixty-two weeks**; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. Then after the sixty-two weeks the **Messiah will be cut off** and have nothing.*
- Verse 26 speaks of the destruction of the temple in AD 70.  
*And the people of the prince who is to come will destroy **the city and the sanctuary**. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.*

Jesus told us about this in Mark 13. Not one stone will be left upon another. This was fulfilled in AD 70 when the Romans devastated Jerusalem and the temple. But that leaves a week of years (or seven years) unaccounted for. Do you see that? We still have this one last week of years hanging out there. That’s what Jesus is talking about.

Now we jump to Daniel’s future 70th week or seven years of tribulation, which prophesied the coming prince or the one we call Anti-Christ. How God controls history to bring all this about is amazing. If He fulfilled His promises and prophecies in the past, we can be sure He’ll fulfill them in the future. What did God tell us about this man?

- Verse 27 Anti-Christ makes a treaty with Israel for one week (seven years).  
*And he will make a firm covenant with the many for **one week**.*
- Verse 27 Anti-Christ breaks the treaty with Israel half way through (at the 3 ½ years point).  
*But in **the middle of the week** he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering.*
- Verse 27 Anti-Christ himself is the abomination of desolation.  
*And on the wing of **abominations** will come **one who makes desolate**, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.*

This future man will rule in Jerusalem for 3 ½ years as Israel’s false messiah or protector from the hostile surrounding nations. But then he will break his peace treaty and become the abomination that causes desolation – the temple worship will be destroyed.

It's true that a Syrian named Antiochus Epiphanies in 167 BC came into the temple and did abominable things that desolated temple worship. He put an image of Zeus in there, offered a pig on the altar of burnt offering, and forbade Sabbath worship, Law reading, and circumcision at pain of death. They called him Antiochus Epimanes, the mad man. He was nuts! Not unlike Hitler. You can read about him in 2 Maccabees 5 and 6.

But he couldn't have been the prince or Anti-Christ Daniel spoke about since Jesus says he's still coming, as does Paul and John. How's that thinking cap? Are you with me? This is very relevant to us. Daily we wake up to news reports where Israel is the object of hatred and revulsion to most of the nations of the earth. Netanyahu has expressed great courage in the face of international opposition to Israel. Like I said, we don't know when it will come, but every day brings us closer to the rapture and the beginning of the tribulation period. Remember that one week (seven years) in Daniel 9 divides into two halves (sometimes referred to as 1280 days, 42 months, or a time, times, and half a time). This Anti-Christ brings a peace solution for the first half, but then breaks his treaty and does horrendous things. We need a closer look at him.

### **Zooming in closer on the Anti-Christ in Revelation 13 and 2 Thessalonians 2.**

Let's go to Revelation 13. All we need to do is read through this and make some observations and you will know John is talking about the same person as Daniel and Jesus were warning the Jews about.

- Satan empowers the Anti-Christ – vv. 1-2
- Anti-Christ recovers from a fatal wound – vv. 3-4 He may be assassinated by armies from the north, Russia, or Syria, or the Arab coalition. Because he recovers from a fatal wound, the world now sees him as the great World Savior, risen from the dead. Who is able to make war with him? The world worships both Satan and this satanic messiah. Remember, he first comes to protect Israel, but at this point he turns.
- Anti-Christ blasphemes God – v. 5-6 and 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4. He takes his seat in the temple of God declaring himself to be god.
- Anti-Christ implements global extermination of God's people – vv. 7-10 He will unleash his supreme fury and all his satanic terror against the Jews. Satan has always had the Jew in his crosshairs. He hates the Jews because the Jews, even in their unbelief, represent God.
- False Prophet enforces global worship of Anti-Christ – vv. 11-15
- False Prophet enforces global registration for buying and selling – vv. 16-18

So this horrible act in God's eyes, the great stench of the ages, this Man of Sin, this Anti-Christ, will stand in the temple – where he should not be, clearly referred to in 2 Thess. 2 and Rev. 13 – He will recover from a fatal wound. He will blaspheme God, speak arrogant words, and all the world will worship him, enforced by his Secretary of State the False Prophet, who will do great miracles and set up a global tracking system. All will have to register and display the mark of the beast. Those who refuse will face beheading. Doesn't sound strange to us any more, does it? Beheadings and debates about tracking systems are part of our daily news. But the Anti-Christ and all his worshippers will pay a horrible price, for ever! The Anti-Christ and the False Prophet are the first to be thrown into the lake of fire by Jesus Himself, personally, 1000 years before anyone else (Revelation 19:20)!

Now, back to Mark 13 and what happens when the Anti-Christ becomes the abomination causing desolation...

### **Christ's warnings to the future generation of Jews living under the Anti-Christ – Mark 13:15-23**

- Flee immediately - v 15) *"The one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house; 16) and the one who is in the field must not turn back to get his coat. 17) "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 18) "But pray that it may not happen in the winter.*
- Unprecedented world-wide horror – v 19) *"For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will.*
- Limited to 3 ½ years – v 20) *"Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days.*
- Don't be deceived during this awful time - v 21) *"And then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ'; or, 'Behold, He is there'; do not believe him; 22) for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect. 23) "But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance."*
- Christ's return will be unmistakable, like lightning flashing from the heavens (vv. 24ff). We'll see this next week as we come to the return of Christ to this earth!

**What about us? Live with a daily eager expectation – 1 Corinthians 1:7**

*Awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ....*

Remember, Christ is talking about Jews and Jerusalem. We in the Church Age aren't looking for the Abomination of Desolation. We don't have an earthly temple. We're not Jews. Our hope is that Christ could come today and receive us to Himself! We should live every day with that eager expectation. That word "awaiting eagerly" is one of the coolest Greek words going. It's a verb with two prepositions. It doesn't just mean waiting for someone. It means getting out of your chair, going out the walk, looking down the road, waiting with excitement, joyful hope! Are you living with that daily expectation? Are you trusting in Christ alone today? When He comes for His church, will you be included?