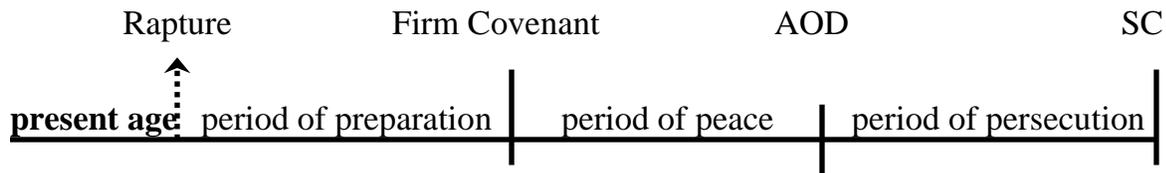


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B0609 – March 5, 2006 – Major Bible Themes
Chapter 43 – Events Preceding the Second Coming of Christ

This morning we will deal with the events during four time periods; 1) The present age, 2) the period of preparation following the rapture, 3) the period of peace for Israel in the 1st half of the Tribulation, and 4) the period of persecution for Israel in the 2nd half of the Tribulation.

I. MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PRESENT AGE



The eight parables of Matt 13 (= Mark 4:11ff = Luke 8:10ff)ⁱ are called “mysteries of the kingdom of heaven”. That phrase means they contain truths that were not revealed in the OT regarding the earthly Millennial kingdom. The primary teaching of the parables is that “in view of Israel’s rejection of Jesus as Messiah a whole new age will intervene; this age is not the kingdom but precedes it. This is a totally new teaching and gives good meaning to each of the parables.”ⁱⁱⁱ The idea of an intervening age/a parenthesis in God’s kingdom program was totally unknown in the OT because unrevealed. However, this intervening age is *associated with the Kingdom.*ⁱⁱⁱ



So, these eight parables are teaching general characteristics about this new intervening age that somehow relate to the future earthly Millennial kingdom. The first parable is introductory to the other parables and the eighth parable is an application of the kingdom parables.

	Parable	Scripture	Interpretation
1	Sower and the Soils	Matt. 13:3-8, 18-23	4 Responses to the Gospel
2	Wheat and Darnel	Matt. 13:24-30	A New Age Will Intervene
3	Mustard Seed	Matt. 13:31-32	Growth in # of Kingdom Heirs
4	Leaven	Matt. 13:33	Increasing Apostasy
5	Hidden Treasure	Matt. 13:44	Kingdom Hidden; Jesus Will Find
6	Precious Pearl	Matt. 13:45	Redeemed of All Ages in Kingdom
7	Drag Net	Matt. 13:47-50	Judgment at End of New Age
8	Head of Household	Matt. 13:52	Wed Old Truths with New

A. INCREASING APOSTASY

In 2 Peter 2 & 3 Peter lays out the progression toward apostasy during the present age. False teachers will “secretly introduce destructive heresies”. Notice the word “secretly”. It is this word that indicates how important it is to be an advanced Bible student. False teachers use deceptive techniques. They lull sheep into spiritual stupidity by several tactics.

1. They gradually introduce heresies. They don’t introduce them all at once. They slowly condition your mind to accept new ideas.
2. They don’t teach the Bible. Instead they start with a verse that they pulled out of context and use it as a springboard to promote their political, moral, or social agenda. Through this they can manipulate the people to give money and time to support their agendas.
3. They use Bible words but with non-biblical definitions. They talk about Jesus, God, resurrection, inspiration, etc...but by Jesus they mean a first century political activist. By God they mean the forces of nature. By resurrection they mean new age mysticism. By inspiration they mean the minds of the authors of Scripture were stimulated to create a literary masterpiece.
4. They interpret the Bible allegorically/spiritually. This means they read into the words ideas that are not communicated by the words. By doing this they read into the Bible ideas that are not in the Bible.

These are all secret ways of introducing destructive heresies. If you are not an advanced Bible student then you will not be able to detect their true intentions. They don't want to be found out because you provide the money and manpower to accomplish their agendas.

Their doctrines, secretly introduced, are destructive. They are destructive because they destroy your lifestyle. Their doctrines work out in the following progression; futile speculations (Rom 1:21), evolutionary thinking (Rom 1:23), heterosexual immorality (Rom 1:24), homosexual immorality (Rom 1:26-27), become filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are gossips* (Rom 1:29), slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents (Rom 1:30), without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful (Rom 1:31); and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them (Rom 1:32). Since they gradually introduce heresies you gradually fall into this destructive lifestyle.

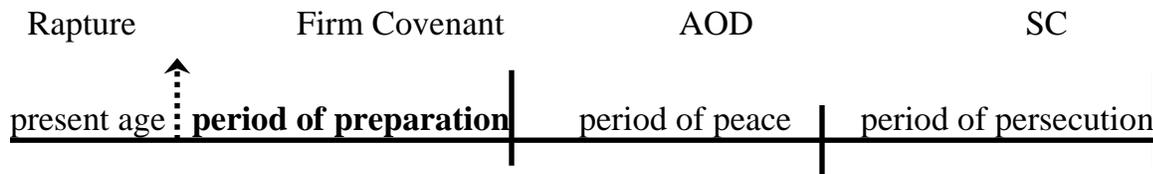
Their doctrines are heretical; ways of thinking that are clearly contrary to God's word. Once your mind has gradually been re-conditioned then they can casually dismiss cardinal doctrines. The text says the "even deny the Master who bought them." They often do this in secret ways. This means they deny the deity of Christ. They may say Jesus was "like God" but not God (Arianism and Semi-Arianism) or they may say Jesus is "a god" but not "the God" (Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism). They may say its not important that Jesus was God. They may say that Jesus died on a cross but that His death was only an example of martyrdom and one who would die for His convictions. They may talk about the death of Christ a lot but not in a substitutionary way. They deny a literal, physical, bodily 2nd Coming of Christ (Extreme Preterism). In its place they teach that Christ came through the Roman Armies to destroy Jerusalem in 70AD. These reformulations are how false teachers secretly introduce destructive heresies. That is why it is so important to know the truth and to be able to detect errors.

The general tenor of the present age is toward apostasy. Yet, as Chafer says, "there is no ground for pessimism, because God will fulfill His purpose." The ultimate apostasy will happen after the genuine church is raptured and the professing church is left behind in the world (2 Thess 2:3).

B. RAPTURE

The church will be brought to a close at the rapture. This event is not dated anywhere in Scripture. Hal Lindsay said the rapture would happen in the 80's and based his calculations on current events with the modern state of Israel. While the present state of Israel is the fulfillment of prophecy (Ezek 37) it nevertheless cannot be used to date the rapture. No one can date the rapture because there are no signs revealed that must precede it. If there were signs we could look for the signs and then get ready. As long as we saw no signs then we would not get ready. But the whole tenor of the rapture doctrine is that there are no signs and so it can happen at-any-moment. As such we must be ready at all times. At the rapture, "the dead in Christ are raised and living Christians on earth are caught up to heaven without dying" (1 Cor 15:51-58; 1 Thess 4:13-18). At this point no one else will ever be added to the Church. The Church will be complete. As a result of this dramatic event, the world will undergo a chain of events in preparation for the end times (i.e. latter days of Daniel).

II. THE PERIOD OF PREPARATION FOLLOWING THE RAPTURE

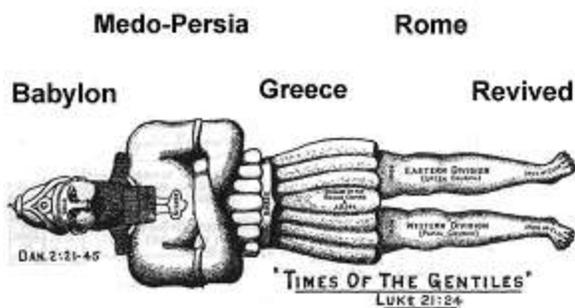


After the dramatic removal of all believers from earth the world will undergo a period of preparation for the major events which must follow. During this period several things will happen. First, since the true church is removed, the false or professing church will be left behind. Some of these may truly believe during this period (contra some expositors interpretation of 2 Thess 2:10-12). Others may not and they will join the "one world religion".

The world will be in such a state of shock that a one world religion will emerge. All Protestant denominations, Catholicism, Islam, Buddhism, et. al. will drop their distinctives and find a common ground. The present rise of relativism and religious pluralism are fueling the present ecumenical movement which will ultimately result in a "one world religion". This "one world religion" is called the "harlot" in Rev 17 because it is the embodiment of spiritual idolatry. The "harlot" has dominion over the "whole world" (Rev 17:15) and its central headquarters are the city of Babylon. The Antichrist (scarlet beast) is pictured as riding the "harlot" to his ultimate position of political and economic dictatorship.

Israel's partial hardening will be lifted and many will begin trusting Jesus as their Messiah. Rom 11:25 says that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. Most likely the “fullness of the Gentiles” refers to the completion of the Church since the Church is Gentile dominant. After which God will begin to remove the partial hardening and many Jews will trust Jesus as Messiah. They will be curious as to what happened to the Christians and will begin to study all the books, pamphlets and internet sources that Christians leave behind. Their search will be rewarded as many will read the NT Scriptures and will trust in Jesus. The fact that Jews already live all over the world and are normally multilingual (there is also renewed interest in Hebrew among Jews today) fits them as the primary witnesses during the future Tribulation period.

The Ancient Roman Empire will be Revived under a Ten-Nation Confederacy. This may happen before or after the Rapture. There is no way to tell when it will happen but it will certainly happen before the Tribulation begins. Older expositors thought this Empire would cover the same geographic region of ancient Rome (mainly Europe). But the Scriptures are clear that the Revived Roman Empire is worldwide in extent (Dan 7:23). The statue Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream of Daniel 2 describes this kingdom by the feet with “ten toes”.



It is also described in Daniel 7 under the fourth beast who has “ten horns”. The “ten horns” are “ten kings” (Dan 7:24) who will rule the Revived Roman Empire.

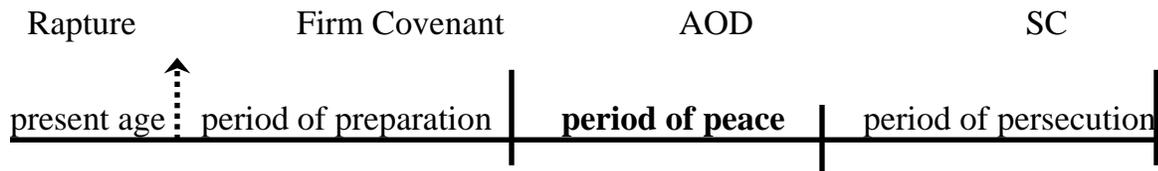


DANIEL'S FOURTH WILD BEAST
Dan. 7: 7-8, 19-26

These “ten kings” will form a ten-nation confederacy.

The period of preparation will end when the Antichrist makes a firm covenant with many Israelites for one week (7 years). In Dan 9:26 the Antichrist is referred to as the prince who is to come. He will make a firm covenant with many Israelites (but not all of them) for one week (7 years). This key event marks the beginning of the Tribulation (70th week of Daniel) but it is not the 1st Seal. The 1st Seal is a bloodless takeover by many antichrists which results in worldwide peace that lasts only till the 2nd Seal. The Antichrist’s covenant with Israel results in peace for Israel and will last for 3 ½ years. Even when the Antichrist signs the covenant with Israel most will be unaware that he is the ultimate Antichrist because there will be many antichrists besides him (Matt 24:5). Perhaps the “ten kings” will be antichrists and are included in the 1st Seal. The Antichrist will rise to power *after* they are already in place (Dan 7:24). Nevertheless, the many Israelites who enter this agreement trust that the Antichrist is able to solve the middle-east crisis and provide protection even though he is not one of the ten kings who rule the Revived Roman Empire (Dan 7:8). This covenant will issue in a time of peace for Israel that will be broken in the middle of the week.

III. THE PERIOD OF PEACE FOR ISRAEL (1ST HALF)

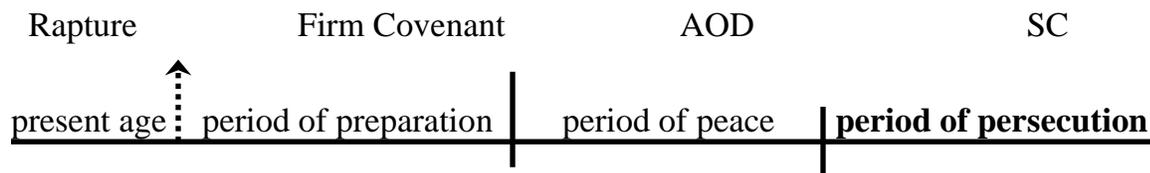


During the 1st half of the Tribulation Israel will “dwell securely” in her land under the protection of the Antichrist. During this time the Antichrist will use the “one world religious system” centered in Babylon to rise to power (Rev 17). As the one world religion is unified in Babylon the Jewish people will be returning to orthodox Judaism in Jerusalem. A Tribulation Temple will be operational and sacrifice and grain offerings will be offered (Dan 9:27; 12:11; Matt 24:15; Rev 11:1-2).

The worldwide peace established under the 1st Seal will be shattered under the later seals (2nd and 4th) when warfare and bloodshed replace it. The great battle of Gog and Magog described in Ezekiel 38-39 and in Dan 11:40-45 describes an attempt by kings from the north and south to attack Israel (Ezek 38:2-5; Dan 11:40-45). The text says that when Israel is attacked she is “dwelling securely” (Ezek 38:8, 11). This must be during the 1st

half of the Tribulation^{iv} since they are under Antichrist's protection at this time but his persecution during the 2nd half (Rev 12:6-18). Apparently the invaders attack for "spoil" (Ezek 38:12-13). However, God will cause confusion among them so that they begin killing one another (Ezek 38:21) and then God will destroy them by a supernatural judgment (Ezek 38:22) on the mountains of Israel north of Jerusalem (Ezek 38:8). Many of the events in Ezek 38 are similar to the 2nd, 4th and 6th Seals confirming that these events occur during the 1st half of the Tribulation (cf Ezek 38: 19-23). Israel will have been protected from this invasion by God (Ezek 38:22) but then the Antichrist and his army who were protecting Israel will use this great destruction of his enemies to advance his own power. It is probable that it is during the battle of Gog and Magog (Ezek 38-39), very near the middle of the Tribulation, that the Antichrist will be killed (Rev 13:3).

IV. THE PERIOD OF PERSECUTION FOR ISRAEL (2ND HALF)



At this same point Satan is kicked out of heaven (Rev 12:6-9) and he counterfeits the resurrection by healing the Antichrist (Rev 13:3, 14; 17:8) and indwelling him. Because of his new-found power the Antichrist will find no more use for the "one world religion" (the "harlot") centered in Babylon and he and the ten kings will strip her of her wealth, kill all who remain, and burn the city (Rev 17:16). To advance his power he will then enter the Beautiful Land (Dan 11:41) of Israel to acquire Jerusalem, the most important military stronghold in the world because it rests at the crossroads between three great continents: Europe, Asia, and Africa. In the Bible Jerusalem is referred to as the navel of the earth (Ezek 38:12). When he arrives in Jerusalem he will enter the Tribulation Temple and commit the abomination of desolation (Dan 9:27; Matt 24:15; 2 Thess 2:3) breaking his covenant (Isa 28:18) and he will have the false prophet set up an image in his likeness (Rev 13:14). It will remain in the Temple for 1,290 days (30 days after the Tribulation; Rev 12:11). At the sight of this abomination the believing Jews will flee southeast to modern day Jordan where they will be nourished and protected for the 2nd half of the Tribulation (Matt 24:16; Rev 12:6). The false prophet will make all men worship the Antichrist and the image.^v He will perform signs trying to draw out the Israelites who are in hiding (Matt 24:23-26) so he can destroy them. Once the image is set up the Antichrist and his armies will not head southeast where many Israelites are hiding (Dan 11:41) but southwest to Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia (Dan 11:23; Ezek 38:5).

He will take all their treasures and use their worth to further his military activities (Dan 11:38-39). He will use rapid blitzkrieg warfare to wipe out all who stand in his way as he tries to take dominion of the earth (this is what is meant by the “overflowing and passing through” of Dan 11:40 and it will happen in conjunction with the breaking of the “covenant of death” as Isa 28:18 connects). During this campaign he will hear rumors from the north and east (Dan 11:43; in Palestine). He will become wrathful because it delays his military advance. But because of the importance of Jerusalem he will return with great fury and annihilate many Jews (Dan 11:44). Most likely he will annihilate 2/3 of the population (Zech 13:8-9). Then he will set up his military tent in Jerusalem showing that he has subdued them (Dan 11:45). Then an angel will pour out the 6th Bowl and the Euphrates River will dry up so that the kings of the east can assemble for the final battle (Rev 16:12). Once this is done the Satanic trinity will send out deceiving spirits to gather the armies of the world for the final campaign of Armageddon (Rev 16:13-14). They will assemble in the valley of Megiddo (Rev 16:16) to make war against God and his army (Rev 19:19) and to destroy the final remnant of Israel hidden southeast of Jerusalem in modern day Jordan. Israel will have nowhere to turn but Messiah. Their power will have been shattered (Dan 12:7) and they will call upon the name of the Lord (Matt 23:39), Messiah will come with His bride, the Church (Rev 19:8, 9, 14). And the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19:16) will seize and break and destroy the Antichrist without human agency (Dan 8:25; 9:27; 11:45; Rev 19:20) and he will be cast alive into the lake of fire (Rev 19:20) and He will kill all the rest with the sword that comes out of His mouth (Rev 19:21). And the birds will assemble and feast on their flesh (Rev 19:21). And he will bind Satan for 1,000 years (Rev 20:1-6). And He will destroy every other kingdom in every respect (Dan 7:26) and He will establish His kingdom which will last forever and ever (Dan 7:27).

ⁱ It is crucial to understand that the phrase *kingdom of heaven* is never re-defined in the Book of Matthew. From the very first usage in Matt 3:1 it refers to the earthly Kingdom over which the Messiah would rule. There is no justification for re-defining the *kingdom of heaven* to mean anything other than that same earthly Kingdom. However, dispensationalists have been notoriously slippery on the parables of Matthew 13. Rather than sticking with the normal meaning of *kingdom of heaven* many have opted for a “spiritual kingdom”. This view states that the “mystery” here is a new ‘form’ of the kingdom. The kingdom would take a new form. They claim the *kingdom of heaven* here is not the earthly Kingdom but a spiritual Kingdom. This so-called “spiritual kingdom” begins with Israel’s rejection of Jesus as Messiah (Matt. 12) and ends with Israel’s acceptance of Jesus as Messiah at the end of the Tribulation.

Contrary to this, however, Jesus does not say the “mystery” is a new ‘form’ of the kingdom. A “mystery” simply means a truth that was not revealed at all in the OT. Thus, a *mystery of the kingdom of heaven* is some truth associated with the earthly kingdom that was not revealed in the OT. If we fudge the text and say the “mystery” is a new ‘form’ of the kingdom then on what basis can we say that the kingdom John the Baptist and Jesus offered to the nation of Israel was not a “spiritual form” of the kingdom (cf. 3:2; 4:17)? What stops us from saying that there is no future earthly kingdom? What stops us from saying that God’s promises to Israel of an earthly kingdom

have been transferred to the church? What stops us from doing away with Israel's earthly kingdom altogether? Why did Jesus separate the coming of the Holy Spirit from the coming of the Kingdom in Acts 1:5-8? Why is Peter still looking for the Kingdom in Acts 3:20-21 if the Kingdom was already there? I hope you can see how deadly this approach is to Dispensationalism and the normal reading of the scripture.

ⁱⁱ Toussaint, Stanley, *The Kingdom in Matthew 13* (paper delivered at the Pre-Trib Rapture Conference in Dallas, TX, Dec. 2003), 11.

ⁱⁱⁱ The intervening Church age is associated with the future earthly Kingdom in three distinct ways: 1) we are the prayer warriors for the Kingdom (Matt. 6:9-13), 2) when a person believes during the Church age he is transferred from the Kingdom of Darkness to the Kingdom of Light, and 3) Christians are being prepared for service in the Kingdom.

^{iv} Some prophecy students place Gog and Magog with the Battle of Armageddon and though there are some similarities between the two battles (as with almost every battle) they are not the same for several reasons. For example, the battle of Gog and Magog occurs when Israel is enjoying peace in her land but the battle of Armageddon occurs when Israel is under persecution. Also, God gathers the armies for the battle of Gog and Magog (Ezek 38:4-6, 17) but the Satanic trinity gathers the armies for the battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:13-14).

^v Through this Satan will be seeking to achieve what only God deserves, the worship of himself.

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