

THE END OF THE AGE, THE LAST DAYS & THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

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Jesus tells us it is important to know "*the signs of the times.*" (Matt.16.3) In today's world we are constantly hearing of wars and rumors of war in the area of the Euphrates River and Israel. We believe that it is vital to understand what "TIME" we are living in. The Bible often speaks of the "LAST DAYS" and the "END OF THE AGE". What is the difference?

Jesus was asked "*What will be the sign of Your coming and the end of the age?*" (Matthew 24.3) He answered that we would know that we are at THE END OF THE AGE when Jerusalem is returned to Jewish control. The END OF THE AGE begins when Gentile domination over Jerusalem comes to an end. "*Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot until the times of the gentiles is fulfilled.*" (Luke 21.24) As we know this came to an end in 1967 when, after 2000 years, Jerusalem came back under Jewish control. According to Jesus this is the sign that we are in the END OF THE AGE. (See Matthew 24 and Luke 21 especially verse 24.)

Daniel was told that his message was sealed until the TIME OF THE END - THE END OF THE AGE i.e. until these times that we now live in. Now that we are in the time of the end his prophecies are becoming easier to interpret. "*Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the TIME OF THE END.*" (Daniel 12.9) The Book of Daniel is very important at this time in history as we see that the angel's message to Daniel can only be understood at the END OF THE AGE. Likewise the messages of Revelation Chapters 13 and 16 can only be understood in the light of Daniel's prophecies.

In every age antichrist leaders have arisen to oppose God's plan, God's people, Israel and the Body Of Christ. For three thousand five hundred years the Jewish people have suffered relentless opposition from antichrist figures, from Pharaoh, Haman, Roman Emperors, Inquisitors, Hitler to the terrorist leaders of fanatic Islam today. Likewise the true Church has been persecuted violently from the times of the Apostles, through the persecution of the Chinese Church and the church in many other parts of the world today. Political leaders who instigate persecution against the Jewish people and the true church can be described "ANTICHRISTS." The word "Antichrist" refers to many evil political leaders (past and present) who have used the power of their office to persecute the Jewish people or the true church. John writes that there are many antichrists. In the coming days we can expect Antichrist leaders to continue to emerge who oppose God Israel and the true church. "*Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now MANY ANTICHRISTS HAVE COME. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.*" (1 John 2.18) Here John writes that there have been many antichrists. Antichrist who set themselves in opposition to God's people and God's plan have been a part of every age. In the coming days we can expect Antichrist leaders to continue to emerge who oppose God, Israel and the Church

However, in the Book of Revelation, John does not use the word "ANTICHRIST" to refer to the coming onslaught of Satan against Israel. He refers instead to a "BEAST." Though there are many antichrists, John sees a specific "BEAST" empowered by the dragon (Satan) rising up with great power and authority. This beast is a group of nations emerging with great power and authority just before the return of the Lord.

"And I saw A BEAST rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and, blasphemous names on its heads. And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority." (Rev. 13: 1-2)

Because many believers have been taught to look out for a last day's 'antichrist', they ignore or pay insufficient attention to the BEAST, that is emerging before our eyes, with an agenda to destroy and annihilate Israel. By looking for an antichrist to come into the Temple many have been lulled to sleep unaware that we are ALREADY at the climax of history and the Coming Of The Lord.

What does John mean by the word "BEAST?" The word "BEAST" is a word used in the pictorial language of the Book of Revelation and The Book of Daniel to refer to a nation or confederation of nations. The Book of Revelation does not use the word "Antichrist" but emphasizes that the threat coming to Israel will be from a BEAST nation or group of nations. It talks about a "BEAST" coming against Israel at the end of the age with the nature of a LION a LEOPARD and a BEAR. (Rev. 13.1-2)

What are these nations that were like a LION, a BEAR and a LEOPARD that John saw? To answer this we need to turn to the Book of Daniel. In Daniel Chapter Seven, Daniel describes four BEASTS emerging from the sea. He saw the rise and fall of four empires that would dominate the Middle East and Israel. In his vision the first of these empires was like a LION, the second was like a BEAR and the third was like a LEOPARD. *"I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. And four great BEASTS came up from the sea, each different from the other. The first was like a LION and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it. And suddenly another beast, a second, like a BEAR. It was raised up on one side and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said this to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh!' After this I looked, and there was another, like a LEOPARD, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it. (Daniel 7.2-6)*

In Daniel's time the Empire of Babylon was the dominant power over the Middle East. Its national emblem was a lion with eagles' wings. Therefore Babylon is the *"LION with eagles' wings"* (Daniel 7.4) It was overcome and replaced by an empire described as a BEAR. This is the empire of the Medes and the Persians which, under Darius, conquered Babylon. (Daniel 7.5) The third empire is described as a LEOPARD. This is the Empire of Greece that overthrew the dominance of the Medes and Persians. (Daniel 7.6)

- The LEOPARD was Alexander's empire, whose eastern part corresponds to *modern* Turkey, Syria and Lebanon. (Daniel 7:6)
- The BEAR was the Medes and The Persians which corresponds to modern Iran (Daniel 7.5)
- The LION was Babylon - modern Iraq. (Dan.7:4)

If THE LION, BEAR and LEOPARD in Revelation 13 are the same as the LION, BEAR and LEOPARD in Daniel, then the last "BEAST" that comes against Israel (described in Revelation 13.1-2) is a confederation of Middle Eastern States from the area of ancient Greece (Leopard) ancient Persia (Bear) and ancient Babylon (Lion). This is the area of today's Northern Middle Eastern nations. It is a wicked coalition of nations which is empowered by the dragon (Satan) (Revelation 13.2) Notice that the southern Middle Eastern nations such as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Dubai are not included with this satanically inspired BEAST that comes against Israel in the last days. (These southern Middle Eastern nations are also a part of today's Abrahamic Accords.)

THE FINAL WAR, THE LAST BEAST & THE FALSE PROHET

Revelation chapter 16 describes the LAST WAR that will take place before the coming of the Messiah to rule and reign over the earth. Here again we see a BEAST being formed around the area of the Euphrates River.

"Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the DRAGON and out of the mouth of the BEAST and out of the mouth of the FALSE PROPHET, three unclean spirits like frogs. For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. ("Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments so that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!") And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon." (Rev 16:13-16)

From this we see that the epicenter of this Final War is the **area of the Euphrates River**. This is **the area of modern Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran** (the area of the Middle East that was dominated by the empires of the LION, BEAR & LEOPARD of Daniel and of Revelation 16.) In Daniel's days these empires warred against each other - in the Final War these nations will be allied together to form one BEAST (Rev. 13.1-2)

John saw a demonic power - the dragon - and a false ideology uniting these nations in an exterminationist agenda against Israel until they are finally defeated in Northern Israel at the valley of Armageddon. In this vision John also saw a FALSE PROPHET inspired by the devil (the dragon), stirring up the nations to go to war against Israel. (Rev. 16:13) According to John the Antichrist is the one who denies the Father and the Son, Jesus. *"Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son."* (1 John 2:22)

THE FALSE PROPHET is the ideology that empowers the Beast. Fanatic Islamic teaching unites the Middle Eastern nations against Israel today. It denies God's promises to Israel, and the Atoning work of Jesus. Fanatic Islam also teaches that in the last days Allah will raise up from the Muslim world a leader: "The 12th Iman" who will destroy the "lie" of Christianity and Jewish rule over Jerusalem. This anti-Semitic teaching, (though not embraced by all Moslems) will stir up hatred of Israel in the Middle East and throughout the world. It will result in an invasion of Israel that will be put down by the Lord Himself at His return. (Zech. 74:3-4)

Today before our eyes the whole world can see that Iran is leading this confederacy of Islamic anti-Israel nations. It is evident that the Battle of Armageddon is near, and the sovereign will of God is permitting the nations to be gathered in this final conflict.

The Final War

This last war will be stopped by the Lord at His coming when *"his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives,"* to take the throne of David, fulfill the Davidic Covenant and rule and reign over Israel and the world. (See Zechariah 14.3-4)

The Lord's return will be a time of great triumph glory and the completion of our redemption, but it will also be a time of punishment and defeat of the devil and the SYSTEMS that have come out of his influence. When the Lord returns He will reign in righteousness, judge, punish and destroy those who have ignored God and the gospel. Though God is love, His rule over the earth requires that He binds the devil who has deceived the nations and those who submitted to him and refused the gospel. This is a stern reality and warning of the urgency for all individuals and nations to be reconciled to God through believing the gospel and turning to Him with all our hearts

"It is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because of their testimony among you who believed." (2 Thessalonians 1.6-11)

Those who do not receive a love of the truth through Biblical knowledge will easily succumb to false prophecy and ideologies and become anti-Israel, antisemitic and anti-Christian, but those who are wise will instruct many.

YOUR KINGDOM COME - YOUR WILL BE DONE!!

Footnote This teaching is especially relevant this month - August (Gregorian calendar) which corresponds roughly to the Jewish month of Av. **THE 9TH OF AV** (Tish BaAv) is a time of mourning in Israel because it was on exactly this day that the first and second temples were destroyed. Many other atrocities against the Jewish people took place on or around this date e.g. the expulsion of the Jews from England was on the 9th of AV 1290; their expulsion from France was on 10th of AV 1306; and their expulsion from Spain was on 7th of AV 1492.

This August as we observe the events taking place in Iran and the Middle East we recognize the formation of the Final Beast whose epicenter is in Iran, and which threatens to wipe Israel off the face of the earth. Although we *"do not know the day or the hour,"* Jesus exhorts us to *"be aware of the signs of the times."*

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