

PREPARE FOR



REGIME CHANGE

Preface

The kingdom of darkness has had its grip on the world for several millennia, but that is all about to come to an end. There is a regime change coming that has been foretold for thousands of years.

It has been prophesied that Jesus will return, and when He does, He will bring an end to Satan's dominion over the earth. The kingdom of darkness will cease to influence mankind as it is destroyed when Jesus returns and begins His reign. He will then establish the kingdom of God on earth and will rule the nations for 1000 years.

But before that takes place, people will be compelled to choose sides. Everyone will have the opportunity to demonstrate who their allegiance is to by the decisions they make. After a time of testing, the decisions are final and the wicked are destroyed as the kingdom of Satan falls.

The time to prepare for the coming regime change is now.

The Domain of Darkness

The domain or kingdom of darkness is made up of evil spirit beings along with those people who are influenced to do their will. Its leader is Satan who is described as the god of this world. He and his regime currently hold sway over the affairs of mankind.

The whole world lies in the power of the evil one. 1 John 5:19b

Origin

Satan is an evil angel; a created spirit being who at one time was full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. He held a high position in the hierarchy of angels until his wisdom became corrupted by pride and he sinned. He negotiated for the allegiance of other angels to help him in a coup against the Most High God. Their attempt was an utter failure.

Satan and those angels who joined with him rule the kingdom of darkness, with Satan being the chief. The fall of Satan is described in Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14.

Influence

Soon after the creation events of Genesis 1-2, Satan was busy trying to corrupt what God had made good. He succeeded in persuading Adam and Eve to disobey God which resulted in both their spiritual and natural deaths. Their sin had separated them from God which brought about their immediate spiritual death, however, their natural lives would continue on albeit under the influence of their new master. Consequently, their natures became sinful which in turn produced a human race with a sinful nature, a people born as slaves to sin in a kingdom of darkness.

By listening to the council of Satan and doing his will, Adam and Eve opened the door for sin and death to enter the world. They relinquished the authority that God had given them over the earth to Satan and he became the god of this world. The domain of darkness had expanded beyond just fallen angels to also include the human race.

Having a sinful nature makes mankind susceptible to the influence of evil angels. Their influence among the human race is what the Bible refers to allegorically as Babylon. A common tactic in their efforts to persuade people to behave in an ungodly manner is the appeal to "self" or selfishness. It may take on various forms but the end result is some sort of self-gain, and is often at the expense of others. This is why Jesus said that we are unable to serve both God and ourselves. Selfishness is of the sinful nature and opposes God.

Characteristics

The kingdom of Satan is referred to in Jeremiah 51 as a destroying mountain that destroys the whole earth. Satan cares nothing for the welfare of people. His only interest is opposing God in any and every way possible. Jesus described him as a murderer, a liar, and the father of lies.

Jesus also taught that a tree is known by what fruit it produces. People who choose to remain slaves to sin in the kingdom of darkness will exhibit characteristics, or fruit, of the sin nature which is also referred to as the flesh.

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. Galatians 5:19-21

Fate

The immediate consequence of Satan's rebellion was that he was cast down from the high position he had with God. He, and the angels who joined with him, have no chance for repentance and will ultimately be cast into the lake of fire. They have a limited amount of time before that fate is realized. In the days leading up to the return of Christ, Satan and his angels get cast out of heaven down to the earth. When this happens they realize that their time is short and they lash out in anger.

And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has *only* a short time. Revelation 12:9,12b

The Kingdom of God

The kingdom of God is led by the one true eternal God and is made up of created beings that worship Him and do His will. This includes both spiritual beings as well as natural beings. The kingdom of God will ultimately put an end to all other kingdoms and will never be destroyed or be left for another people. It is an everlasting kingdom.

The Promise of Restoration

After Adam and Eve relinquished their authority over the earth to Satan, God began to foretell of His plan of restoration through Jesus Christ. In Genesis 3 we read about the seed of the woman who would crush Satan's head. Later, God would reveal that the nations would be blessed through Abraham's seed. There are many other prophecies that spoke of this anointed one of God as a savior and deliverer.

When Jesus came to earth, His disciples expected that He would establish a political kingdom at that time, but He stated that His kingdom was not of this world. He had come for a different purpose and promised them that He would return. When He was here, He overcame the ways of the world by living a sinless life. He never succumbed to the lies of Satan but rather, lived a life of perfect obedience to the Father. Consequently, He became worthy to dethrone Satan and exercise dominion over the earth. This is exactly what He will do when He returns to establish the kingdom of God.

His sinless life was also sufficient payment to ransom the human race from the slavery of sin. The shedding of His blood on the cross provided the perfect sacrifice so that any who are willing to believe in Him will be forgiven and no longer be a slave in the kingdom of darkness but will be a part of God's kingdom.

The kingdom of God came to earth in a spiritual sense through Jesus Christ and any who are willing to forsake the kingdom of darkness can belong to it. After this message of repentance and forgiveness is preached around the world, Jesus will return to destroy the domain of darkness and establish the physical kingdom of God on earth.

The Spiritual Kingdom

After Jesus rose from the dead, He told His disciples that when He ascended up to heaven that He would send the Holy Spirit. Those who believe in Jesus would have the Holy Spirit living within them to help them understand God's truth and guide them as they endeavor to separate themselves from the ways of the world.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 1 Corinthians 6:19

But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. John 16:13

Jesus instructed the disciples to go into all the nations and preach the gospel. They were to make known what He had accomplished, that people could defect from the hopeless kingdom of Satan and join God's eternal kingdom if they would repent of their sins and believe in Jesus. Their sins would be forgiven and they would receive the Holy Spirit to help them live the kind of lives that will produce godly fruit.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5:22-23

The Natural Kingdom

After the message of God's spiritual kingdom is preached to all the nations, Satan's time of being the god of this world will come to an end. The events foretold in Matthew 24, Revelation, and elsewhere will come to pass and Jesus will return. He will destroy Satan's kingdom and rule the nations with a rod of iron for 1000 years.

It will be the first time since the Garden of Eden that the world will be free from the influence of evil angels. It will be a time of peace, even among the animals.

And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war. Isaiah 2:4

"The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent's food. They will do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain," says the Lord. Isaiah 65:25

Being Ready

Numerous times we are exhorted to be ready and alert for the return of Jesus, but what does that mean? With so many conflicting views of what people expect to happen, how can we know what to prepare for?

The answer lies not in having an exact understanding of the things to come but rather in having spiritual discernment and a *general* idea of what will take place. Having such, a person can make godly decisions when what they may have expected to happen, doesn't.

While having godly wisdom is by far the most important aspect of being prepared for His return, there is also merit in understanding what Jesus said would take place in those days. He Himself said, "Behold, I have told you in advance." There is a reason that He spells it out for us like He did. There will be things taking place in those days, the likes of which we have never seen before. Deception will be at its fullness in accordance with the activity of Satan, and tribulation will be such that the world has never before experienced. So, there is certainly merit in "beholding" the things that He has told us will take place.

Godly Wisdom

Jesus confirms in the Matthew 25 parable of the ten virgins that godly wisdom is what is necessary in order to be prepared for His return. He refers to the five virgins that were ready as being wise. The five unprepared virgins, whom Jesus describes as foolish, were those who did not know Him.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 7 that a person gains godly wisdom from putting His teachings into practice, and that a foolish person hears His teachings but chooses to ignore them. Hebrews 5 confirms that this is how we grow in spiritual discernment and John wrote that this is how we get to know Jesus.

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.” Matthew 7:24-27

But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. Hebrews 5:14

By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.

1 John 2:3

These passages make it very clear that in order to obtain godly wisdom, to discern between good and evil, a person needs to practice the truth. They need to be **doers** of God's word and not hearers only. That is how a person gets to know Jesus. The events leading up to His return will reveal which foundation people's lives have been built on, either the rock of Jesus or the sands of the world.

Truth and Error

Being able to discern between truth and error will be vital if one is to fare well in the end times. When Jesus was asked what would be the sign of His coming, His initial reply was to see to it that you are not misled. The level of deception in those days will be at its highest. The man of sin is described in 2 Thessalonians 2 as coming with **all** the deception of wickedness.

The lies that are spread by the kingdom of darkness will eventually make their way into the churches. Jesus states in Matthew 24 that people will claim to be believers but will mislead many. It's likely that this occurs more from a lack of discernment rather than being done intentionally. It will come from people who knew **about** Jesus but didn't really know Him.

All believers have the Holy Spirit, referred to as the Spirit of truth, who guides our understanding as we act on the words of Jesus. This process of knowing and doing the will of God is called walking in the Spirit and it is how we worship God. It is how we get to know Jesus and grow in spiritual wisdom and discernment. It is absolutely required if we are to discern between truth and error.

At some point the level of deception will progress beyond false doctrine alone. False prophets will be allowed to perform supernatural signs and wonders in an attempt to validate their lies. The chief false prophet is the man of sin which some refer to as the Antichrist. People will see things and be exposed to things they've never encountered before and most will be deceived as a result. Deuteronomy 13 tells us that if someone speaks contrary to the word of God they are to be rejected, even if they are able to perform signs and wonders.

Reject The World

When we decide to believe in Jesus we are spiritually taken out of the kingdom of darkness and become part of the kingdom of God. We are no longer slaves to sin but we still have the sin nature or "flesh" to contend with.

Those people who remain a part of the kingdom of darkness are led by the god of this world and pursue his ways, the ways of the world. The ways of the world are self-serving and appeal to the flesh in order to persuade people to engage in ungodly activity. John tells us in 1 John 2 what the ways of the world include and that we are to reject them.

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. 1 John 2:15-17

As believers we are called to be separate from the ways of the world since they belong to the kingdom of Satan. James 4 says that whoever embraces the ways of the world is an enemy of God. The events leading to Jesus' return will cause people to demonstrate which they love more, the ways of the world or the will of God.

Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

James 4:4

Things to Come

God has described the destruction of Satan's kingdom in various ways and places throughout the Bible. Daniel 2 and 7 along with Matthew 24 and the book of Revelation give us pretty good general idea of how it's going to end. We're given this information ahead of time so that we won't be caught unaware. In Matthew 24, Jesus says, "Behold, I have told you ahead of time." If the things He described weren't relevant, He wouldn't have said that. He also says, "When you see all these things, recognize that He is near, *right* at the door." We would be remiss if we didn't behold the things He told us.

It is important to realize that the ultimate goal of the spiritual forces of Satan's kingdom is to bring the man of sin to a position of exercising dominion over the world. The things that we will see taking place on earth are the effects being caused by supernatural influence to that end.

A Final World Kingdom

There are two passages in Daniel that describe the world kingdom that is in power when Jesus returns. One is in Daniel 2 and the other is in Daniel 7.

In Daniel 2 we see a large statue of a man made up of different metals that correspond to a succession of kingdoms beginning with Babylon. The kingdom that is struck when Jesus returns is pictured as feet that are made of iron and clay. This kingdom is described as being multinational and multicultural, a fitting description of what we see today in the United Nations and with mass immigration.

In Daniel 7 we see a series of beasts coming up out of the sea or abyss. They represent the same kingdoms as in Daniel 2, and more specifically, the evil angels that bring about these kingdoms and cause them to exercise dominion. The final kingdom in this passage is pictured as a beast having ten horns.

When looking at Daniel 2 and 7 together, it shows how the final world kingdom transitions. It starts off as a multinational form of government which is destroyed by the ten horns who straightaway have their authority usurped by the man of sin. He then becomes the undisputed world leader.

The ten horns will rise up out of the multinational government and destroy the world's capital, that city which is described as "the great city which reigns over the kings of the earth." When they do, a time of war ensues.

A Time of War

When the ten leaders who are described in Revelation 17 rise up out of the multinational world government, they attempt to establish themselves as the leaders of a new world order by destroying that city which symbolized the old order.

Jesus describes this in Matthew 24 as a time when there will be wars and rumors of war. It also corresponds to the second, third, and fourth seals in Revelation 6 being opened, a time when peace is removed from the earth causing severe food shortages. The extent of these wars, as described in the fourth seal, will cause people to think that it's the end, but it's not. It's part of the plan that catapults the man of sin, who is commonly referred to as the Antichrist, from being a lesser leader to becoming the unchallenged dictator of the world.

The new world order that the ten leaders establish is a very short lived one. It only lasts for one hour. The means by which they were going to rule, controlling the world's economies, is hijacked by the Antichrist. The ten leaders are double-crossed and three of them decide to come against him with an overwhelming force. They unwittingly walk into a trap because he is able to call fire down from heaven to destroy them, which he does. Such a display of supernatural power makes him the undisputed leader of the world and the time of war is brought to its fullness.

The Great Tribulation

After the Antichrist demonstrates his supernatural abilities and restores order to a chaotic world, he proclaims himself to be God. Although he will be the epitome of evil, the majority of the world will not see him that way. They will be deceived by the signs and wonders that he performs and will receive him as a savior for restoring order.

After proclaiming to be God, he sets out to identify and kill those who will not be a part of his kingdom and worship him. This corresponds to the opening of the fifth seal in Revelation 6. He does this by requiring that everyone must receive his mark on their hand or forehead before they can engage in the global economic system. This indicates that he has gained control over the world's economies which is something that he likely usurped from the ten leaders.

Unless a person worships him, they will be put to death. His mark will identify those who have joined his kingdom. Those without his mark will be confronted. This is a time when many believers will be martyred. It is also a time when many others will stumble and fall away from the faith, being deceived into taking his mark.

After a period of time when everyone has decided whether to align with Satan's man of sin or not, God brings an end to the great tribulation. The sky is rolled back like a scroll

and people catch a glimpse into the spiritual realm, a glimpse that makes them fearful of the coming wrath. This corresponds to the sixth seal being opened in Revelation 6.

The Seven Plagues

When the seventh seal is opened, God's wrath begins to be poured out on those who chose to receive the man of sin's mark and worship him. This happens through a series of seven plagues. God sends two prophets, who are divinely protected, to smite the earth with the plagues.

The plagues are sent as a judgment against those who aligned themselves with the man of sin. As the plagues progress, they increase in severity. This is for the purpose of convincing those believers who succumbed to the deception of the Antichrist that they made a mistake. The plagues are a call for them to repent, to reject the man of sin and forsake him. They are God's last call to abandon the kingdom He will soon destroy.

The Return of Christ

At some point after the sixth plague has begun, God allows the Antichrist to kill the two witnesses. This causes the effects of the plagues to cease, which brings relief to those who were afflicted by them. Conditions around the world return to normal and the man of sin is seen as victorious over the "evil" plague-bringers. People rejoice and celebrate his victory.

It is at this time, between the sixth and seventh plague, that everyone is making their final decision. Those who repented of worshipping the man of sin are having the sincerity of their repentance tested. They are likely being enticed to rejoin his kingdom with some sort of "all is forgiven" amnesty appeal now that he appears to have things under control.

To ensure that there are no more interruptions to his reign, the Antichrist has the armies of the world gather together at Har-Magedon. As days pass by and turn into weeks, those belonging to the kingdom of darkness begin to proclaim "peace and safety." They think they are out of the woods, but actually their demise is imminent.

At the appointed time, Jesus will descend from heaven and destroy the kingdom of Satan along with those who chose to belong to it. The kingdom of God will then be established on earth bringing about the ultimate regime change. Blessed are those who remain faithful until He returns!

Things to Consider

Since the return of Jesus will be a time of regime change, it will have already been determined ahead of time who is of God and who is of the world, who is going to be saved and who is going to be destroyed. The days and years leading up to His return will have a way of revealing that.

The kinds of situations that people will face will vary depending on a number of factors, however, they will all serve the purpose of making known what a person truly believes. Who has been wise and acted on the words of Jesus and who has foolishly ignored them?

Perspective

When a person has a change of heart and forsakes the kingdom of darkness to receive the life that Jesus offers, they also receive the Holy Spirit who is referred to as the Spirit of truth. He will guide a believer into understanding God's truth, which will bring about a change in perspective.

This change in perspective is part of the transition out of Satan's kingdom and will have the effect of rearranging our priorities from being self-centered to being God-centered. We will start to see things as God sees them and adjust our values accordingly.

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21

Being a part of the kingdom of God means that He is our king and that we are to give preference to His will over our own. Our lives are to be in His service for His purpose, not in the pursuit of selfish ambitions.

For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. Mark 8:35

If we are going to fare well in the last days, we will have to have a Godly perspective of what has true value. The things of this world are going to pass away but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

Worship

As believers, we are to worship God, to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We have the kingdom of God within us spiritually and are to act on this reality by separating ourselves from ways of the world. The ways of the world come from Satan, the god of this world, and have nothing in common with the kingdom of God.

What people worship is determined by their lifestyle behavior, not something that they might do for an hour every week. The things people say and the things they do are an extension of what they value. People worship what they value by the way they live.

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:1-2

The decisions people will be required to make in the last days will reveal what it is that they value and worship.

Persecution

We believers are no longer a part of Satan's kingdom and are consequently expected to disengage from the ways of the world. In doing so, we stand as a testimony to the Light which the world in darkness hates. This is the source of animosity that leads to tribulation for the believer.

This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. John 3:19

If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. John 15:19

Consequently, tribulation is something that a believer should expect to encounter. Jesus said that while we are in this world we would have tribulation, but to be courageous because He has overcome the world. His victory over sin and death is our assurance of eternal life, a hope beyond this world.

Jesus describes a time of unprecedented persecution of believers that takes place before His return. It is referred to as a time of great tribulation or **the** great tribulation and takes place when the fifth seal in Revelation 6 is opened. This is when the man of

sin declares himself to be God and issues the ultimatum that whoever does not worship him is to be put to death. His effort to purge the world of believers is expedited by the requirement to receive his mark in order to buy or sell anything.

Discernment

The great tribulation will reveal who is able to persevere in faithfulness to God when challenged by the lies of Satan. The level of deception achieved by the man of sin will be so high that unless a person has had their spiritual senses trained to discern good from evil, they will be deceived by his lies.

The single most important aspect to remember about the return of Christ is that everyone will see it for themselves. No one will have to be informed. If you haven't see it for yourself, it hasn't happened, regardless of what anyone says. Jesus cautioned specifically about this.

So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them. For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. Matthew 24:26-27

BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and **every eye** will see Him. Revelation 1:7a

The man of sin will not be perceived as evil by most of the world. Most will see him as a savior, and in a sense, they are correct since he did restore order to a world in chaos by using supernatural power. This will be a very strong delusion and only those with spiritual discernment will be able to see through his ruse when he claims to be God and demands worship. The worship he will require won't be merely lip service or some humbling gesture, although that may be part of it. He will require obedience to a code of conduct that affirms his claim as God and ruler of the world.