



Eschatology – A Study of the End Times

Lesson 8: The Time Before the Tribulation, Part 2

Introduction

As we saw in the previous lesson, God has a plan in this present age in which He is working through the church to draw people to Himself in salvation. Jesus gave parables about the kingdom that help to understand what is happening in this present age. Some will respond to the message of the gospel in repentance and faith and become a citizen of the kingdom while others will reject the gospel message. However, just because God is working in this present age through the church does not mean that God is done with Israel. In this lesson, we will look at the future course of this present age and show how Israel is a key player.

A Previous Promise

In order to understand why Israel plays such a key role in the end times, we have to go back to a promise that God gave in the Old Testament.

- Genesis 15:5–7; 18–21. What did God promise to Abraham? _____

- Genesis 17:7–8. How does God describe His covenant and the land promise? _____

Satan wants to do everything in his power to stop God’s promise from coming true. One of the ways he does this is by attacking Israel because of the promise that God made to Abraham.

The Rebirth of Israel¹

In AD 70, Titus and the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and ended Israel’s identity as a political entity. The Jews were dispersed worldwide for many centuries. In World War II, over six million Jews were murdered by Adolph Hitler and Nazi Germany. In 1940, amid the war, no one could have imagined that within a decade Israel would be a nation again. And yet it happened. On May 14, 1948, Israel declared her independence and began the fulfillment of specific Bible prophecies about an international regathering of Jews before the future tribulation period. Although the Jews

¹ The following is adapted from *The End Times in Chronological Order* by Ron Rhodes.

have regathered in unbelief, they must regather in order for the future judgments and tribulation to take place.

- Ezekiel 36:24. What does this verse tell us about an end-times regathering of the Jews?

- Ezekiel 36:25–28. What do these verses reveal about the timing of this promise? _____

- Ezekiel 36:32–38. Why does God do this for Israel? _____

The regathering of the Jews in Israel is necessary in order for key biblical prophecies about the tribulation period to make sense. The return of the Jews to the land prior to the tribulation period is clearly implied in the peace covenant between the antichrist and the leaders of Israel.

- Daniel 9:27. What will the “firm covenant” signal? _____

In order for this covenant to make sense, the Jews must be in their own land, and Israel must be a viable political entity. The point to all of this is that Israel must be regathered to the land before the beginning of the tribulation period.

Not only will a covenant be made with Israel (Dan. 9:27), but there must also be a Jewish temple existing during the tribulation period.

- Matthew 24:15–16. Where will the abomination of desolation take place? _____

- 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4. Where will the man of lawlessness take his seat? _____

In order for the events above to take place in the future, there must be a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem during the tribulation period. In order for a temple to be rebuilt, Israel must be reborn as a nation.

An Increasing Apostasy

Another characteristic that is prophesied about the present age is an escalation of apostasy. The word *apostasy* comes from the Greek word *apostasia*, which means “falling away.”

- Acts 20:29–30. What was Paul’s warning to the Ephesian elders? _____

- 1 Timothy 4:1–2. What does Paul say will happen in later times? _____

- 2 Timothy 3:1–5. What does Paul say the end times will be like? _____

- 2 Timothy 4:3–4. What does Paul tell Timothy will happen in the future? _____

- Matthew 24:9-13. What did Jesus will happen during the tribulation period? _____

What will the time before the tribulation look like? It will be a time of increasing apostasy where people will become lovers of self and pleasure rather than lovers of God. Many will fall away from the faith as they no longer endure sound teaching. As we look at our world today, we can see that we are getting closer to the end.

Application

1. Stand upon the promises of God. Believe what God has revealed in His Word and read the Bible in light of His everlasting promises.
2. Understand that although things may get worse as we get closer to the end, Christ still has all authority and is completely trustworthy. Don't panic. Stand firm.