

COME LORD JESUS

- A. Introduction: Almighty God is working out a plan to have a family with whom He can live forever. God created men and women to become His sons and daughters through faith in Christ, and He made this world to be a home for Himself and His family. Both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin. Eph 1:4-5; Isa 45:18; Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12; etc.
1. Jesus Christ came into this world two thousand years ago to pay for sin at the Cross. Through His death and resurrection He opened the way for sinners to be transformed into holy, righteous sons and daughters of God through faith in Him. John 1:12-13; Gal 4:4; Titus 2:14; etc.
 - a. Jesus will soon come again to complete God's plan for a family by restoring this world to a fit forever home for Himself and His family. He will cleanse the earth of all corruption and death and return the world to its pre-sin condition. Life on earth will finally be all that it was meant to be before it was corrupted through sin. I Isa 65:17; II Pet 3:10-13; Rev 21:1-7; etc.
 - b. Jesus said that the years preceding His return will be increasingly difficult and culminate in the worst tribulation the world has ever seen. Jesus compared some of the difficulties to labor pains. They will increase infrequency and intensity as His return draws closer. Matt 24:21; Matt 24:6-8
 2. For a number of months we have been looking at what is going to happen according to the Bible. We have emphasized the fact that the birth pangs have begun and that we must learn how to navigate through the difficult days and years ahead of us.
 - a. The Bible gives us much information about world conditions at the time the Lord returns. Last week we pointed out that certain recent developments indicate that those world conditions are setting up. These developments help us see that Jesus' second coming is near.
 1. The Bible describes a worldwide system of government, economy, and religion able to control humanity. The technology needed for such a system has only recently been developed.
 2. The Bible also describes a final world war with the potential to kill everyone on earth. This kind of destructive power has also only been available in recent decades.
 - b. We further stated that Jesus said religious deception and lawlessness will be a hallmark of the final years of human history before He returns (Matt 24:4-5; Matt 11-12; Matt 23-24). In this lesson we're going to build on what we said last week, as we conclude this series by looking at the help that is available to us as we live through these years.
- B. Lawlessness and religious deception have been linked since humanity's earliest days on earth. Lawlessness is a rejection of authority. It is ultimately a rejection of Almighty God who is the supreme authority.
1. The first rejection of God's authority came from Lucifer, an angel who mounted a rebellion against God before earth was created. Lucifer (who became known as Satan) desired the honor and reverence that belongs to God alone. He lured a number of angels to follow him. Isa 14:12-14
 - a. When God created human beings, Satan enticed the first man and woman to join him in rebellion. Adam's sin altered human nature and a propensity for wickedness (lawlessness) developed in man.
 1. Men became sinners by nature. This is why we must be transformed inwardly by the Holy Spirit through a new birth or regeneration. Rom 5:12; Eph 2:3; Titus 3:5
 2. Since that time Satan has sought to influence as many people as possible to obey and follow him rather than God. This has manifested itself, not only in wicked actions, but in false religions—idol worship or the worship of something or someone other than Almighty God. Gen 11:1-4
 - b. Prior to Jesus' return, Satan will offer the world the ultimate false christ (commonly known as Antichrist). Through this man Satan will receive worship from the entire world as he attempts to hold on to control of his counterfeit kingdom in the earth. Luke 4:6; Luke 22:53; II Cor 4:4; etc.
 1. This final Satan empowered leader is referred to as the man of lawlessness (sin) who will exalt

- himself and defy every god there is and tear down every object of adoration and worship. He will position himself in the temple of God, claiming that he himself is God (II Thess 2:4, NLT).
2. This evil man will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles. He will use every kind of wicked deception to fool those who are on their way to destruction because they refuse to believe the truth that would save them (II Thess 2:9-10, NLT).
 - c. The tribulation of the last few years of human history in this age will be caused by the actions of the final ruler and the behavior of fallen people who have willingly embraced massive deception and rejected Almighty God.
2. Paul wrote that times will be perilous: For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control; they will be cruel (NLT); despisers of those that are good (KJV). They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act as if they are religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly (II Tim 3:1-5, NLT).
 - a. Note the connection between behavior and willful rejection of God, along with the religious bent in these people. Peter wrote: that in the last days there will be scoffers who will laugh at the truth and do every evil thing they desire (II Pet 3:3, NLT) and willfully overlook and forget (Amp) the truth of God (II Pet 3:5, Amp). Willfully implies active volition and purpose.
 - b. We see a hint of what the human heart is capable of as far as resisting the truth in Jesus' first coming.
 1. Herod ordered the slaughter of children two years old and under in an attempt to maintain his power (Matt 2:16). When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the priests decided to kill, not just Jesus, but Lazarus, since because of him many believed on Jesus (John 12:9-11).
 2. Wicked and lawless men inspired by Satan crucified the Lord (Acts 2:23). Chief priests and elders of Israel paid Roman soldiers who had been guarding the tomb to lie about what occurred at the resurrection (Matt 28:11-15).
 - c. In addition to the continuing rebellion of Satan and wicked behavior in men and women who have not surrendered to Almighty God, another factor is involved in the coming chaos and tribulation.
 1. Lawlessness (or rebellion against God) has been at work in the world for many millennia. But it has been restrained. However, the restraints are about to be fully removed.
 2. II Thess 2:7—For the mystery of lawlessness—that hidden principle of rebellion against constituted authority—is already at work in the world [but it is] restrained only until he who restrains it is taken out of the way (Amp).
 3. We could do an entire lesson on this topic, but for now, consider one point. The body of Christ (true believers in Jesus) and the Holy Spirit working in and through them is a restraining force in the earth.
 - a. When believers are taken off the earth in the catching away or gathering together (I Thess 4:13-18; II Thess 2:1), there won't be a single follower of Jesus on earth. If God's heart was to destroy mankind and the earth, this would be the perfect time. But His purposes are always redemptive.
 - b. Once the man of lawlessness comes on the world scene, there will be only a few years left before this age comes to an end. Men and women will have only a short time to acknowledge God and submit to His rulership or be forever removed from His presence. Radical action is necessary.
 1. In these final years of human history the wickedness in the human heart apart from God without any restraints, and working in tandem with the devil, will be on full display. Mankind will see what life is like in a world that completely rejects Almighty God for a false god.
 2. Some people will be further hardened in rebellion. But multitudes will wake up, acknowledge the True God and become part of His family through faith in Christ. Rev 7:9-14; Matt 24:14
 4. This final world ruler, the man of lawlessness, will need a lawless society to welcome and embrace him as God—a society that has rejected God and His truth. Those circumstances are setting up now.

- a. We are witnesses the increasing breakdown of societal norms, the rejection of objective truth, and an open hostility to Judeo-Christian ethics and morality—all of which is producing corresponding chaos and violence, not just in our country, but around the world.
 - b. In the first chapter of Romans Paul describes a downward spiral of destruction that occurs when men willfully reject the truth of God—wicked people who push the truth away from themselves; ...they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks (v18-21, NLT).
 - 1. The result was that their minds became dark and confused. Claiming to be wise, they became utter fools instead (v21-22, NLT). Their behavior became increasingly debased until their minds became reprobate (v28) leaving them unable to make decisions in their own best interest.
 - 2. Our lives are being increasingly affected by reprobate decisions made by wicked people—and this will continue until Jesus returns.
 - c. I do believe that believers in Jesus will be taken off the earth before the destructive events described in the Book of Revelation take place. That destruction begins when the man of lawlessness is revealed and he can't come on the scene until believers leave. Rev 6:1-14; II Thess 2:3.
 - 1. The Old Testament has many examples of God's people being delivered from the consequences of reprobate decisions and actions. Enoch was taken off of the earth before the flood of Noah's day (Gen 5:22-24; Heb 11:5). Noah and his family were preserved in the ark through the flood (Gen 6- 8). Lot was delivered from Sodom before it was destroyed (Gen 19).
 - 2. But we can't only be waiting for the catching away of believers (the rapture). We must also learn how to live a godly life in the midst of a rapidly deteriorating world and build our faith in the fact that God will get us through whatever is ahead—until He comes.
- C. The Bible records a number of examples of godly men and women who lived through societal upheaval that resulted from decisions made by wicked national leaders and the people around them. They can encourage us and instruct us as we face the years ahead.
- 1. I Kings 16:29-34—About 870 BC King Ahab of Israel and his wife Jezebel took the nation deep into Baal worship. God raised up Elijah the prophet to call His people back to Him.
 - a. I Kings 17:1—Elijah, in the name of Almighty God, declared that there would be no rain in Israel for three years. Then, at Elijah's word, rainfall was restored (I Kings 18:41-46).
 - 1. Lack of rainfall resulted in drought which resulted in crop failures. God had previously warned His people this would occur if they worshipped idols. Lev 26:19-20; I Kings 8:35-37
 - 2. There was a redemptive purpose in all of this. No rainfall was a direct challenge by Almighty God to Baal (a false god). Baal was a storm god and he was also the farm (fertility) god who caused the fields, flocks, and herds to increase.
 - b. I Kings 17:2-16—God supernaturally provided food for Elijah at a brook in Gilead (east of the Jordan) and for a gentile widow in the town of Zarephath (in modern-day Lebanon).
 - 1. God directed Elijah to a brook called Cherith for water. Ravens brought him meat and bread twice a day. When the brook dried up, the Lord sent Elijah west to Zarapheth, to a woman who was about to cook her last meal and then die. Elijah instructed her to feed him first, telling her that if she did so, her food would not run out.
 - 2. These accounts sound exciting when we read them. But imagine living with the reality that you have to depend on birds to bring you food. And you have to hope that there is meal and oil in the containers every time you go for food.
 - 2. Both Elijah and the widow woman had to hear God's specific instructions to them, believe His Word, and then obey it. This is hard to do if you don't have the peace that comes from seeing the big picture and drawing hope from the fact that God's plan for a family on this earth restored will be completed.

- a. Jer 29:11 is one of the most famous Old Testament passages. But few people consider it in its context and miss the true meaning of the verse. God spoke those words to His people when they were about to be forcibly removed from their land and taken away as captives because of their persistent, unrepentant idol worship. They would be gone from the land for seventy years (v10).
 1. Even though there were some godly men and women living in Israel, their lives were also about to be completely altered because of reprobate decisions made by wicked people.
 2. Most of them would never see their homeland again. They would die in Babylon. Where is their future and hope? It's in the life to come—on this earth renewed and restored.
 3. Jer 29:4-7—God gave His people specific instructions on how to make the best of a bad situation. Settle down and make a new life for yourself; you will survive; you have a future.
 - b. Habakkuk was another prophet sent to Israel (along with Jeremiah) just before their national existence came to an end. Both prophets obeyed the Lord. Yet both had their lives upended because of reprobate decisions made by ungodly men and women. Habakkuk's response was: Despite what is going on around me I will rejoice in God my Savior. Hab 3:17-19
 3. Jesus gave instructions to the first generation of His followers on how to deal with political unrest in their day that was due to unwise choices made by others. Luke 21:20-24
 - a. In 66AD Israel rebelled against Roman rule. Jews who had become believers in Jesus did not join in the revolt which made them traitors in the eyes of their fellow countrymen.
 - b. The Romans eventually surrounded Jerusalem and laid siege to the city. Israel was defeated, the Temple burned to the ground, and Jerusalem destroyed. Israel ceased to exist as a national entity and became known as Palestine.
 1. As many as one million Jews were killed and large numbers were forcibly relocated to other parts of the Empire. Not a single Christian was killed. They heeded Jesus' warning to get out of Jerusalem when they saw the city surrounded by armies.
 2. Believers escaped to the mountains and many eventually settled in Pella (east of the Jordan River in the region of Decapolis) and established a Christian community there.
 - c. This was specific direction for a specific situation to protect God's people and to further His redemptive purposes.
 4. As we stated above, people will come to faith in Christ in the years after the lawless one comes to power.
 - a. Some of them will be living in Jerusalem when this final ruler enters a rebuilt Temple and declares himself to be God. Jesus warned those who see this event to get out of the city immediately because the ruler will come after those who reject his claim to be God. Matt 24:15-21
 - b. We could do many lessons on this, but note one point. God will help those who belong to Him make it through the troubling times ahead. However, we must learn how to walk in peace so that we can hear God's directions to us on how to navigate the days and years ahead.
- D. Conclusion: There are difficult days and years ahead for this world. Understanding what is happening and why helps us have peace of mind. God's plan is unfolding and He will get us through until He gets us out.
1. II Tim 3:13—In the context of the perilous times that are coming on the earth Paul wrote that evil men and deceivers will get worse and worse. Why? Because that's the natural progression of lawlessness or sin. Sin further deceives and hardens those who persist in it (Heb 3:13).
 2. II Tim 3:14-15—Paul instructed believers to deal with the circumstances coming on this world by continuing in the Word of God. The same voice that inspired the Scriptures is the same One who will specifically direct us through the increasing turmoil ahead. (More on this in the next series)
 3. A plan is unfolding with a good end in sight. The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ—and He shall reign forever and ever. And of His peace there will be no end (Rev 11:15; Isa 9:6-7). That is our peace, our joy, and our hope. Come Lord Jesus come!