

Practical Eschatology and Signs of the End Times

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Introduction

In general, besides focusing on the events that will happen in the last times, this book also looks at the attitude we need to have while facing those events. There are many people with different ideas, who are focusing on the facts of what exactly and when it will happen, but I don't think that this was the main purpose of Jesus when He was talking about the last times. He told us about the signs and the events, but He also told us to be ready for them.

We will be dealing with some of the events that could happen throughout the chapters of this book, but we will first see how we can face those moments in the best way possible. The purpose of Jesus was to prepare us so that we can be ready. We will also discuss what actually causes the end to come and the stage where our society is today.

We need to have a sober point of view when discerning the times in which we live. There have always been people who have gone to extremes concerning the end times. Even among believers, some are not worried at all about the topic and others are living as if the end has already come (which in a way is not so bad, as the Bible also teaches us to be always ready). We have to live in the right way, though, discerning the times and being sober, with our feet on the ground on this matter.

Chapter 1

The Unknown Hour

There are many different theories about the occurrences that need to happen in the last times. The most discussed and asked for is the second coming of Christ and the rapture. People are inquiring about it and each one comes up with a different theory, some made up and some of them based on the Scripture. We have to go to the Scripture, however.

There are those who support the idea of pretribulationism, meaning they believe that the rapture will happen before the great tribulation, so that the Christians can escape the trials that are going to befall this world. There are those who believe in midtribulationism, the belief that the rapture will occur at the midpoint of the Tribulation, and others believe in posttribulationism, meaning they believe the rapture will happen after that tribulation. Apparently, these are the three main streams of thought about how and when this will happen.

There are many ideas about the topic, and we are not going to mention all of them. Some people even set dates for when they think it will happen. “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only“ (Matthew 24:36). From this scripture, we clearly see that no one knows the exact hour when the rapture will happen.

I believe that the rapture event is a mystery for a reason and it’s no wonder why because we as humankind want always to know exactly when something is going to take place and how it is going to happen. It is hard for us to believe, to take something by faith, meaning that when someone believes, he trusts completely that God is going to do something in His way, in His will and time. That person is confident in God. He knows that whatever God does and plans will happen in the best way and that is the way of God, he knows that He is in control.

But instead of having this confidence in God, man in general doesn’t want to lose control of his life. He wants to be the one controlling each event and that’s why he doesn’t like to believe, to trust God with his life.

Taking the rapture event as an example, most people want to know exactly when it is going to take place, so that they can be in control and know when exactly to be ready. Why not live the

way they want to and when the rapture is about to come, they will repent? This is the thought in man's heart in general. God instead intended this and many other things to be taken by faith, so that we can trust completely with all our hearts and be ready and wait on God.

To believe doesn't mean we know everything, or we control something, but it means that we trust in God, and He is in control. It means that we trust in His way. We don't even know when our own end will come. God established this perhaps because He knows that if we knew everything, we might live our own way, knowing that the rapture or our own end was going to be still far off, and in this way, we wouldn't desire or rush to repent, postponing it for another time, making it much harder to happen. Some people say that they will accept and obey the Lord in the last moment of their life, but we must never postpone repentance or doing something for the Lord if He really knocks on our door, even if we are convinced we need to have more time, because first, we don't know our own end and second, who knows if later on we would have another opinion and our hearts had already hardened.

But He knows what the best for us is, and we need to trust Him. Some things, like the rapture, are going to remain a secret to us for a reason, so that we can be always watchful, and we can have the right attitude in our hearts.

There may be signs through which we can see that the time is approaching, but we don't know when it will happen.

“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So, you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors!” (Matthew 24:32-33).

This means that by looking at the signs and what is happening around us, we will be able to see in part that the time is approaching, but we still won't be able to know the exact hour and time. That's why we will only find out when it happens. Until then, we need to do what Matthew 24:42 says and live by faith: “Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.”

Chapter 2

Are We in the End Times?

Are we in the end times? Yes, we are. But we need to understand what exactly the Bible means when it speaks about the end times. We see in some of the epistles how the apostles were already using terms like *the last hour*, *last times*, etc. Why is that? Were they confused? Definitely not. If they wrote that, it means that the last times were already there.

When Jesus died and was resurrected, He marked the beginning of these last times, of this last opportunity God gave humanity through His Son. This means that the last times began at that moment already. The parable of the barren fig tree in Luke 13 explains it. “But he answered and said to him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it’ “ (Luke 13:8).

These were the words of the keeper of the vine to the owner. This keeper was Jesus, and He was pleading with the Father to wait before cutting down the tree. He was going to take special care of it. And today we are living in this time of special care for us through His sacrifice. The only way we can bear fruit is through His sacrifice. That means we are living in this “last year“ figuratively speaking. When He shed His blood, this last year started. “He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these *last times* for you“ (1 Peter 1:20).

We see from this verse that the times Christ was manifest were called “the last times.” Looking as well at the seven seals in Revelation 5:8, which are considered the judgment on this earth that will take place in the last times, we have to consider that probably some of them have already been opened. What if some of the seals could have been opened a thousand years ago? We often used to think that if we see an end times sign, the end needs to come tomorrow, or in five years, for example; otherwise it’s not a sign. But have we considered that a thousand years for God is not a long time, and the signs can start showing long before the end comes? What is considered a long time for us is not long for God.

Leaning on this point we need to know that there are signs accompanying the end times and others having to do with the great tribulation. I believe they are different. Pestilences, for example, have always been there and of course Jesus said they will be there in the last times. But

the last times are much longer than we think. He also spoke of “wars and rumors of wars” (Matthew 24:6). There have been some crucial wars in these past centuries and one of them was the Second World War. We hope not, but it is likely that additional wars will come. When Jesus spoke though of these wars in Matthew 24, He was probably also referring to the ones we have witnessed as the First and the Second World Wars

So the right question to ask is not exactly “Are we in the end times?” but “Are we close to the great tribulation the Bible speaks about?” Because if we see the seven seals that the book of Revelations speaks about, we will see that the first six were hard, but the seventh (which I believe we haven’t experienced yet) is the hardest. That seventh seal consists of seven trumpets. They start sounding one by one when that last seal is opened.

When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel’s hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. So, the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. (Revelation 8:1-6)

In this passage, we probably see the great tribulation and when it begins, we will be left with a short time.

There are various ideas about the end times, but let’s look at two that differ from each other. One is that the end is too far and probably all of these signs still need to happen; and the other one states that the end is now and anything happening is taken as a sign that precedes the end. I am not against either one of them seeing that the Bible says clearly that no one knows the exact hour, not even the angels or the Son, but only the Father.

The problem is that in general, people have been impatient with these end times prophecies. There was a time when each sign, natural disaster, or war was seen as a sign that the end was here already. Such interpretations led people to set dates and periods of time when it was going to happen. This can be dangerous, as we know that setting dates is not in line with biblical doctrine and when these predictions don’t happen, it can lead to disappointment, discouragement, and a

loss of faith. The things that happened were probably signs and things God had predicted, but again we need to know that He measures and sees time differently from the way we do and the very end times are still preserved for the future. It is exactly as the Scripture says in 2 Peter 3:1-9:

Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgement and perdition of ungodly men.

But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Even at that time, when the people did not see the prophecies of the end accomplished, they turned against God and became scoffers. But people with a solid foundation of faith know how to be patient regarding the prophecies and promises of God. And we need to understand that if the end isn't here yet, it is because God is patient toward people and wants more of them to reach salvation.

On the other hand, we mustn't despise the prophecies or discharge all of them, taking them as something futuristic only. We need to consider the book of Revelation and its prophecies. Many people might not pay attention to the events happening now and won't consider them because in the past nothing significant occurred when similar disasters happened. But maybe all of these things are happening just to ring the alarm in our hearts that we need to be spiritually awake. And again, people measure the time of God's promises and prophecies according to their own view and perspective of time, when we see that God has been faithfully accomplishing His promises and fulfilling His Word throughout time.

Another group of people state that the prophecies have been already accomplished somewhere around the first century AD at the time of the Roman emperor Nero. Such teaching is called preterism. Even though some prophecies might have been accomplished at the time of Nero in the first century AD, we need to see that not all of them were fulfilled at that time. There are events that still need to take place. “Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near“ (Matthew 24:32).

Jesus spoke this short parable to focus our attention on the events happening around us so that we can know when His coming is approaching. He didn't give us a date, but He told us to be alert. And I think Christians can read the signs and see more or less when the time is close, but to say the exact date is wrong.

There is also disagreement in the Christian world regarding the rapture and when it will take place. Some people say it will happen before the great tribulation, and others say it will be after it. But do you wonder why is there this disagreement and why can we not know for sure? Some things are just not meant to be discovered by us now because we need to be always ready, for we don't know the hour. This is also the right attitude we can have in the faith, to be always ready and alert, because when faith is still, it doesn't grow.

It is also possible that the end might come when many different prophecies fit together, meaning that the events of the end times prophecies are going to be occurrences that probably have happened before. But when that moment approaches, we will see those occurrences happening more frequently than the usual and at the same time.

Today we notice events like the plan for the reconstruction of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, which for many is a sign of the end times as some of the end time prophecies have to do with the Jewish temple. We also see groups and individuals in the world desiring to organize a “one world order.“ We hear about a change in the monetary system and wonder if this will have to do with the mark of the Beast). We observe more natural disasters happening and other indicators. But we don't know how long it will take for the end to come once these events start taking place.

Maybe all of this is happening now to prepare us for the times to come. Even if this is not the very end (it might be, we don't know for sure), the events happening are an alarm to wake us

up. Even if it doesn't happen in this generation, the great tribulation and worse times than the present ones will probably occur during the next one or the one after it.

But how are people in the world from this present generation and those from the next one going to be watchful, as Matthew 24:42 says, if they haven't seen us doing it? How will they know about what is to come? Some might say, "No, don't worry, these things will come a long time in the future. We are fine now. Nothing to worry about."

Even if we have sometimes said things like this, we shouldn't always reason in this way, and we should reflect what the Bible says when we talk to people. The Word of God says explicitly that we need to watch—always. Our attitude should always be watchful alertness. It is something that was told to the early Christians it is still true today. Jesus commanded everyone to be watchful. This is the condition in which our hearts must be found.

Watchful alertness doesn't mean that we start doing certain things more often than what we used to (even if this is also a part of it). As it is written in the Song of Solomon 5:2, "I sleep, but my heart is *awake*. . . ." We see that this is a condition of the heart, and it can be achieved only by faith. In general, most of us Christians have been living in a very comfortable way (which is not always wrong) and we started focusing on having a blessed and prosperous life, which the Lord obviously can give us. But all this can cause us to forget certain principles and basics of the Christian life, such as living by faith and being watchful. "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming" (Matthew 2:24).



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Chapter 3

About the Rapture

Discussing a topic like the rapture can lead to misunderstandings and differences of opinion. Some people state that there will be a pre-tribulation rapture and others say it will be post-tribulation. We can discuss it endlessly, but we are not meant to know certain things and there is a purpose for it. No one knows the exact time of the Lord's return, and no one knows the exact time of his own death. Why? Because we need to be always ready. What we need to do is go to the Word of God.

Some things need to be taken by faith. We mustn't try to be always in control of everything. Man by his nature likes to control things and know everything, but it cannot be, and it doesn't always happen in this way. If you inquire about what faith means, you will see that it doesn't have to do with knowing, seeing, and controlling. It is God who must be in control and be over us. If today we can know, see, and have things under control (under God's control), it is because we believe, not the other way around.

Just imagine how it would be if we knew everything, even the time of our own death and also the time of His coming. What do you think we would do then? Most, if not all people will do whatever suits them and whatever they like with the thought that when the day comes, they will repent. Do you think that they will really repent on that day? I don't think so. Most of the hearts of those persons will be so hardened that they probably won't do it.

God knows our hearts and wants to save us from that condition. He has established everything perfectly and in our favor, so that we can believe in a genuine way. And while we are here on earth, we need this kind of faith. The faith that trusts God, believes what He says, and is not impatient when something doesn't happen in the way or the time we expected it to be. I am not saying that Christians believe blindly in God. They are able to see and experience certain promises and have experiences in their hearts, but there are some things for which we need just to believe and *wait*.



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Yes, faith sometimes has to do with patience. We usually want everything now. We say, “Where is the success that You promised me, Lord?” when maybe that success will come in a different way, or “Where is the wife You promised me?” when this could happen in His time, which is the right time, or “Where is the rapture that You promised will happen, Lord? Why is it not happening yet?”

In general, we are always impatient, but faith sometimes means having patience. I am not referring to faith for salvation. The Bible says it can happen at any time and “now” is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). Why does it say that? Because tomorrow can be late. We don’t know what will happen tomorrow. Our life is like a vapor (James 4:14). For some things we are impatient, and we want them to happen right now and for others, such as salvation, we can wait and that won’t be a problem for us. This is the nature of our hearts.

One of the passages in the Bible that speaks about the rapture is 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17.

Even though it doesn’t include the word rapture there, we see a clear description of what will happen. “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be *caught up* together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

The word for “caught up” in the Greek Bible is *ἀρπαγησόμεθα* (arpagisometha) that derives from the word *αἰρέομαι* and basically means “grab,” “grasp,” “seize,” “take up,” “pull,” or “take with force.” We can see the clear meaning of this word and say that even if we don’t find the exact word *rapture*” in the Bible, this word describes exactly what a “rapture” is.

I can’t tell you if this occurrence will be before what the Bible calls “the great tribulation” or after it or in which way exactly it will happen, but from what we see in the Scriptures, something will happen.

Let’s look at another story having to do with the topic. We know that God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for the sake of their sin. They were destroyed by fire. This description is very similar to the way this world according to the Scriptures. There were not many righteous people in Sodom, only Abraham’s nephew Lot, who was spared because of his righteousness and was *taken away* by the angels sent to destroy that city. (Genesis 19:15-17)

There is a time when God’s patience is over. I mean that even though He is a patient God, as we read in 2 Peter 3:9, He still has limits regarding His patience with sin. The only reason for Him to have patience and bear it is because of the lost souls who still need to be saved. If there is still some possibility for the gospel to be spread and people to have opportunity to hear the gospel, He will still have patience with sin. He is a just God and cannot bear any sin, but for the love of those who still need to be saved, He doesn’t bring the end right now and is patient.

When that possibility is over, and the people are so hardened that they won’t hear the gospel and darkness overwhelms everything—meaning there won’t be a chance for the good news anymore—the end will come. Then God will no longer be able to bear the sin.

Why do you think that Jesus bore all of our sins on the cross and allowed Himself to suffer and be slain? Because He knew that His death and resurrection were for the salvation of the souls of the lost. This is His main purpose. The salvation. He is not waiting only because sin hasn’t yet escalated to its maximum, but also because there are people who need to be saved.

The end will not come just because of the sin itself because God in general cannot bear sin. He still bears it for love. The end will come because the gospel will be prevented and because of the world’s view toward the sin, because of the way the society sees it. When sin is considered completely normal, as it has already started to be, and the gospel is only seen as negative, there will be obstacles preventing its spread and the time will be right to make the end happen.

Even in our personal lives how we see sin and our attitudes toward it are important in God's eyes. The Bible speaks about the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place where it is not supposed to be, meaning that what was meant to be holy and honorable, like God and standing on His throne, lifted up and exalted by the people, is replaced by something opposite that exalts what is wicked. "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place . . ." (Matthew 24:15).

If God is having patience with us today, it is because of Jesus' sacrifice and the possibility it gives people to repent. Jesus represents the mercy and the patience of God. "But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for the fire until the day of judgement and perdition of ungodly men" (2 Peter 3:7).

Notice it says that the heavens and the earth are preserved by "the same Word," the same Word through which everything was created. Jesus is the Word of God as John 1:1-3 states. As Christians, we also need to bear with others and be patient with them, not to tolerate their sinful life, but to be patient, waiting for them to turn to God. "And the Lord said, 'Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is *very grave*, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know" (Genesis 18:20-21).

Here we see the reason the Lord reacted in this way toward the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah—because their sin was too grave. The unrighteousness was at its maximum. What comes to your mind when you think about this? Doesn't this remind you of the times we are living in now?

We are certain that God can break any chain and any hardened heart, but looking at the Scriptures in general, we are warned not to harden our hearts. ". . . Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (Hebrews 4:7).

If hearts are overly hardened, He cannot work there and save someone by force. We are all warned not to get to that point. When the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was so great and they were hardened to it, there wasn't more to do.

We are not talking about someone who is just struggling with some issues and is worried about his condition and heart before God, but about someone who is not worried at all about his or her sin and after hearing, perseveres more and more in a stubborn way in his own direction.

The Bible tells us in Romans 1:28, “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting . . .”

In this case we see that there is a limit that has been surpassed. There is always a solution if we go before God and we repent, but here we are talking about people who don’t want to depend on God and don’t want to seek a solution from Him and walk in His ways. The end and the tribulation will come when there isn’t much possibility for Him to work anymore because of this hardness.

Maybe the last trials, which form part of the Great Tribulation, will be the last way God will try to awaken the people, show them their condition and need, and warn them. It is because He loves them so much that He cannot just leave them in their condition. Why can’t He just touch them the way they are? Because it works this way: People need to realize something first. They cannot just repent without coming to this realization and acknowledging their sin. And He is the one who can bring them to this condition so they can acknowledge their sin. No one can do it alone. Only He can do it. The only thing people mustn’t do is to resist.

God wants to help everyone reach this realization. He loves us and He died for us. In this is shown His love. We need to go to Him as we are, but we need to change by His power afterwards. We need to go “as we are” to Him, but if we truly have gone to Him, then we won’t come back “as we were,” but different. We are not the same after a true encounter with Him.

We need to realize our need and trust in His power that can regenerate us and perform a miracle in us. We see in the book of Revelation that even after going through trials and tribulations, some people will still harden themselves even more.

The world in which we are living is hardened as well. The unrighteousness and tolerance of sin are ever increasing. “Free thinking“ is in fashion now and things that not even a long time ago were considered taboo now are seen as something almost normal. This is one of the reasons for which the Lord will return, but what else? For what other reason can He make His return and finish everything? It will be when the hardness of people’s hearts are so great that they will no longer be able to receive the gospel. It will be a time when the gospel isn’t any longer preached and doesn’t find any more good ground. Let us just meditate on something. If the world still exists today, if the birds are still singing and we can laugh and live today, it is because the gospel has been preached. This is the reason God is patient because He still wants and waits for people to be saved.

When there is almost no more possibility for the gospel to be preached and for people to receive it, the end will come, just as of the end came to Sodom and Gomorrah. People don't know what they are doing when they prohibit and obstruct the spread of the gospel. In a way, we can say that they are accelerating the end, even though we know that God knows the exact time and He is in control.

We also know that the gospel has been attacked and hindered throughout time, but what we will probably see in the last times will be the opposite of what God wants and the opposition to the gospel will be overwhelming.

Chapter 4

Abraham's Petition and the End Times

We can learn a lot about the end times from the story of Abraham. He traveled and wandered through different lands and places toward what God had promised to him. It was a tough road sometimes, but he obeyed and listened God's to voice. He departed from his homeland, Haran, with his nephew Lot. After a while they decided to part from each other as the land wasn't large enough for the livestock of both groups and there was strife between their herdsmen.

Abraham let Lot to decide where he was going to head, and he chose the best-looking land without knowing that it was the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, whose people were exceedingly wicked and immoral (Genesis 13:5-13).

It happened that after a time, the Lord decided to destroy that land because the outcry against it and its sin was great, and He saw their wickedness. He appeared to Abraham and said to him: "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know" (Genesis 18:20-21).

This is the part of the story that has to do with the end times. Why? Because God is always the same. He doesn't change. If He wasn't able to bear certain things in that time and if there was a point to reach when His patience was running out, so it is now. As 2 Peter 3:8-9 tells us, "But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

When the people of this world mock ask why His coming is delayed, we need to tell them that it is because of His longsuffering and patience. This means that He is patient now, but his patience will eventually run out. In the time of Sodom and Gomorrah, sin was something common in their lands. It was their style of life and considered as something completely common and

normal. The time will come and in part has already started when what was considered as something wrong by the society is suddenly something normal and a matter of choice to do or not.

Today you don't have to hide anymore to do certain things that before were considered as taboo. They were not only considered taboo by the society but were also wrong in front of God. With time, what was considered evil has been deemed good and accepted even by the law itself, and what was good is slowly becoming taboo, uncommon, and pointed out as something wrong (Isaiah 5:20).

This is a danger. We see this drastic change in our society today. I am not going to list all the wrongs and the sins committed today, but you know well that your parents or grandparents didn't even imagine all the things we as a society today accept, things that in their day were rarely even seen or heard of. Topics like divorce, sex, relationships in disorder, drug abuse, same-sex marriage – are openly discussed and promoted in today's society and even schools.

Returning to our story about Abraham and Lot, we can see that the condition in which God found Sodom and Gomorrah was similar to our condition now. Some would ask, "Yes, but why is it that He is not coming yet? We keep on doing all of these things and no punishment or even a sign of His disapproval can be seen."

I would not agree with this because I think He is showing His disapproval, but not in the way we expect Him to. We all expect to see Him coming now in the clouds and showing all of His majesty. This will eventually happen, but it will be at the very end, and then it might be too late for any other action or choice we need to make. He is showing His disapproval now in different ways, even through nature itself. He is just not showing all of His discontent toward sin now because He wants to still give us opportunity.

The other reason I can point out to those asking why He is not showing up and coming now, is that it hasn't actually been a long time that we have lived in a such an extreme and immoral way. Immorality and wickedness have always been there in the world, but the Lord will come when this immorality becomes unsupportable. The trend toward ungodliness even at extreme levels has been around for fifty or sixty years. I am speaking about fifty or sixty years, because this is the time in which many taboos have fallen, even on a global level and have become a promoted fashion in our culture and many people follow that. Things that can make the Lord furious and He cannot stand, have been accepted as something normal. He nevertheless still has

patience and because of His love He still waits for people to repent. This is the reason for which He doesn't show His wrath now.) If we had lived a longer time in the immoral way in which we live today, then yes, we could probably consider the fact that He is delaying, but even this is relative as only He knows the purpose and the exact time established for Him to come. But it is not a question of how long we've been living this way, but how low the society's moral values are getting. As said earlier, there has always been immorality in the world, but when it is generally accepted by a society and considered to be the ordinary way of life, it is something different.

The story of the Noah and the flood has similarities with what we can expect at the end. There as well, the sin was so much that God wasn't able to bear it anymore. "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart" (Genesis 6:5-6).

My thought on this passage is that as people before the flood lived for a longer time, which I think is first because the Lord had decided so, and second because the natural and atmospheric conditions in which they lived as the Bible says that there wasn't any rain before the flood, and obviously because the Lord had decided so. People used to live up to 700-800 years and in this way, they developed the sin more in their lives. This is what provoked the Lord to bring the end through water (flood) and probably to decide to shorten the longevity of their life to how we know it today.

"And the Lord said, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years' " (Genesis 6:3).

He said this just before the flood. We can see that He also did that for good, because He knew that if the man continued to live longer, then he was going to develop sin more and, in this way, to be harder to reach salvation and be saved. Which is the most important is the salvation and eternal life.

Today we often see that the older someone is, the more he has advanced into sin and the harder his heart is toward God.

Imagine how it was when people lived for over 700 years as the Bible says. What we nevertheless see today is that even though man doesn't live as long, he is still advancing toward sin because of the knowledge he has and the overwhelming information he is surrounded with and

can access effortlessly. The information we have today can be used for good, but also for wrong as is being done in general. Everything today is moving faster and faster.

From these events we see that there is a limit to God's patience. We can say that when nothing else can be done, when there is no possibility for the gospel and God to break through with His light, then the end will probably come. Obviously, God can do anything anywhere, and His light can penetrate the deepest darkness, but He has also established things to be done in a certain way. We see an example in Genesis 18:22-33 where Abraham conversed with the Lord after He had told him that the end of Sodom and Gomorrah was coming.

Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD. And Abraham came near and said, "*Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?* Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare *it* for the fifty righteous that were in it? Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

So the LORD said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes."

Then Abraham answered and said, "Indeed now, I who *am but* dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose there were five less than the fifty righteous; would You destroy all of the city for *lack of* five?"

So He said, "If I find there forty-five, I will not destroy *it*."

And he spoke to Him yet again and said, "Suppose there should be forty found there?"

So He said, "I will not do *it* for the sake of forty."

Then he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Suppose thirty should be found there?"

So He said, "I will not do *it* if I find thirty there."

And he said, "Indeed now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose twenty should be found there?"

So He said, “I will not destroy *it* for the sake of twenty.”

Then he said, “Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?”

And He said, “I will not destroy *it* for the sake of ten.”

So the LORD went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

We see here that Abraham started conversing with the Lord to see if He was still going to destroy the city if there were found righteous men in it. “And Abraham came near and said, ‘*Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?*’” (Genesis 18:23, emphasis added).

After that he started to make a kind of a petition and ask Him what He would do if there were fifty righteous persons, and the Lord told him that He wouldn’t destroy the place because of these men. Abraham kept on asking and from fifty, he asked what would happen if there were forty, and then he kept on asking Him until he arrived at the number ten (Genesis 18:32).

For a long time when I read this story, I thought that when they talked, they arrived at the number of one righteous man only or they meant that without mentioning it. Then I noticed that they had stopped at the number ten, meaning that if there were at least ten righteous persons, God wouldn’t destroy the city. I also wondered why God brought the end when was at least one righteous man, Lot, but he was indeed the only one and the last number they had stopped at, while conversing, was ten.

There was only one righteous man and not ten. The one righteous man was Lot. All of this means that if there were righteous men in a certain place, God wouldn’t bring the end there. The righteous men, the Christians, preserve the earth. They are like the salt of the earth and what the salt does is preserve. This is one of the qualities for which it is used.

As it happened in the time of Sodom and Gomorrah, so it will happen in these times. Until there are no righteous men on the earth, even a few, God will not bring the end. Now, we need to

see what *few* means. If in a place like a city such as Sodom, ten were enough and that was the last number through which the judgment could've been avoided, we need to see what that will mean for the whole earth. What would be the number?

All of this means that as long as there is a hope and the potential for the gospel to be transmitted so that more people can be saved, the end won't come. People today don't know what they are doing when inventing new laws and obstacles to hinder the proclamation of the gospel. All of this is just causing the end to come sooner. The purpose of God is to reign on this earth so that the gospel can be proclaimed. And in which way it can be done if not through the Christians, as this is the way it needs to be done?

While there are believers here, He can still reign on the earth and His kingdom can be seen through those who believe. Once this becomes impossible, and the iniquity gets to an even higher level, He will have to finish everything and create a new earth on which His ultimate kingdom and justice will reign. But until then He wants to save as many persons as He can and that's why He is withholding His ultimate kingdom and justice now, for the love of those who need to be saved. There will eventually come a time in which the gospel is not available. It will be hard to be preached and transmitted.

The greatest iniquity is not just expressed in certain crimes or immorality, but mainly in taking God completely out of the picture and replacing good with evil, or better said, calling what is evil good and in this way people would not be able to see and acknowledge their own iniquity.

It is good that the laws of God are still used in our moral code but when they are removed and replaced, with the world's way of defining justice, it will be a problem. We can look at the people in past generations, for example. Speaking in general, their morals were better than those of the people today. There was still evil and immorality, but the people had to hide to do certain things and were also ashamed of them if they did them, while today the same things are done openly without any shame or regret. They are just considered by those doing them and by many others as something normal.

I am not saying that the people from the past were saints. They were also sinners who needed to repent, but their view on immorality was different. Doing many of the things that people are trying to say are acceptable today was still considered wrong. They knew when they were doing something wrong. That's the difference. When you do something wrong, you know

that you have to repent, but when the wrong you are doing is considered completely normal for you and there is no law or something to tell you it is wrong, that's a problem. This is the attitude that God doesn't accept, when people don't feel ashamed of their condition.

“Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; Nor did they know how to blush. Therefore, they shall fall among those who fall; at the time I punish them, they shall be cast down,” says the LORD” (Jeremiah 6:15).

This will be the downfall of today's society, when the knowledge of evil and good is completely distorted. It is already going in that direction, but there will be a time when that is complete. “Where *there is* no revelation, the people cast off restraint; But happy *is* he who keeps the law” (Proverbs 29:18).

Here we can see how a nation without a vision, without guidance from God, perishes. We see how our society in these days is slowly removing and changing the original laws and principles we had, which were based on the laws of God. The role of the law is not to change anyone because it can't; but at least it can show people they are wrong, which can bring them to realization of their condition and repentance. But how are they going to realize it, if they grow up and live in a society that doesn't teach them what really is right and wrong, good or evil, and has for laws and principles something else, rather than what God states? How will they know it, if what is wrong is considered something good and vice versa?

Going back to the story of Abraham and the questions he asked the Lord concerning the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, we see that they stopped at the number ten. We can compare this situation to the end times, which are about to come, as God is always the same and He will deal with situations similarly as He doesn't change throughout time.

There are couple of points and points of view here which slightly differ from each other because we also don't know the exact way things will turn at the end times. It is not something simple we can discuss and take positions on, as Jesus Himself told us there are things that we won't be able to know. He told us to be watchful and ready, which was His main message, and He told us that we won't know the exact hour He will come.

Many people have different points of view concerning the end times and they stick firmly to them. I personally don't have strong and firm convictions on all the points. I am sure and firm on what He told us about His return and that we need to be watchful and ready, which is the most

important, while I don't know the exact way or time that will happen, as some things are not meant for us to know because the Bible states so and also because most important is to be ready for it. We can know, though, if He is close as He gave us a comparison in Matthew 24:32-35 in which He says that the signs of His coming are as the leaves of a fig tree and the approaching of the summer. Just as the summer approaches when we see leaves appearing on the fig tree, so His coming is close when we see the signs.

One thing that probably doesn't directly have to do with the events of the end times but is important in our Christian life and the way we can stay watchful, is the way a believer needs to live. We can see that Lot was the only believer there and if there were at least ten, God wouldn't have destroyed the place.

I think Lot's duty was to transmit and share with the others what he knew about the Lord. We can think that he probably did it, but nobody listened to him, and we can also think that he was probably a believer who didn't pass much of his time trying to do that in his everyday life. Why? Because the moment he tried to warn his sons-in-law about the coming end, they thought he was joking (Genesis 19:14). They were probably not used to him talking on that topic or perhaps his life did not represent this image.

The other thing was that his wife looked like she was so attached to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. We know it because she looked back at the end and in this way turned into a statue of salt. It is not a question that she looked back but that she desired what was left behind. Okay, I know also that there are many believers who have families who don't share their faith, and this is something that happens. These people are still faithful to God and do everything possible for the gospel.

Lot's situation looked quite different. There was also the fact that he chose to live in places such as Sodom and Gomorrah. Yes, if someone stays in places that are ungodly and apart from the Lord with the purpose to bring a light there, that is fine and is actually what we are called to, to bring a light and to be a light. But Lot and his household's main reason was another, such as the land which they chose looked fruitful and well-watered (Genesis 13:10-11). That prevailed over God's purposes.

To all of these factors we can add the behavior of his daughters with him after their escape (Genesis 19:30-33). We can see that they weren't used to living in the right way, probably

because they didn't hear much about it and if they heard, it wasn't transmitted to them as something of prime importance. We can also say that they might have heard about it but didn't accept it. I am keen to think, though, that they didn't hear much about it.

By all of this, we can see plenty of indicators that probably Lot was not performing his duties as a believer in the best way. Yes, he was a righteous man, but he was probably keeping this righteousness for himself alone. This is not what we are called to. We need to share it. The Bible speaks about people who build on the right foundation but use materials that perish easily, such as wood, hay, straw.

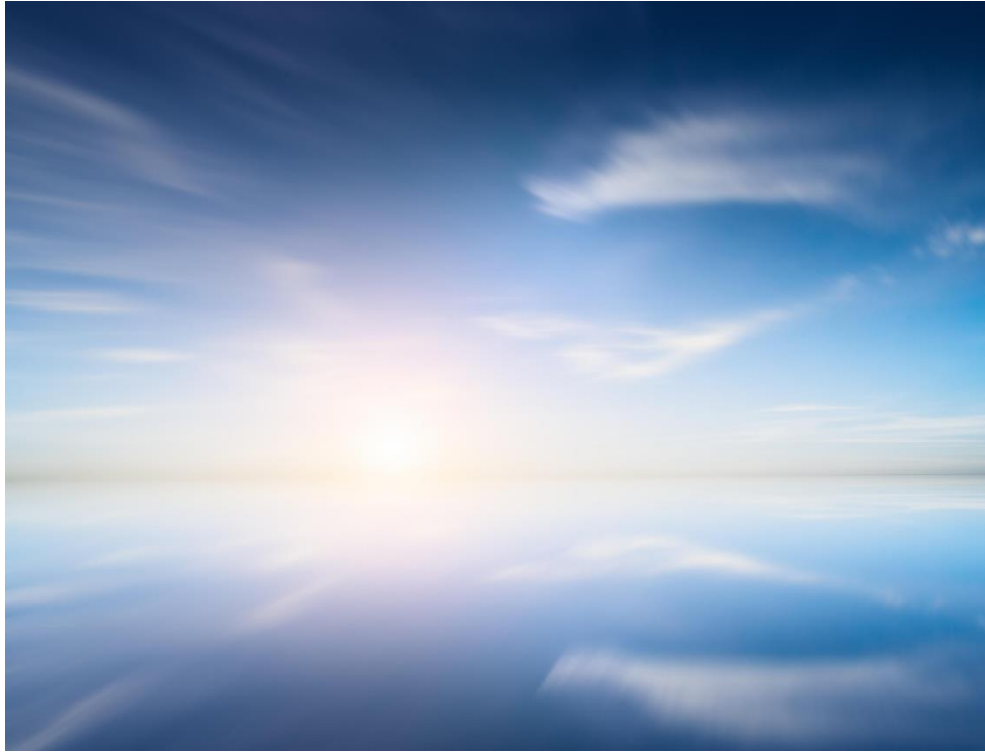
“Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire” (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

It looks like there are some persons who build with materials that endure fire and others who build with materials that do not.

They will be saved, but as through fire, the same as Lot was. I am speaking figuratively about the fire as a form of a trial. The way someone builds brings consequences obviously. I know that today there are imperfections in my life, but I would like to trust in God for that. The greatest imperfection in Lot was perhaps not in his life, but in the fact that he probably didn't share what he knew about the Lord with the others.

Going back to the topic of the end times, we can see that when there were not enough righteous people in Sodom and Gomorrah, its end came. We can compare it with the present situation. There are still righteous men on the earth, but one day when they are no more, the end will come. It will happen when there will be no more possibility for sharing the gospel. If we look at the future situation, there might be *two ways* in which there will be no more righteous persons on the earth one day. When I speak about righteous persons, I obviously speak about people who

have been saved by the Lord.



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Post-tribulation rapture

The first case we will look at and the way this can happen is that the laws and the way of life will be changed drastically, and all godliness will be taken away completely. The righteous persons will become fewer and, as in the days of Lot, he was the only one. So, in that time, those who are righteous because they are saved and Christ's righteousness has been applied to them will be very few and the Lord will take them, will rapture them and the end will come.

We see in today how the regulations prohibiting Christians from sharing the gospel with others are increasing. With the new age cultural movement and in education, Christianity and God are not welcome. This idea supports the theory of a post-tribulation rapture, meaning that the Christians will go through the great tribulation and after that, when immorality and the lawlessness are at their peak, they will be taken. Their number will decrease because of the growing opposition toward the gospel. The number of the true Christians will decrease because of the opposition, the difficulty to share the gospel, and the increasing immorality in the society. Their numbers will probably decrease because there won't any longer be so many new converts to

Christianity. I mean that the people from the new coming generation will come harder to the faith. One of the reasons will be because the gospel will be no longer available as before. It won't be preached freely as before, and it might be prohibited. We already see that it has been taken out of some of the schools. The moral values in general will be changed, the same as the times of Sodom and Gomorrah.

We hope, though, that these times will not come quickly, and we can still have opportunity to proclaim the good news. It needs to be done in any circumstance, though. There will be, however, those times when the opposition toward the gospel will grow so much that God will not be able to bear it anymore, and He will take the believers, meaning that the rapture will occur, and the end will come immediately after that, same as in the case of Lot. He was taken out of Sodom and Gomorrah, and their end came right after that. As we said before, this is the case of post-tribulation rapture and it is when the Christians go through the great tribulation and are taken after that. Whether there is a pre-tribulation or post-tribulation rapture, the end will come because there will not be believers and salt anymore on the earth. In the case of pre-tribulation rapture, it is because the believers are taken and after that the immorality and the extreme difficulty will come, so much that God will not bear it, and in the post-tribulation is when their number will decrease because of the difficulty and the opposition itself, and after that the few left will be taken (raptured). In both cases we see that the reason for which God's patience will finish will be because the iniquity will take total control and Satan will try to establish fully his kingdom here on the earth.

Pre-tribulation rapture

I support the idea of the rapture as this is biblical and I think it will happen, but I just cannot say which one it will be—pre- or post-tribulation? I don't know because God is the one who will decide when it will happen, and some things are hidden to us.

As we said already, the other way in which could happen is that the Christians will be raptured first, and the great tribulation will start then. This is the pre-tribulation rapture. So the decrease of the righteous people on the earth will happen because God will take them away. This is because He won't let them go through the exceedingly bad trials that will take place on the earth.

In both cases, the end will come when there are no longer righteous people on the earth. Surely God wants to preserve His people from the judgment. The question is whether they will be preserved from the great tribulation, or they will go through that and then be raptured after it. This is a mystery for us. What we need to do is be ready and watchful and share the good news with others.

Although the discussion we made before about the way Lot lived and what he was supposed to do seems to be somewhat off the main topic of this book, which is the end times and the signs of them, it is actually close to the matter. What we are supposed to do in these perilous times is to share the gospel as much as we can, as the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.

Again, we don't know if the rapture will happen before the great tribulation, in the midst of it, or after it. We also don't know if when the Bible in the book of Revelation speaks about the wrath of God (Revelation 11:18) it refers to the very end or the great tribulation. There are verses pointing out that the wrath of God will be poured on the earth, and it will happen over a period of time and will not just come in a moment. "Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete" (Revelation 15:1).

In this verse, we see that with the seven angels having the seven last plagues, the wrath of God is complete. This means that the wrath of God had started already before the event of the seven angels and this led us to think that this wrath doesn't represent just a single moment. If it says that with these seven angels having the seven last plagues, the wrath of God is complete, it means that it started already before that. By this we can assume that it will not happen in a way that everything will be fine and then all of a sudden, the end will come. It could happen gradually.

To me, the tribulation and the fact that God will not just end everything in a moment, means that He will do it with a purpose, so that people can reflect on their condition and repent. This is what trials are for, those we are going through now and those that will come to the whole world to draw people to Himself and to repentance. Otherwise, He would end everything in a moment without any warning. But He is a God of compassion, and He warns us about danger, about things that could happen because He doesn't want us to perish. Unfortunately, as we read throughout the Bible, there will be people who won't hear and pay attention.

Maybe we are not meant to know all things, but something will happen. When a few Christians are left and they will be not able to do much more for the kingdom because of the great opposition, then they will be taken. We are starting to see this opposition now. We didn't expect it in these times in which we are living with all of the freedom of speech and rights everyone has. It seems that Christians don't have these rights because they are shut down and oppressed while all the rest of the people are free to express themselves.

So, we don't know how much more time there will be until the total opposition to Christianity takes place, but in recent years we can see things moving in that direction.

One of the things that somehow makes me to think that there will be a rupture is the growing opposition toward it. We see the enemy's attacks on the idea of the rupture. We see media, we see certain secular movies that distort its idea, the way and the purpose with which it will happen. Haven't you thought why is that in so many science fiction movies, there have been alien abductions, people disappearing all of a sudden in a mysterious way? All of this has been represented obviously in a negative way. This is already an enemy's deceit prepared perhaps for what is about to come. When the rupture will happen one day and the people start wondering what just happened, there will be already an answer that will state probably aliens had abducted people or that something else mysterious happened. All of this will be with the purpose to distract people from the idea that God is involved in all this. Revelation 16:13-16 states that there will be a battle in the last days. That battle will be at a place called Armageddon and people will be probably fighting without knowing who they are fighting against because of the deception they will fall for.

"And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, *which* go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

"Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed *is* he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon." (Revelation 16:13-16)

They will not know they are fighting against God. They will be blinded, will follow the demons' deceit as it is said in Revelation 16:14, and will fight the battle thinking probably that are fighting against someone else. This the enemy's purpose – to distract people's minds from God. He doesn't want them to get involved with Him.

As we said, we don't know the exact way the rapture will happen. We've seen movies about it, heard stories and opinions, but the question is not how exactly, but the purpose with which it will happen. For us is nothing else left, but to listen to the Bible exhorting us to be always ready. "Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. *Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming*" (Matthew 24:40-42, emphasis added.)

Notice that these verses speak about persons that will be taken and others who will be left behind. They appear immediately before the exhortation to be watchful because we don't know the exact hour in which He is coming. We don't know when exactly the second coming of Jesus will happen and in which way. It is wrong to say and define with precision the time and the way in which it will happen. When I talk about the second coming of Christ, I am referring to the rapture as well. I am taking as a reference Matthew 24:30-31 where it says that after He appears in heaven and all the tribes see Him, He will send His angels and they will gather together His elect.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:29-32).

This passage makes us keener to think that Christians will be taken after the tribulation as verse 29 speaks about tribulation that will happen and after that in verse 30 it mentions His coming, but I'll leave everyone to decide for himself. What is certain and we know for sure is that we need to be ready.

Many people made a mistake when predicting the date throughout history. God doesn't want us to know all the things at once and some things we are not meant to know because they are

meant to be taken by faith because faith is needed for salvation. We might imagine how His coming could happen, but it might not take place that way.

For example, movies about the rapture give us an idea of what could happen and warn us to be ready, but these are just the way the movie makers imagine it could happen.

The question problem is that people want the rapture to happen tomorrow and when they don't see it happening, they start to question the Word of God. But Peter said it well in 2 Peter 3:1-4: "Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: *that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation"* (2 Peter 3:1-4, emphasis added).

We read in 2 Peter 3:8-9, "But beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

We see here the main purpose of God "delaying" His promise of coming back and redeeming His elect. It is because He still wants people to know Him and be saved. He looks differently at time from the way we do, and His eyes see much further than what we can see or imagine. He sees the complete picture of our redemption. What an amazing God we have! The best thing we can do is to trust Him!

Chapter 5

The New World Order

In this chapter we will dig deeper into today's society and the movement of the world in general since this also has to do with the end times. It is not a matter of just the signs and wonders we will see in the last days, but also the direction in which society will go. This is also a sign of the end times to which we need to pay attention.

I'll be sharing my thoughts and backing them up as much as I can with scriptures. The so-called "new world order" is a delicate topic. When I mention this phrase, I am not referring to any group or organization in particular, but to the general idea and movement of the world today and in the future. Many people have expressed themselves on this topic and have speculated about how things could be in this world in the future. I am not saying they are wrong, but on the contrary, I think some of them are right. I am not saying either that all the things I am talking about will occur exactly the way I think they will. This is just a reflection on the present situation through the light of the Scriptures.

We mustn't only look at what could or will happen in the world in order to see the future, but rather we have to see what is *already happening* and how its system works. By this we can have an idea of how the future will be. Things definitely have changed in the past years and decades, not only with the progressing and development of technology, but also with the idea and philosophy of this world.

In recent years, the world is trying to remove God from the culture, education, entertainment, sports, and much more, and this is where the problem lies. It is not in the development or the progress we are making, but in the fact that we are intentionally turning away from God, although there are still people who love and believe in God.

In past times, maybe even a couple of decades ago, God was much more involved in the educational system and the standard values of life. A child was educated to know about God's existence. That doesn't mean that everything people from that time were doing was right because surely there were people who didn't walk with God and teach His values and virtues correctly. That probably let the devil take more space and influence people with his destructive ideas

because not comprehending and announcing the gospel in the right way leaves a space for the devil to influence and give more reasons to people not to believe.

But the culture in general was more God oriented in the past. Slowly, the idea that this was old-fashioned influenced people and they started to put the name and values of God aside. All of this obviously was influenced by the devil, as we know that this world is under his rule. Obviously, everything is under God's rule, but the devil is the one behind the ideas and movements of this world. We know that his purpose is to take God off of His throne, but he will never be able to do that. In Satan's mind, he is convinced that he can turn people away from God and win the battle, but we know he will never succeed, and he will be defeated.

Obviously, people from the past were not all saints and sinned like all humans do. But the culture and education stood more behind God's values. Whether people believed or not, they knew clearly what was wrong and what was good; what pleased God and what did not.

Think of this: *If we take away the One who defines what is wrong and what is not, then slowly but surely, we will also lose the sense and the meaning of doing what is right.* I am speaking about society in general. What happens in today's society is that things that for a long time have been considered wrong and uncommon are now considered normal. We still know that these things can damage us but now they are more like a kind of a choice that each one has to make. It is like each person is free to do whatever suits him without being judged by anyone, because if someone tells him he might be wrong or warns him about something, it means that person is entering into his space and violating his rights.

But whose rights are we talking about, and which rights are the most important? Of course, human rights are important, but they need to be submitted under God's rule because if today we can feel human, it is because of God. He makes us to be real human beings, as we were designed to be. With Him we are complete. There is one way set already that is good for everyone, not just as an idea, but for life itself. This is God's way and even if we don't want to admit it, we are supposed to be part of God and His kingdom. We are created by Him.



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Each person today can do most of the things considered taboo earlier, but the problem is that no one is warning them that these things and activities will damage them because they are wrong. We need to know that God didn't invent the commandments because He wanted to invent some rules just for the sake of it. *He didn't do that just to enjoy something, but for our own good because each wrong we do actually damages us; it hurts us. And He doesn't want us to get hurt.* He knows us better than anyone and that's why He wants to save us and give us the best.

Today the world is moving in one direction. There is this oneness and unity and as soon as something new is accepted by someone or by some country, it is soon accepted by everyone else. Now we see that some drugs, for example, have been legalized. Prostitution is also legal in some countries. Things that obviously have been done since the beginning of societies, but the difference is that people before at least knew that those things were wrong. I mean they knew clearly that they were in the wrong while doing those things.

Choosing immoral activities today is considered nothing more than the choices everyone can make in life. The difference is that when you know something is wrong, you at least can

acknowledge it as sin, as something wrong and repent. That's why the law is needed as the Bible tells us. "But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully" (1 Timothy 1:8). We read in Galatians 3:24, "Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

This is the purpose of the law: to show us the reality of sin, to reveal our sin, so that we can know we've broken His laws and repent. But how can someone do that today, if many of the things that are wrong in God's eyes are considered right? Who is going to be brave enough to reveal to people their wrong deeds and show them that they are wrong? It cannot be done easily in our days because it is considered entering someone's private space and judging his rights. These are today's greatest values—human rights. Human rights have been violated in the past and still are today in many parts of the world, and as a result people today are trying to defend as much as possible those rights but doing it in their own way and excluding the One who really can help us to do that.

There have also been people doing things in the name of God in an incorrect way, which has produced turning away from and rejection of the truth and placing human rights in first place. This happens when the truth is not brought to light in the right way. Of course, abuse of the human rights in the past was wrong, but now we have gone to the other extreme and much harm is coming from the so-called rights to live any way you wish to without regard for right and wrong as taught in the Bible.

Legalization of what was considered wrong, such as prostitution and certain drugs, may seem to make things easier for the governments as they control this activity and collect massive fees from it with people doing it out in the open instead of hiding. The income from these activities goes directly into the pockets of the governments and the whole system who runs them.

Legalizing activities that have been considered wrong throughout history gives the appearance of having the activities more controlled and monitored. Across the world, this kind of system is being pushed. Globalization is definitely here and spreading. Many countries are following the example of others on how laws and governance must be applied. All this gives the appearance that if it is legal, it must be okay to do. It takes away people's ability to know right from wrong if they don't have a solid standard based on truth, the Bible, to inform them.

And this is the problem. I don't want to be a pessimist, but if what was considered taboo thirty years ago and now is "normal," what will happen in the future with what now is still considered taboo? That is a horrifying thought when you think of children and young people and what will be done to them and what they will be allowed to do to themselves. What kind of country can survive when its people are all destroyed by immorality of one kind or another? Will everything just be a matter of choice? Like abortion, or murder, as an example, things that now are considered unthinkable and unacceptable.

This is a scary thought, but it might happen if so-called human rights to choose allow individuals to think that anything they "choose" is right for them, and this is what is most important today. Matthew 24:12 says that in the last times, lawlessness will increase. We can see it happening today. "And because *lawlessness will abound*, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:12-14). Come quickly, Lord Jesus.

I believe this is lawlessness in God's eyes, something that He sees as lawlessness. Something that goes against His laws and principles. This is not necessarily something considered wrong before human tribunals, because men's laws have changed in this past time and will keep on changing. Many times, today what is considered right according to human laws is actually wrong before God. By this we can conclude that the lawlessness about which Matthew 24 speaks will probably not be lawlessness or something wrong in the view of human authority and their law system, but before God. There will be also a lack of the law, a lack of God's Word to guide people and to determine right and wrong and guide people into the right way. *So, there might be people in those days who practice lawlessness that is something wrong in front of God, but not wrong according to men's law.* And why? Because this will be the way and direction the world will go, as we already see now, totally against the God's law.

We can add to this same-sex marriage, something against our nature and the way God established things to be is now considered normal, a matter of choice, human choice. I am not saying that God doesn't love the homosexuals or that we need to reject them. On the contrary, we need to show them God's love and let them know there is still an opportunity for them to repent. They need that like anyone else on this planet because everyone is a sinner and needs to repent and accept the truth.

There is nothing wrong with being united because the Bible speaks about getting united but for the right cause, in the name of Jesus. But some people do that, but in the name of humanity, or of man, rejecting and leaving God aside. Something similar happened a long time ago when the people were trying to build the tower of Babel.

Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. Then they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said, "Come let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." (Genesis 11:1-4)

From the following verses, we know that after this God confused their language and they couldn't understand each other any longer. All of this was because they were not united in the right way and with the right purpose. The Bible says that they wanted to make a name for themselves, meaning that they wanted to do it for their glory and wanted to be like God.

Something very similar is happening now. People are getting united. It hasn't happened yet, but this is their ultimate desire and vision for the future. There is this sense of unity. We see it and we hear about it everywhere. Humanity has set this goal in front of them. There is nothing wrong with being united and I am not saying anything against it. I am just discussing the reason for which the humankind is getting together. People indeed will be united one day, where no nation and no color will be important and all of them will be one in the name of the Lord, but this will be in heaven and there they will be together in the name of the Lord. What is wrong is when people are getting united in their own name and excluding the Lord. It is when the general movement of this unity excludes Him and encourages whoever belongs to this movement to do the same.

The problem is that this movement goes in the opposite direction of the Lord's principles and teachings. So, if someone would like to believe in God, he or she will be suppressed and if the majority of the world goes in that direction away from God, it will be difficult for someone to hear the Word and believe. How is that someone believes? It happens when he hears the Word, he hears about God who is mighty to save. The gospel is meant to be shared. The culture in which we live is of huge importance. If our culture has Christian values and the gospel has been shared, then obviously people will hear about God and believe. But if the culture or the educational system doesn't allow this to happen, obviously fewer and fewer people will accept and believe.

Cultural influence regarding Christianity is not everything because on one side people can get used to it and take it as something granted, but it is obviously important because if we don't have it, the risk is that fewer people will hear clearly about the truth and be able to consider it important.

Obviously, I am speaking of what might happen in the future, but the way things are going it looks like this time is close. The influence and the environment in which we live play an important part. It is important that there is Christian education and influence in our society. This is not all, but it is necessary. How will people learn of or consider the love of God if the widespread belief in these present times is to be selfish and look out only for yourself? Of course, people will not always plainly say you need to be selfish, but they say, "You can be whatever you want, you only need to pursue your idea and your dreams."

Having ambitions and dreams is not wrong but encouraging people to be and do whatever they want without regard for others and whether what they do might hurt or offend them, is wrong. It is selfish to do whatever we want without regard for others and for God. Obviously, God doesn't want us only to suffer and not feel pleasure at all. The pleasure is included in His will. We also feel real pleasure when we please Him with our lives. But the pleasure the world promises us if we follow its ideas is not good. We feel much better when we experience the pleasure of being with God and serving and pleasing Him. Without Him, our lives are not complete. He is the missing part in us.

I know that it sounds as a high expectation, but I have to say that Christians are needed even in politics, although some would disagree. The United States, for example, was founded on biblical principles intended to make it a godly nation and Christians need to be active and participate today so that godly values and influence can be brought to bear. God calls us to influence society in a positive way toward the gospel.

That's why believers are called the salt and the light of this world. Obviously, in the times in which we are living, this can be difficult to do because governments are linked with the world movement and where it is leading. In the past, Christians had the opportunity to hold important roles and places in society in order to influence the people in a positive and Christian way, but now the Christian worldview is often not welcome in the public arena.

Also, some people say that religion is harmful and can cause wars and violence. God is against violence and suffering and He offers all of us, no matter what we have forgiveness through Jesus if we repent and turn to Him. Nevertheless, some believe that religion is the main reason for conflicts and violence, and they want to remove it from society. Their attempt to do this is a problem for humankind in their lives and also before God.

Seeing all of this, we can conclude that the end is approaching. We cannot say when exactly and maybe it won't happen tomorrow. Maybe there will still be a couple of generations or maybe not, we don't know, but the way things are going we can see these end-times events approaching.

The end will come when there is complete ungodliness and lawlessness is at its peak. This is the direction in which the world is going. By lawlessness I don't mean only havoc and criminal activity, but actions and activities that go against the law of God throughout the world system.

What is evil has become good for us and what good, evil, as the Bible says in Isaiah 5:20: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"

These are the signs defining that the end times are approaching, not only the new viruses and wars coming onto the scene. We know that these things have always been happening and will continue, but the greatest evidence is the way this world reasons and the direction in which it is going. When the virus came first (I am referring to Covid 19), many people thought it was evidence of the end, but it could or could be either evidence of the end or something else. What really shows us that the end is approaching is the way the human race reasons and the general ideas accepted by the world today. Man has obviously sinned, but the current ideas that exclude God are now being promoted by both society and the law. That makes the difference.

I am speaking about the law given to us by the authorities. I am not promoting rebellion against the authorities, as the Bible says we need to be submitted to them, but here is my point. In general, each country and state have their own regulations and laws, but with time these regulations have become generalized and globalized. In a way, right and wrong are dictated by what the general worldwide movement dictates. The pressure is too much when each government or structure decides something important apart of the others.

The law that we used to know is slowly being modified by what society and the world movement are doing. The question is that we as humans don't have a limit. We go too much to

one limit or too much to the other. Speaking about laws and regulations, people have been either too strict or too loose. This is what we are witnessing now: people in the past were perhaps too conservative and now they have gone to the other limit. This happens when we are not led by the Spirit of God, who brings an understanding of how to apply properly the law of God. The law and regulations we find in the Bible should be enough to allow our society to live in peace, if applied properly.

Men have tried to apply these same laws, but not in the right way and have pushed people away from the truth instead of bringing them closer. Now people are going to the other limit, being overly liberal in some cases where disobedience is tolerated and even encouraged, thinking that this will sort out the situation. I admit that people have been extreme and overly strict with their lifestyle before, but now it is the other way around.

What we need instead is to apply this in a balanced way and with understanding. Human rights have been trampled in the past—women have been abused and kids have been exploited, things that today we obviously condemn. This is the other extreme and sometimes people who called themselves men of God have mistaken parts of the Bible and acted like dictators in their families. This doesn't mean that kids shouldn't respect their parents or women their husbands as also the husbands need to take care of their families and love them as Christ did the church.

The Bible warns us about how some people will act in the last days: "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!" (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Here the apostle Paul describes how people will be in the last days, and it sounds very much like society in general today. I am not saying all the people are this way, but that this is the general idea of how the people behave today. This is a sign of the end times, the way the culture and the world are going. Usually when the signs of the end times are discussed, people refer to wars and pestilences, something we are going through now, but we also need to know that there have been wars and pestilences throughout history. Of course, that in the last times, they will be more concentrated, but these are not the main signs and not the only reason the end will come.

The main reason that triggers all the rest of the events is the way people are living and behaving—far from God. This is the reason wars happen and God will not be able to bear with people anymore, because of the increased iniquity and lawlessness. This is what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah long ago.

In past times, only people in some places behaved in an extremely sinful way. But today, because of globalization and the easily transmitted influence we have, almost the whole world is following the same direction.

People have always sinned and behaved in the way described in 2 Timothy 3:1-5, but the difference is that today this kind of behavior is transmitted, accepted, and promoted by the society. We can even say that these are some of the values in today's days. Through movies, media and entertainment is promoted to be unforgiving and to revenge. Adultery also looks as something common, and it is promoted too. Certain things that were widely deemed to be wrong are not considered wrong anymore. In the past, people were ashamed and hid certain wrong actions they did, while today they do them openly because there is no law or morality to tell them it is wrong. This leads us to think we are on the way to the end.

This is about the abomination of the desolation standing in the holy place, which Daniel speaks about in Daniel 11:31, and it is also mentioned in the Gospels, including in Matthew 24:15. We don't know for sure if this verse refers to the antichrist himself or just sin and the way it will be exalted by society because speaking about something standing on the holy place means that this thing will stand in the place of God and will be exalted instead of Him. This will also provoke the desolation, meaning that God will totally leave the people on their own. Then the end will come soon. We are probably not living yet in these times, but we see how certain things that are sinful are being exalted.

“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34).

Why do the nations rage,
And the people plot a vain thing?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, *saying*,

“Let us break Their bonds in pieces
And cast away Their cords from us.”

He who sits in the heavens shall laugh;
The Lord shall hold them in derision.
Then He shall speak to them in His wrath,
And distress them in His deep displeasure:
“Yet I have set My King
On My holy hill of Zion.”

“I will declare the decree:
The LORD has said to Me,
‘You *are* My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
Ask of Me, and I will give *You*
The nations *for* Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession.
You shall break them with a rod of iron;
You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.’ ”

Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.
Serve the LORD with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,
And you perish *in* the way,
When His wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him. (Psalm 2:1-12)

This is what the nations have always desired to do and in today more than ever—to stray from the Lord and be independent from Him, to be as far from Him as they can be. Even if they don’t fully realize it, the human spirit in them is against Him continuously strays from the Lord. This is what our flesh wants to do—to live for itself instead of believing in and submitting to the

Lord. It is the spirit of this world and the evil coming from the devil, but it is also our own beings and flesh that stray from the Lord.

Both individuals and the nations as a whole all want to stray from the Lord. Because a nation is composed of persons, the spirit and the ideology of these persons will define that nation. He wants to reach each one of those nations. And this is what will happen: He will bring justice to those who have been against His laws and statutes but will bring eternal peace to those who have believed in His name and honored Him.

“And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bondservants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth” (Revelation 11:18).

One day every tongue will confess that Jesus is the Lord, and every knee will bow and acknowledge Him. What will remain from these nations in heaven, will be those who have believed and accepted Him. They will be saved and will live in the Holy City, in the new Jerusalem coming down of heaven from God. “Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; all the nations shall serve Him” (Psalm 72:11).

“His name shall endure forever; His name shall continue as long as the sun. And men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed” (Psalm 72:17).

When I speak about a new world order, I am not referring to any particular group or society that will establish it. Even if there are groups or societies that want to do that, it is not actually them doing it, but the spirit of this world who lives in the sons of disobedience who do not know God as Ephesians 2:2 states: “In which you once walked according to the *course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air*, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.”

And this in general is everyone who doesn't know God and doesn't have His Spirit in his heart. Someone might be thinking that the present condition we are in is the fault of some group or persons or a country or society and if they were not there, then things would be in a better way. Our battle, though, as Ephesians 6:12 describes it, is not against flesh or blood, meaning that it is not against persons, and it is not their fault. It is the spirit of this world, the spirit of the air that moves all of these persons and world rulers and also other common people to make the decisions

they are making. If they were not there, then surely someone else would do it. This new world movement, however, wants to exclude God from society and from the culture in general.

More than any other religion, Christianity has been restricted and suffers assaults in the past and today. We are not speaking about places where Christianity is openly persecuted, but even places where the Christianity has been the main belief. It appears that everyone has rights, but often it is not so when it comes to the Christian faith.

Today we can also see something else coming on the political scene. Obviously as we said, it is not just political parties or ideology we are talking about here, but the spirit behind those beliefs. We see that the world is busy directing itself toward a socialistic movement. Why am I saying that? Because we see a kind of unity and desire for social justice and equality, although till now socialism and communism have proved not to be able to accomplish that. Millions have been murdered under these ideologies. But there are some good values we can find in socialism such as equity, justice and unity, and this doesn't sound bad at all. The problem is that they wanted to achieve it through men's wisdom and vision, excluding God, and this is where the corruption came. It is impossible to achieve those values in a society without Him. He is the real author of unity and justice. They come from Him and any other attempt to achieve them, will result in failure. This is what also happened with communism in the past. This is the reason of its failure. I am not expressing myself directly against it; I am against the spirit behind it. The problem, as we said, is when you exclude God. It was God who started unity and equality as we read in the book of Acts. There we see the first believers breaking bread together and sharing all of their possessions amongst them (Acts 4:34).

“For I do not mean that others should be eased, and you burdened; but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack – that there may be equality. As it is written, ‘He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack’ ” (2 Corinthians 8:13-15).

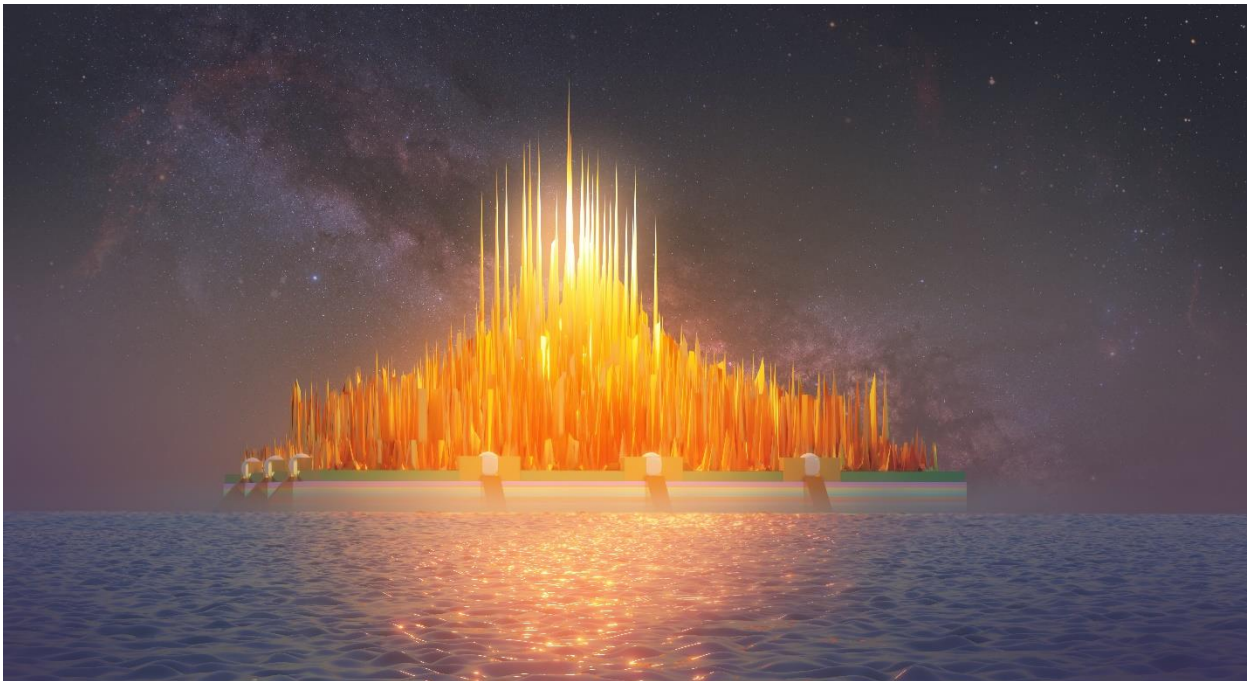
Later on in the history people took this idea and created communism and socialism, but without placing God in the center. On the contrary, they excluded Him. And when you don't place Him in the center, then problems and confusion come. Then it becomes an idea built just on a human ideology.

Many political parties have good ideas; the problem is that God has been left aside. These ideas of socialism and communism have always been against the belief in God and the Christian faith. Today we see that it looks like this kind of ideology is coming back, not in the same form as it was before, but with the same principles.

Why? Because everyone is craving unity, and they think this is the way to accomplish it. The desire of people for the future is to subject everything under one system. Something else that the world aims at today is one world currency and having in this way everything centralized into one banking system, and this is pretty much the same as it was at the time of communism, when there was a central bank that was managing everything under the rule of the state. That one wasn't of much success, but today humanity has advanced and having one world currency will apparently ease the trade between countries and will have everything under control to prevent unnecessary debts and fraud. Having almost everything digitalized today could also make this possible. All this as the other ideas the world is having, sound really nice, and this is what will draw people toward this idea, but at the same time it is the purpose and the idea standing behind it that are not right. This in a way is paving the way to the idea of the antichrist with the mark of the beast described in the book of Revelation 13:16, 17. Without the mark no one will be able to buy or sell and this points out to something like one world currency. I am not saying that one world monetary system is straight away the mark of the beast, but it is something that probably precedes it. I am not pointing either which exactly will be this mark, but I am just stating that what we see now, I mean the desire people are having now and the direction in which the world goes could be the beginning. I think that obviously when that time comes, the believers will be aware and all of this will have to do with the worship toward one system, idea and a person which will be the antichrist. This is just a theory, and I am not saying that it will be exactly this way, but I am just observing the present situation. As people cannot control everything, they prefer this kind of idea that places everything under one rule, exactly as the Bible describes that it will happen. It says in the book of Revelation that everyone (who doesn't follow God) will follow the beast. "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" (Revelation 13:3). "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" (Revelation 13:7).

This passage describes the world getting united but under the wrong rule and person. We see this kind of idea being planted and promoted today. No one obviously knows and understands the consequences of it. There's nothing wrong with coming together, but when God is excluded, then it is not a good way.

Speaking about these kinds of ideologies and movements, I am not saying either that any other human rule or idea is better. We mustn't place our trust in men when it comes to this. The best way is God's way, and His rule is the best one. We need to place our trust in Him in each circumstance. All the human kingdoms and rulers will fall, but His kingdom will endure forever.



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“And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.” (Daniel 2:44)

“I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13-14).

Even if men want to, they will never be able to bring perfection into this world. The ultimate perfection will come with the rule of Christ over everything. Our main duty is not to be against anyone but to trust in Him and to proclaim His kingdom, so that more people can hear and come to Him. This is the only way the kingdom of darkness can be defeated.

Chapter 6

Babylon and the Last Times

Before going to the main point of this chapter, we will repeat again some of the topics we discussed in the previous chapters as they are important, and we need to keep them in mind. They are also pertinent to the topic of this chapter. We are living in very intriguing times. We cannot say that we are surely in the very last times (or maybe we can?), but we can at least see the signs that precede them, the signs that Jesus spoke about in the Gospels.

“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer *is* near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Matthew 24:32-35).

He was speaking about the signs through which we are going to see if the last times are approaching. He never spoke of the exact day or hour, and I am also not pointing to that. But let's reflect on certain passages of the Bible having to do with prophecies and compare them with today's time and ideologies.

We also need to keep in mind that the events of the last times don't occupy a short period of time, but most probably a much longer period of time. God measures and looks at time from a different perspective. For us, fifty years are a long period of time, but for Him obviously not. When we see, for example, that certain events written about in the Bible concerning the end times happen, we quickly think that the end is about to come. We even start pointing to dates and times and when it doesn't happen, we get discouraged and some people start asking in the same way as people from old asked: “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation” (2 Peter 3:4).

It's not the way we think most of the time. We are just being impatient as this is a topic that most people find interesting, new, and intriguing, especially if they think it is about to happen. Many people focus more on the event, than on what is essential which is what Jesus wants to teach us, while pointing us to the events of the last times. *And that is to be ready, to be watchful*

and be saved. “Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming” (Matthew 24:42).

The main thing He was teaching when telling people about the last time events was the need to watch, to be aware of the false teaching in these times, and not to be like Lot’s wife who set her sight in the wrong direction. All of these things have to do with our spiritual condition and the way we live.

If we don’t focus on being alert and watching for Him, it will be useless to keep on trying to figure out and inquire about the end times. *The main thing to do is to be ready for them.* How do we get ready? By having a relationship with our Lord.

Speaking about signs, however, in these past decades that have been so rushed and innovative, there are indeed some signs that point to what could happen in the last times. We see the direction that in general this world has taken. All of this globalization and putting God always on one side, confirms that the last times are approaching. I am speaking about the very last times, as we know that the last times began the moment Jesus died and was resurrected for us. Since then, the Bible addresses the times in which we live as “the last times” (1 Peter 1:20, 1 John 2:18). “He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in *these last times* for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God” (1 Peter 1:20-21). This verse mentions “the last times” as something that occurred since Christ died and was resurrected. It says that He was manifested in “these last times.” The Bible calls the period of time since Jesus “the last times” because it was the last hope and opportunity for mankind to repent and find a solution. There is a difference though between “the last times” and the “very last times” or better said some of the events for which the book of Revelation talks about called also “the great tribulation” as mentioned in the Gospels.

“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:21). He first speaks about wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places (Matthew 24:4-7). He said that these are the beginning of the sorrows. We see these signs happening right now in front of us in an accelerated way, even though He also said that we mustn’t be terrified when we hear of things such as wars and commotions as they must come to pass first, but the end won’t come immediately (Luke 21:9).

The question is, was He referring perhaps to the First and Second World Wars or to the wars and commotion happening now? We can assume that He was including the two world wars, which in this way could also be a part of the last times' prophecies. We don't know this for sure; we just need to be ready.

Then He continues to mention certain signs that accompany the great tribulation, such as the abomination of desolation mentioned in the book of Daniel. Immediately after the tribulation, the sun will be darkened, the stars of heaven will fall (which might indicate meteorites), and the powers of heaven will be shaken (Matthew 24:29).

I am not saying that we are living in those times or that they will come tomorrow, as God measures differently the times and what He considers as "soon" or a short period of time, which for us might be much longer. Some of the signs have probably already happened, even a while ago. What happens is that when we see a sign or something telling us that we are close, we quickly think that it will come tomorrow and when it doesn't, we get discouraged and we lose confidence. But for God, a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like a day. He looks differently at time. Many people think that those times should come quickly, not considering that if for us fifty or hundred years are a lot, for Him it is not so, and He is patient and waits for people to repent.

There are two major books dealing more precisely with this topic—the book of Revelation and the book of Daniel. In the book of Daniel, we read:

Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height *was* sixty cubits *and* its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. And King Nebuchadnezzar sent *word* to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. *Then a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and*

worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”

So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, *and* lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down *and* worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever! You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up.”

Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, “*Is it* true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, *that* you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, *good!* But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who *is* the god who will deliver you from my hands?”

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that *is the case*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not

serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.” (Daniel 3:1-18, emphasis added)

We see here a situation that happened in Babylon, the greatest empire of that time around 580 BCE. To better understand the book of Daniel, we need to know what Babylon actually represents. The book of Daniel is full of prophecies concerning the last times. Daniel interpreted dreams King Nebuchadnezzar (the king of Babylon) was had. One was about the last times. Daniel himself had visions and dreams about the last times, the coming of the Messiah, that is Jesus Christ, and His return (Daniel chapters 7, 8, 10, 11, 12). So we can conclude that this book has to do with prophecies that have been accomplished and with the times about to come.

Another prophetic book in the Bible is the book of Revelation. Obviously, we can find prophetic passages in the Gospels, as well as in other books in the Bible, but these two specifically, the book of Revelation and the book of Daniel, are more centered on this topic. We can see how these two go hand in hand, completing and confirming each other. What is interesting is that in Revelation the name Babylon appears again (Revelation 14:8, 16:19, 17:5 et al). And this is obviously after the end of this empire as it was written after that and concerns times to come. It means that some place or country in the future will have many similarities with that empire. I personally don't believe that it will be literally called Babylon, but it is just compared for its similarities. “And another angel followed, saying, “*Babylon* is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” (Revelation 14:8, emphasis added).

This name has been used since ancient times when the people united and wanted to build the tower of Babel that was supposed reach up to heaven so they could make a name for themselves. “And they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; *let us make a name for ourselves*, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth’ ”

(Genesis 11:4, emphasis added).



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Babel and Babylon are written in a similar way in Hebrew and the people of that period started building the tower of Babel (which means confusion, as there their languages were confused) in the same place where the Babylonian empire appeared later.

They wanted to do something, but they wanted to do it apart from God. Obviously, this didn't please Him, and He confused their languages because they got together to build a name for themselves. He didn't want them to do that as that was going to drive them further away from Him. It was going to bring them *pride*, something God really cannot bear. In His nature He cannot accept it. So for their own good, to prevent them from sinning further, He confused their languages (Genesis 11:7-8).

This is very similar to what is happening today. People and nations have the desire to get united, and there's nothing wrong with it if it was done with the right purpose, but they are doing it in their own name, to bring glory to themselves. This is what is actually happening. The people

are putting God more and more aside and the idea of getting strong and together not in His name, but in the name of the humanity is increasing.

Why is this wrong? Even if at first sight, it seems good. It is because rejecting God is not good for us. We are meant to be with God. To be together with Him. We are His creation, and we are part of Him. We cannot exist without Him. What is keeping us now in this world is His mercy, giving us a chance to repent and accept Him. Unfortunately for some people, this mercy and opportunity will eventually end and they will find themselves definitely separated from Him. Then they will see what that really means. We have to make the most of this time of mercy, to accept Him. The people, however, uniting and putting God aside, not knowing what they are actually doing.

Looking at the situation in the empire of Babylon in the time of Daniel, we see that it was an empire with various nations under its rule. Amongst those nations were also God's people (the nation of Israel). Why do we compare or better said, why does the Bible compare this empire (Babylon) with what will happen in the last times, as it mentions it again in the book of Revelation?

We see that exactly in this empire—Babylon—is where Daniel received the visions and revelations of the prophecies concerning the last times, likely because there were many nations united under one rule, in this case the empire of Babylon. In the same way, in the future there will be nations united under one rule. The book of Revelation speaks about a ruler who is figuratively called the beast. It says that all the world marveled and followed the beast (Revelation 13:3-4), so we can assume that it will be a ruler.

The book of Daniel also speaks about a ruler who will come in the last times and make war against the saints, speak against the Most High, and intend to change times and laws (Daniel 7:25). A large part of the book of Daniel deals with prophecies about the future. It includes prophecies concerning the first coming of Jesus as well as His second coming and the very last times (Daniel 12:4, 9). For these reasons, we can conclude that this book is prophetic in many aspects and even in its story in general. That's why Babylon is also mentioned in the book of Revelation. There will be many similarities between what will happen in the future and what Babylon was in the past.

It was not by chance that God gave these prophetic revelations to Daniel when he was in Babylon. He could've given them to any other prophet in any other time, but He chose this time and place, and we know God never does things by chance, but with a purpose instead. We can see in general how the kingdom of Babylon can be compared to the future one that is about to come.

However, when we read the story in Daniel 3 when King Nebuchadnezzar erected a golden statue and all the people of all the nations and languages were compelled to bow down and worship that statue, we see a similarity with what is going on in Revelation 13 when again people of all nations and languages will be compelled to bear the mark of the beast and worship the beast. That is something that will not please God and He will oppose. We see how these two situations, the one in Daniel 3 and the one in Revelation 13, are very similar and they confirm the way things will happen. Babylon is also mentioned in the book of Revelation.

What the world aims at today is unity and peace. It doesn't sound bad at all and it is something right to do. The problem as we said before, is that they are trying to achieve it without God. Jesus said: "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad" (Matthew 12:30). Even though there are still conflicts and separations in the world today, this is what they desire. This is the vision they have for peace. We know that the only prince of peace is Jesus Christ and one day He will bring the ultimate peace. The problem is that even having good desires, man cannot achieve that till he surrenders to God. The enemy is aware of this desire people are having and will come one day to offer a solution they will accept. This will obviously be a deceit in which many nations and almost the whole world will fall. Many nations will be probably gathered as one, but not in the right cause. Same as there were many nations united together in the time of the Babylonian empire.

"Then a herald cried aloud, 'To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, *that* at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up" (Daniel 3:4-5).

"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" (Revelation 13:15).

These are two passages found in two different books, Daniel and Revelation. They are similar events and one has already happened, but the way it happened is similar to the way it should happen one day. We read that in both situations people were compelled to worship someone and doing otherwise would cost their lives. That's why we are making this comparison between the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation. That's why not by chance Daniel received the visions at that time while he was in the Babylonian empire, and that's why this book has a prophetic character. What happened in ancient Babylon could be just a shadow of what will happen in the new one, that, we repeat, might not bear the same name, but spiritually could be similar.

There will be a time where it won't be important who you are or where you are from or which religion you follow, as long as you do what you are told to do and go with the flow. The freedom often spoken of today refers to the right to be whoever or whatever you desire to be. We are speaking about those so-called human rights that are above everything in today's society and rule our governments and the decisions they make. We are not talking of genuine human rights that look really for everyone's good in a right way. Everyone today is looking for his rights, but they many times are based on selfishness with no regard to the other person. This is because of our fallen nature. If it wasn't for this, we wouldn't have problems and persons wouldn't be harmed because of some other person's interest. Our human nature is governed by sin and therefore is leading us to self-destruction. Why? Because we lack God in our lives and when we lack Him, we are governed by our instincts and passions, which are led by sin.

For these reasons, we can conclude that it is not good to be led by human rights only as we see how they constantly change and we can't find peace in our hearts, and we want more of everything. There are good human rights, obviously, and people who fight for freedom. But freedom to pursue genuine happiness and live peacefully is different from the kind of freedom that basically allows us to do anything that hides itself behind "human rights." Human rights are supposed to be good for men. It is a human right for people to know about their Creator and be reconciled with Him. Why? Because this is in their favor.



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Nevertheless, there will be times (and already are) when not the good and profitable rights will be exalted, but the rights and freedom of expressing ourselves in a sinful way. This decay will nevertheless come with a price. People will be required to submit to ungodliness and do things that are against God's principles. I have to be clear that believers are required by the Bible to submit to the authorities, but there will be a time when what we are told to do will be against God's principles, just as the people of Babylon were compelled to bow down and worship someone and something that were not God (Daniel 3:4-6). Those with discernment will know that these things are wrong.

In the Babylonian empire, it wasn't a matter of whether you were a Jew or an Assyrian or something else. Daniel's friends were thrown into the fire, not because of their religion or because they were called Jews, but because they actually listened to what God commands. They obeyed God and did His will by not bowing to the statue King Nebuchadnezzar had erected. This is what makes the difference in us as believers, not that we are merely called Christians, but because we actually obey and listen to what God says.

There might not be an issue in the future if you are called a Christian, but if you actually obey and do God's will and follow His principles, there will be trouble. Many people will

probably be deceived by this matter, as many think that to be called a Christian or a believer is enough. They may think that since the authority (the system) allows them to be called Christians, everything is fine.

Since the beginning we see that God's people got in trouble not because they were called by that name, but because they followed and obeyed God. And even if after they were persecuted for the sake of that name, for being called Christians, it was because someone who came before followed God's will and principles under that name and made a difference.

The name "Christian" means a follower of Christ and was given for the first time in Antioch to the believers there (Acts 11:26). With time this name kind of lost its true meaning as the persecution ended in part and today many people are called Christians just because of the geographical area where they live or because they might like some of the ideas Christianity represents.

With time, the meaning of the name "Christian" has faded away and persecution in the future may not be the result of the name of the denomination one belongs to but will be based on whether you are actually following Christ's ways. If we follow Him really, we know that there are things we will not do because they are sinful, and they don't fit with our nature anymore.

With the purported unity and freedom proclaimed in the end times, there will be probably freedom of belief (as it is already today), many religions will be promoted and surely Christianity will be among them. The problem will be with those who truly follow the principles of God and will not obey the system submitted to the beast. Those Christians will be true believers, just as today when many people go to church and belong to the Christian religion, but how many of them truly believe?

Because the enemy has been always crafty, he will find a way to blind and deceive people. He will persecute the people who really follow God, and many will probably bear the name of Christians, but will not be persecuted because they will not do the will of God (that will be the problem) and will follow the beast. They will even think that all is fine with them in front of God, as they will be still called Christians. Many people will be deceived by that in those days.

But we must not be deceived because we are called to follow in His footsteps and His way rather than just bearing His name outwardly. The enemy (the devil) is smart, and he knows how best to deceive people. There are many Christian denominations today and we cannot say that all

of them really follow Christ's way. The enemy has found a new way to blind us. The Word of God says also that there will be many false Christs in the last times, and they will probably come with partial truths to deceive people.

In the Babylonian empire, some Jews actually did what God said by not bowing down to the golden statue, while others might have done so. *Only those who actually did what God said by not bowing down to the golden statue made the difference and only they were persecuted.* The Scripture confirms that in the last times people will be forced to put a mark on themselves and the real believers, those who were bought by the blood of the Lamb, will not put it on. There will probably be people in that time that will be called believers—Christians but will not do what God commands.

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’ ” (Matthew 7:21-22).

I am not exalting here the works that someone can do. Obviously, we are saved by faith, but if that faith is in us, it will cause us to follow and obey God's will. In this passage from Matthew, we see what really matters is to do God's will. When someone is a real believer, he will do that because it is in him, because God lives in him. In ancient Babylon, it wasn't any problem where you were from in the Babylonian empire, or to which nation you belonged, but whether you obeyed what you were told to do. “There is not a problem what you want to be, you are free to choose, or what do you want to believe, just do what we tell you to do and the moment we tell you.” This is how the situation with the authorities was probably looking like at the times of ancient Babylon, and they were probably holding this opinion. This is how it could be also in the times to come.

Christians obviously obey the law, but when they are told to do something that is clearly against God's will, they won't do it. They will be recognized by this. Many people will probably be deceived in the last times because they will be given the freedom to be called Christians or whatever else, but when they are told to do something according to the laws and the system at the time, that will be wrong in God's eyes, they will have to do it. I just think that it will be in this way.

Christians will not be persecuted just because of the name they bear, but because of doing God's will. They will do God's will by not following the system of the world. People in today's days are already doing this, but in the time to come, this way and system of the world will be compulsory to follow. I am not trying to suggest what the exact cause for the believers not to obey the system will be, or what the mark of the beast will represent. There will be some specific reason for which they will not place it on themselves. I am just trying to point out what stands behind it. It will have to do with worship, as in both cases, in the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation, people were required to bow down and worship something else rather than God. That's why they refused to do it.

“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that *is the case*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up’ ” (Daniel 3:16-18).

They were firm in their decision because they clearly knew the One they served. Nevertheless, when they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace, they encountered Jesus there and were delivered (Daniel 3:23-25). But the fire did not deter them as they told him that even if they were not delivered, they were still going to be firm in their decision not to bow down to any other god but God whom they served.

Some people will be persecuted and killed in the last times. Not all will end up in this way probably, but all will go through fire, which represents trials. Even today when we choose not to bow down to the world, we go through fiery trials. Moments like this also strengthen our faith. This is where we also meet Jesus. Perhaps the idea of global persecution of Christianity might sound awkward today, but we see another event taking place today, which is the return of paganism and idol worshiping, which becomes more popular by the day. There are people from Greece worshiping Zeus, people from Nordic countries - Thor and Odin, and many others returning to their ancient deities or witchcraft, which is also quite popular today. What does this mean? The real believers and followers of Christ have always been few and will be few in the future but with all these events happening, like people returning to their former beliefs and paganism, Christianity will slowly lose ground and popularity with time. At least real and pure Christianity as we know it.

There will probably be certain water-washed Christian doctrines and people called Christians, but real Christianity based on sound biblical doctrine will lose popularity. This will open the door to persecution. No one wants to go against something popular and acknowledged by the majority, but when there will be a small minority left of it, same as the beginning of the Christian faith at the times of ancient Rome, it will happen. And this is where this will lead in time with the rising of all other old pagan beliefs today.

We also see that today's world is being oriented toward a socialistic movement. It is probably not the socialism as we knew it from the past, but we can clearly see this idea advancing in our society. As we see that this movement supports all of these ideas—unity amongst all and a system that controls all under one rule. There are also some good sides of the socialism (or communism) such as that this political idea doesn't support racism and is for equity. This has been a sensitive topic in these last years because of the errors committed in the past. I am not against communism, and I am not supporting any other political idea. I am just saying that this idea with the wrong spirit behind it and with the intention to take God out of the scene can be the perfect environment to bring in this new world order. In itself, the idea of communism is actually good, because it speaks about unity and equity, something that we see often spoken of in the book of Acts (Acts 2:46-47 and Acts 4:34-35). It sounds like a very good idea with good principles. As people crave for unity, peace and one world government, I believe that in the future this government and rule will be left orientated. It might not be called "communism", but I think that it will support some of its ideas. This is just a theory though and we or the next generations will see what will happen.

The problem is that God is excluded from this idea. If He was in it, it could work and be really good and practical, but nevertheless it is not. And here is where the deceit comes in when apparently there is a good idea, good principles, but without God. This is how the enemy works. He imitates, he represents apparently good ideas that come from God's principles and ways, but without God Himself. There is humanism instead of God's love, for example, or human wisdom instead of God's wisdom. All of these are ideas that seem good but exclude God, who is obviously the most important and who makes all of these ideas possible in a practical way. There are many good ideas and principles that humanity has set up, but they don't work. This is because the real problem that causes them to fail lies in the human heart. The human heart is the issue, the heart without God. Many times, we hear of peace, unity, of love, etc., but how many of these

things really happen? This is not because the intention was bad, but because the One who can make it possible has been excluded.

In the past in the communist-governed countries, religious belief wasn't supported but the communists left a reduced number of churches controlled and governed by them. They were allowed to preach only what the government was allowing them, and, in this way, the true gospel wasn't preached. Those who rebelled were thrown into prison and tortured. This is what might happen in the future. The religion will be allowed, but the true gospel and belief in God will not be. We are also witnessing today to the avid promotion of the idea of the separation of church and state in the places where the church was somehow involved in the governing system. All of this makes that the church will not have a cultural and moral influence over our society, but it will probably be completely separated from its social values. That's why the legal system in which we live is slowly but surely moving away from the principles of God's law.

I am not saying either that other political ideas or movements include God or glorify Him. They don't do that because man by himself in his natural state is a sinner and is separated from God and unfortunately man is the one who stands behind politics. That's why these ideas, which are manmade, don't glorify God, no matter what. Yes, some of them might be better than others, but in general our hope must be placed in Jesus and not in any man.

In these times, though, people are desperately looking for answers. They are in need of a leader. Someone who can give them the answers and the solutions they need. People don't want to believe in something they cannot see, such as the man from Galilee who lived two thousand years ago and still lives today, but faith is needed to see Him. They want instead a leader they can see and touch.

“But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, ‘Give us a king to judge us.’ So Samuel prayed to the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them’ ” (1 Samuel 8:6-7).

Here we see how the nation of Israel wanted to have their own king, as the other nations had. What we see from this passage is that they were rejecting God with this kind of petition. They preferred to have a man over them rather than God. This is because men in general don't want to be submitted to someone whom they don't see. It is difficult for us in general and our

human nature to believe. We would like always to see and touch. That's why especially in these times to come, it will be much easier for persons to submit and believe the promises of a man whom they see. This will be the antichrist who will come apparently with answers and solutions for the people.

We see how the heart of men is in general from this passage in 1 Samuel. They wanted a king and a ruler they can see and touch, instead of God in whom they have to believe without seeing Him. Jesus came also as a man, but His purpose wasn't actually to establish His kingdom at that moment with Him as a man, but He rather came with the main purpose to sacrifice Himself for us, for our salvation. After that He ascended and sent His Holy Spirit. His kingdom wasn't meant to be established in that way and in that time. His kingdom will be eternal, and it won't be in this world, but in the one to come.

This leader (the antichrist) will apparently fill this void for a leader they can see, and some answers they are looking for, but will not be able to fill the void in their souls. This is the beast, the so-called antichrist. He will come and attract many persons to him and will deceive them as he gives them answers and solutions for this life only and not for eternity, that only Christ can give.

There is another interesting fact that we can notice in the idea of socialism and communism. Besides putting God aside and persecuting those with real faith in Him, they also exalt their leaders as gods. In nearly every important institution they have a picture of their leader, and they are quoted in a way that makes them seem much more than ordinary persons. All of these make me think that in one way or another, the idea of communism will be back, even though in another form, because it perfectly supports the ideas this world is pursuing now—the idea of unity, having one world system, social justice, and one leader uniting the people. That's why my personal theory is that in the future the world will be governed by a left-wing orientated movement, not necessary called communism, but it will be from the left because of the ideas it promotes. This is just a theory and a personal opinion though.

I am saying again that there is nothing wrong with some of these ideas if God wasn't excluded. I am speaking about the real God and His principles, because at the end some kind of liberty in worship may be allowed, the same as in the Babylonian empire where many nations gathered together and were allowed to have their own faith and worship but were also compelled to participate in certain beliefs such as having the king from that time as deity. This was and is against God's standards because it is not good to have other gods beside Him and also because

that ruler will bring and promote sin and everything that is against God's precepts and whoever is worships him will approve those things and will probably have to partake of them.

We don't know yet when all of these things will happen. As I said before, this is just a thought of what might happen at the end, a thought that is based on what we see in the scripture and what we see happening now in this world. We don't know if the things will happen exactly in this way, but one thing is sure and that is that God is faithful to His Word, and He will fulfill what He said He will do.

It is a matter of time, time that is not seen in the same way we think of it. Even if some of these things occur, it might not mean that the end will come quickly. We don't know for sure, as He said that no one knows that hour. All of these things are like an alarm that should always remind us of what Jesus said in Matthew 24:42, "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming."

We must always do this no matter in what time we live. And this is done by prayer, seeking His presence, and being as lights in this world, giving a daily example of how a believer should live, and by living for others.

Chapter 7

Revelation 5 – The Lion, the Lamb, and the Judgment

In this chapter, we will look at some passages in the book of Revelation to see the person in the center of all, and through whom everything exists. The One through whom everything was made, and everything started. He is the one through whom everything will finish as well. He is Jesus. He is the Alpha and Omega. Today we have the opportunity to have Him as our Savior, but one day He could be also our judge if we don't have Him as Savior.

And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?” And no one in heaven or on earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. But one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seals.’ And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the Spirits of God sent out into all earth. Then he came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying:

“You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.” (Revelation 5:1-10)

In this passage of Revelation, we see that John, the one who received the revelation, wept much because there wasn't found anyone worthy to open the scroll. None in heaven or on the earth, or under the earth. Now we know that there were many extraordinary men in the whole

Bible, men who gave us an example with their constancy, faith, and life, but none of them was found worthy as well to open the scroll in heaven. Beside one—the Lamb of God, that is, Jesus Christ. The same one represented as a Lion in verse 5. We can say that this is His real aspect—as a Lion. He came as a lamb, to die for the sins of humanity, but He is actually a Lion; He is a King.

In the Scripture we see the enemy (the devil) represented as a lion (1 Peter 5:8), but this is just for the context of that passage, to express how the devil is in the circumstances of this life, and also because he usually likes to imitate God in His attributes. The Lion is Jesus. And in the next chapters of Revelation, we see that each opened seal represents a judgment on the earth. Here we see that Jesus is actually involved in the final judgment. Not only involved, but we can see that everything is going to be judged through Him. He is the Alpha and Omega. The beginning and the end. Everything started through Him and is going to be finished through Him. John 5:22 says: “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgement to the Son.”

Acts 10:42 tells us, “And He has commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead.”

We see that God has appointed Jesus to be Judge of everything. But why is He worthy to open these seals and to judge? Revelations 5:4 says that no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look at it. We see throughout the whole chapter of Revelation 5 that more than once He is mentioned as a Lamb and we see them often saying, “Worthy is the Lamb.” As a Lion, He is mentioned once, but the reason He is worthy of all the praise and to open the scroll with the seals is because He was the Lamb that was slain. *His sacrifice made Him worthy and above everything.* So He was effective to save, but also to judge at the final day. Obviously, He was worthy also before that and has always been, but this sacrifice accomplished God’s righteousness regarding our situation and God needs to accomplish everything in the right way.

He can judge because through His sacrifice He gave the opportunity to people to be saved. He doesn’t want to judge before giving us an opportunity. He could, but He is so just that He wants to give us a chance first. He wants to give it to everyone. This is His desire. No one will have an excuse. No mouth will open at that final day after seeing the greatness of His sacrifice. In front of this greatness no one could say, as we often say today, that something is not fair or just. That’s why He is mentioned more than once as a Lamb in this chapter. And as a Lamb, He opens the seals that represent the judgment. Because of what He did for us on the cross, He is worthy. That’s why the Father wants everyone to hear the good news, so that everyone could have the

opportunity. He could judge us also as we are, but in His justice and love He decided to look unto us and give us a possibility.

“For by Him all things were created that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominations or principalities or powers. All things were through Him and for Him“ (Colossians 1:13).

We can clearly see from this scripture and many others that Jesus is in the center of it all. Everything started through Him and it will finish through Him. It is interesting to notice something in the parable of the barren fig tree in Luke 13:7, “Then He said to the keeper of His vineyard, ‘Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. *Cut* it down; why does it use up the ground?’ “

What we know from this parable is that the owner of the vineyard is the Father, and the keeper is Jesus. And the tree could be any one of us. We see that the father commanded the keeper (the Son) to cut the tree. It means that He will be the one performing that action—to cut the tree. Meaning the judgment. And He was the one showing mercy and giving another opportunity to the tree to bear its fruit, opportunity all of us have been given through His sacrifice. Special treatment for our lives to be able to bear fruit. His sacrifice and His blood are that kind of treatment. That’s why He was considered worthy to open the seals. Because He gave us opportunity. Because we won’t have an excuse in light of that. No one will dare to open his mouth one day in front of this truth. Everyone will come to an acknowledgment of what His sacrifice really represents. Better for us is to acknowledge it now and not at the end, when we will be in front of His throne.

God is patient toward us; that’s why the end of everything hasn’t come yet. It is through His sacrifice that He still gives us opportunity. But the patience and the opportunity can also run out. And all the people will have to face the judgment in one way or another because all of us will finish life one day.

“But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same *word*, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men“ (2 Peter 3:7). In this passage, we see Peter prophesying and speaking about the judgment and in 2 Peter 3:9 he states that the Lord is longsuffering toward us. But there is a reason why. It is because of Jesus. In the verse above says that the heavens and earth are preserved by the same *word*, the one through which everything was

created. And that word is Jesus. That means He is the one who withholds, prevents the judgment from happening, and is the one who will release it. How many times has He withheld it already from our lives? (At least from mine). How many times did we deserve something else, and He instead gave us opportunity?

He is a Lion and a Lamb. He came as a Lamb to suffer and didn't strike back; He was humble all the way. But one day He will come back as a Lion. Coming as a Lamb made Him worthy and accomplished God's justice. Obviously, He was already worthy, and He's always been, but coming as a Lamb helped us to understand that He is worthy, because this was the way He reached us and saved us. Through His sacrifice heaven's gates were opened for us. Something like dying on a cross, considered so low and so weak by man, became the center of everything and our salvation. He was already worthy, but dying on the cross was what reached us, opened our eyes to see His glory, and helped us to acknowledge Him.

About the Author

Ivan Chamurlev is a Christian who firmly believes in the Bible as God's Word, the new birth in the believer's life—which comes through repentance and accepting Christ—the regeneration the Holy Spirit produces, and the necessity of a person to commune with other believers.

He lives in Italy, where he volunteers in a non-profit organization to reach people through the gospel in different areas of life, but mainly those who are homeless, struggling with addictions, and excluded from society as he also was, but recovered and received a new life through the faith in God.

He spends his time sharing the message, which he firmly believes transformed him, and writing blog posts on Christianity and different theological topics.