

The Soon Coming End – Part 7

2 Peter 3:9-10

⁹ The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. (2 Peter 3:9-10 (NASB))

As we ended the message last week, our view of the events that were taking place was focused upon chapters 4 and 5 of the Book of Revelation, and especially upon the throne of God and all the many angels gathered around the throne, ministering to God the Father. And there in God's hand was a great "scroll" that was sealed with seven seals. And after much weeping and grieving in the heavens, it had been determined that there was only one person in all of heaven and earth who was worthy to take the scroll and to open the seven seals and to bring about final judgment upon the earth and all of its people, and that person was the Lord Jesus.

And as Jesus took the scroll and began to open the seals, this is where we as the readers recognize that God has chosen to not present these mysteries of the "last days" in chronological order. In other words, there are other events given in later chapters of this Book that take place prior to the opening of the seven seals. And so, for that reason may we move on to some of the other events in later chapters, and then return later to the opening of these seals.

You will recall that just before we began to study chapters 4 and 5 of the Book of Revelation, our focus was upon the "church". And I would like for us to return there today.

When we use the word "church", most often our thoughts go to all the many congregations of Christian believers that gather each Sunday to worship the Lord. And that would be a right understanding. But also, as we know, throughout the many centuries since the disciples began establishing those congregations, the "church" has grown and spread over all the earth into a great body of Christian believers that we now call the "body of Christ". And by their presence and by their witness, this great body of believers has been able to impact and bless most everyone they touch, their own families, their neighborhoods, their workplaces, and on and on.

And that is why, as all of the believing Christians are suddenly “raptured” off the earth, their loss to the rest the people who remain will be devastating beyond all comprehension.

Think about it again, in only a moment, without warning or notice, in the twinkling of an eye, every Christian on the face of the earth will suddenly be gone, some perhaps while they sleep, others as they work, some in mid-stride of a walk, or in mid-sentence of a conversation. Those words again from 1 Thessalonians 4

¹⁶ . . . the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (ESV))

And again, as Jesus said in Matthew 24,

⁴⁰ . . . two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. (Matthew 24:40-41 (ESV))

In that moment, in that twinkling of an eye, families will be decimated, a husband or wife raptured away, but the other one left behind, friends and family members suddenly missing, and others left behind. What a crushing blow that will be to each of those who suddenly realize what has taken place right before their eyes.

Consider also, that when the “rapture” takes place, every form of goodness and righteousness on the earth will immediately be gone. Why do I say that? It’s because it is the Holy Spirit who brings us all the many forms of goodness and righteousness, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control. And as the presence of the Holy Spirit, who indwells all of those Christians who have been raptured away, is gone from the earth, there will be no forms of goodness or righteousness remaining, no love and no caring anywhere to be found, no compassion, no pity, no kindness, no goodness, no patience, no sympathy, no honesty, leaving only unbelievers and their “man-made” forms of goodness to carry on the daily activities of life on the earth.

And yes, it can be argued that those who are left behind were also created in the “image of God”, and therefore will have some measure of goodness remaining in them. And perhaps so. But then, we have only to read these scriptures to truly understand what those who are left behind will really be like. Listen to the words given in Romans 3.

¹⁰ As it is written: *"There is none righteous, no, not one;* ¹¹ *There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.* ¹² *They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."* ¹³ *"Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps is under their lips";* ¹⁴ *"Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness."* ¹⁵ *"Their feet are swift to shed blood;* ¹⁶ *Destruction and misery are in their ways;* ¹⁷ *And the way of peace they have not known."*
(Romans 3:10-17 (NKJV))

And then to add to that description, in 2 Timothy 3 we also read.

¹ But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ² For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. (2 Timothy 3:1-5 (ESV))

So then, as the "rapture" takes place and you and I are rising into the clouds to be with Jesus, these are the ones who are left behind to carry on and to run the world. People who are

² . . . lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, (2 Timothy 3:2-3 (ESV))

Remember also, as we studied in an earlier message, before the rapture takes place, the world will have already been doing all of the beginning "signs" of the "last days". World leaders who are under the control of "strong demons" will have been putting themselves into positions in the various nations, forming alliances with other demonic leaders.

And again, we can so easily recognize all of those moves taking place right now, during these days, Russia aligning itself with Syria and Iran, the U.S. aligning with Saudi Arabia and Egypt and Jordan, the many various Muslim factions aligning themselves together, Pakistan and Afghanistan, all clearly prophesied about in the Books of Daniel and Ezekiel and Revelations.

And then, after the rapture takes place, those alliances will take on much stronger shapes, and even more violently so than ever before.

Here in America, you can imagine what the effect will be as Christians are suddenly removed from families and friendships and workplaces. Think for moment about your own family. Will you have loved ones, sons or daughters or grandchildren, or others that will be left behind? What an awful thought!

And in your workplace, suddenly you and the other Christians who work with you will not be there anymore. And because those who are left behind won't know how to do your work, the whole work process will quickly grind to a halt. The office will have to shut down. The factory line will stop. Christian policemen and firemen and bankers and school teachers and doctors and nurses and store workers and food cannery workers and electric power company workers, and car repair workers and on and on, will all be gone.

And may I be so bold as to say that those Christian workers who have just been raptured away are generally the "best" workers, workers with integrity, workers who care, leaving behind less-committed, less-caring workers. Why would I dare say such things about unbelievers? Considering the words that I just read for us from 2 Timothy 3, that describe the ordinary people as being

² . . . lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, (2 Timothy 3:2-4 (ESV))

May I say, these kinds of personalities don't usually make for good and "caring" workers.

Truly, the world as we know it today, especially here in America, will be devastated, workplaces and the general society in a disarray. And as they do even now, the people of America will be crying out for the government to help them, for the government leadership to come and "save" them, save them from the food shortages and water shortages, and the police and fire protection shortages that will quickly develop, and from the chaos and violence that will surely begin to erupt all around them.

Consider how even now during these present days, for frivolous reasons, men and women quickly take to the streets to riot and destroy. What will take place when the real problems and the real shortages of the end times begin to take place?

Our nation's leaders will, no doubt, think of many clever solutions, but as the shortages become greater and greater and the violence increases, their great ideas will fade, and

that will be when even stronger, demonically controlled leaders will begin to emerge, leaders who will not hesitate to be more and more violent.

And remember also, that while much is taking place here within the visible realms of men on the earth, much also is taking place in the “invisible realms” of the “heavenlies”, that place where the demonic “principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this age live. And in Revelations chapter 13 we read how those strongest of the strong demons will begin to rise to power and wreak the worst of their havoc upon the people of the earth. May I read this chapter again for us, it has some of the foundational keys to most of the events that will take place in the last days? Please turn there and read along with me. This is the Apostle John saying,

¹ Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. ² Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like *the feet of* a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. ³ And *I* saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. ⁴ So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who *is* like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" ⁵ And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. ⁶ Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. ⁸ All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. ⁹ If anyone has an ear, let him hear. ¹⁰ He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

¹¹ Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. ¹² And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. ¹³ He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. ¹⁴ And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. ¹⁵ He was granted *power* to give breath to the image of the beast, that the

image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. ¹⁶ He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, ¹⁷ and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. ¹⁸ Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number *is* 666. (Revelation 13:1-18 (NKJV))

This is when the demonic plan of the “mark of the beast” that we have heard so much about will begin to fall into place. Money will begin to have no value. The only currency that will be usable will be the Mark of the beast, the 666 on a person’s hand or forehead.

Bible scholars of today debate as to whether that will be an actual “mark” or “number”. And it really doesn’t matter how it is actually forced upon the people, if it accomplishes what the demonic leaders want it to accomplish. Simply put, if you have the “mark”, you can buy food, or go to the doctor, or buy gasoline, and if you don’t, you will be refused any and all provisions and services.

And yes, at first, many people will be reluctant to take the “mark”. But as the weeks and months pass, and the necessities of life get in short supply, starvation and poverty and destitution have a way of convincing people to do whatever it takes to survive. And slowly but surely, they will fall into line to take the “mark”.

What does it mean for the person who agrees to take the “mark of the beast”? Does it mean that they will simply join together with a group like themselves in order to survive? They might want it to be that way, but it will not be! It means that as each person takes the mark, they will be giving themselves over to absolute demonic control, to be under complete submission to the vilest of evil beings, beings that are far worse than our worst politicians, our worst criminals, our worst murders and serial killers and child molesters, evil beyond imagination. But not only that, those who take the “mark” will themselves become completely possessed and will begin to do those same evil and violent things, obeying the demons that live within them.

And yes, no doubt, violence throughout the world will increase dramatically, nation against nation, fighting and conquering. Why would that be so? It is because with man becoming as evil as the demons who possess them, they will know nothing else other than evil. It will be their natural way of thinking and behaving.

That is when the strongest of demons will begin to put thing into a more workable order. It is then that these strong demons referred to as the “beast” and the “dragon” will rise to worldwide power.

Unfortunately, my time has run short again today. We’ll try to pick back up right here next week and we will talk about these beasts and the dragon. Listen!

¹⁶ He (the beast) causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, ¹⁷ and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. ¹⁸ Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number *is* 666.
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