

Writings on the End of the World



by Pastor Mike

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Introduction to the Writings

You have in your hands a collection of my own personal studies and conclusions on a number of topics surrounding the subject of the end times and end of the world.

Some were extracted from sermons I've preached. Others had their start in Bible studies I've developed and taught. There is even one that is a chronicling of a prophetic word spoken by a woman in a church service (where we attend) along with its real time (now) application.

However these came about, I'm convinced you'll be challenged in your thinking and understanding of the Book of Revelation, the Mark of the Beast (666), the Rapture of the Church and a whole lot more.

May these writings also encourage you to stand firm in your faith knowing that our Lord's return is so very close. Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King!

Pastor Mike :)

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A Vision of God

We need a vision of God in these last days.

It will help us to make sense out of what's happening in our crazy world.

We need a vision of God!

And we have it in the New Testament book of Revelation.

A JASPER AND SARDIUS STONE

In Revelation 4:3 John records that God (who was sitting on the throne in heaven) was “like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance.”

The jasper stone was the final stone in the High Priest's breastplate. (Exodus 28:20)

It represents Reuben, Israel's first born son.

It speaks of Jesus Christ, the first born from the dead.

The sardius stone was the initial stone in the High Priest's breastplate. (Exodus 28:17)

It represents Benjamin, Israel's last born son.

Benjamin means “at my right hand.”

It speaks of Jesus Christ who is seated at the right hand of God.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN OUR CRAZY WORLD

And so what's happening in our crazy world?

What's happening?

God the Father has taken it upon Himself, and on behalf of His resurrected Son seated at His right hand in heaven, to make His enemies “a placemat to stand upon.”

“The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”” (Luke 20:42-43; Psalm 110:1)

It’s like sucking poison from a wound.

And when you see Evil coming to the forefront all around, take heart.

God is subduing Christ’s enemies whether it’s Vladimir Putin or ISIS or Hamas or a lawless American President.

Mark of the Beast

“DYNAMICS” IN REVELATION

The last book in the Bible is so misunderstood. (And if that isn’t one of the greatest understatements...) The book of Revelation ~ of course there are many prophetic systems/scenarios of interpretation (and it’s not my design here to deal with those) ~ but what I do want to talk about is how there are dynamics in Revelation ~ they ultimately have their fulfillment in the book ~ while (and here’s my point) they are already at work in our day. These “dynamics” are already at work.

Let me give you an example from another place. The apostle John wrote: “Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.” (1 John 2:18) John wrote that two thousand years ago. The point is that the dynamic of “antichrist” (which it’s believed will see its ultimate fulfillment in an actual person in the end times) has been part of human society and culture from the first century until now (and increasing). Clear as mud?

MARK OF THE BEAST

Which brings me to the book of Revelation and chapter 13. Of course, “Antichrist” (Revelation 13:1-8; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4) is talked about here (though the word is not used) and also another interesting (frightening) concept. The “mark of the beast” is also mentioned:

“And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the

free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six." (Revelation 13:16-18)

Now whether or not the "mark" is a computer chip just under the skin is beside the point (though we see that already coming?). The main thing is that this "mark of the beast" dynamic is already at work in our day ~ and in this way: There is a push to control all aspects of human life more than ever before and intensifying. And if you don't "buy into the system" (submit to it) your functioning in society and culture will be greatly hindered (if not shut down completely). (Separation of Church and State. No Christmas carols at school. No prayers at graduation.)

MANY HAVE ALREADY GOT IT?

The other side of the same coin is how the greater portion of humanity (Matthew 7:13) has bought into the system. Listen: Many have already "taken the mark" (though not physically). And here's how: They are totally committed to the world as it is and apart from Jesus Christ. For somebody (the False Prophet) to come along and say they must receive a mark to operate ~ they won't question it because they are already a part of it.

How a Super Power (America) Disappears

NO MENTION IN BIBLE PROPHECY

The United States of America is conspicuously absent in Biblical prophecy. Many scholars believe she is among those being referred to in Ezekiel, chapter 38, verse 13, where it mentions: "the merchants of Tarshish." Beyond that there is nothing about the USA.

How could this be? One suggestion is that she declines to the point of being irrelevant as it has to do with end times events. This is interesting as we see that process taking place right before our very eyes? And how else will Israel become surrounded by her enemies and face annihilation as the Bible declares

it must happen? (Zechariah 14:2) America has to be no more. She really is the one and only friend of the Jewish people left that can do anything to help protect her.

HOW AMERICA IS REMOVED

So how is America removed from the scene? Here's how (it's happening now?)

...

1. Socialism established in place of capitalism.
2. Sympathy offered to the religion of Islam.
3. Political instability promoted within.
4. Policies upheld to increase job loss, inflate fuel and food prices.
5. Chaos, unrest encouraged/emboldened abroad.
6. Military stretched thin by too many conflicts (or a deliberate downsizing from within?).
7. Believers in Jesus Christ caught away. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18)

“And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be the only one, and His name the only one.” (Zechariah 14:9)

Prophecy and a Wedding Dress

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom.” (Matthew 25:1)

In a recent Sunday morning service a woman came to the front of our church and began to prophesy. It was dynamic. It was disarming. (Wow.) It was right on.

PROPHESYING AND PROPHECY

And before I get to the “word” she shared I thought I might speak to the issue of prophesying, prophecy, discernment, etc.

I was talking with my wife about what took place in church (I was glad our three kids were there to hear the “word”) and how well it was for the Pastor (ours) to give instruction after the prophecy was given. First, he spoke of the integrity of the woman delivering it. She was a long time attender of the church (3 decades). She'd prophesied before. (I'd seen it.) And so it wasn't just any ol'

person that could come to the front and speak was his point.

Some people show up in your church and they are there to “take over.” (Has it ever happened at yours?) These don’t realize that they’re the ones that have really been taken over (by the devil).

In a former church (where I was a baby Christian) I can remember numerous prophecies given that were both “of God” and “not of God.” The latter included “words” similar to: “This church is lukewarm. I will spew you out of my mouth, says the Lord.” (It seems to be a favorite of the false prophets.) The senior Pastor rebuked more than one speaker. And the ushers escorted them out (part of an usher’s job description).

Something else about prophetic “words” and the one given in our service specifically ~ it was “confirming” to what was already going on in the service ~ and especially to the Pastor’s message. I can’t overemphasize the importance of this. Prophecy will line up with what God’s already been doing/speaking. Of course, it will line up with Scripture, too (and must). My Pastor was speaking about Esther, “for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14b), about non negotiables and how important it was to have those settled ahead of time. In other words (mine): What hills are you going to die on? What ground will you not compromise? (2 Thessalonians 2:15)

THE PROPHETIC WORD

Which brings me finally to the “word” (prophetic utterance):

It was based on a dream the woman had. And she kept repeating throughout: “This is a ‘now’ message!” She was very forceful with this. “This is a ‘now’ message!”

She started out: “We have examples of people in the past that have stood for the faith. And that’s great. But now it’s time for us.”

In the dream she was a bride to be and she was choosing white lace to attach to her dress. The problem was there was no white thread with which to attach it. All the people around her were saying, “Just use the black thread. No one will know the difference because it will be hidden.” And she kept responding, “No, no, no. I can’t do it. I won’t do it.”

Then came her message. While sharing this part she was facing towards a group of young people in attendance. She said: “Times are getting hard. It’s

gonna get a lot worse. The time to stand is now. The Bible is our anchor point.” Her sharing went on for about 4 or 5 minutes.

My responding thought (and I challenge you to consider it): The church is going to be called to compromise with the world. (She already has been.) We must not. We can not.

Thus saith the Lord.

On the Subject of Martyrs

“And when He broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained.” (Revelation 6:9)

WHAT IS A MARTYR?

A martyr is a witness. He is a person who chooses death rather than deny his faith. As the end of the world approaches, this murder of representatives of Christ will only intensify. (Matthew 10:21-22a) Jesus Himself spoke of the dynamic when He said, “[B]ut an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.” (John 16:2) It’s how they treated Him. (Matthew 10:25) It’s how the twelve apostles were treated.

HOW THE APOSTLES DIED

According to tradition, Peter was crucified upside down. (John 21:18-19) James was killed with a sword (beheaded). (Acts 12:2) John was boiled in oil, but survived. Andrew was crucified on an X-shaped cross. Philip suffered crucifixion. Bartholomew (Nathanael) was flayed alive with knives. Matthew was killed with a sword in Ethiopia. Thomas was speared to death in India. James (the Less) had his brains smashed out in Syria. History is largely silent about Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Matthias (the replacement for Judas), but it’s safe to assume they gave their lives for the cause of Christ, too.

SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED

Before the first apostle (James) was martyred, there came Stephen. (Acts 7:58-60) As Stephen was being stoned to death, a young man named Saul stood by

applauding the event. (Acts 22:20) This same Saul would later convert and become Paul, who would write, “For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” (Romans 8:36) He was quoting Psalm 44:22 to a church that was about to undergo tremendous suffering. The psalmist couldn’t understand why Israel had been defeated despite her faithfulness to God. The truth is Israel was suffering because of her faithfulness to God.

And if we are found to be “as sheep for the slaughter” ourselves (face martyrdom), it is not because Jesus has withdrawn His love from us. (Romans 8:35-39) Quite to the contrary. It is because we are His! (Job 1:8)

Pre-Tribulation or Pre-Wrath Rapture?

“And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here.’ Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them.” (Revelation 11:12)

I’ve done a lot of studying of the book of Revelation over the course of time as a Christian.

In the midst of my research the concept of a pre-tribulation Rapture versus a pre-wrath Rapture has been brought up.

Let me try to explain these in the simplest way I can.

PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE

There are those that believe there is a 7-year period called “The Tribulation” (or “Great Tribulation”) ahead for planet earth. (Matthew 24:21; Mark 13:19) During that period (at the very beginning) a man seen as Antichrist will appear and rule the world by Satan’s power. It will be the most destructive time humankind has ever known. As it has to do with the Rapture, many believe it happens directly prior to The Tribulation / 7-year period. This is the “pre-tribulation” understanding of the Rapture.

At least one passage that is used to back this belief is found in 2 Thessalonians

chapter 2...

“And you know what restrains him (Antichrist) now, so that in his time he will be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he (the Holy Spirit) who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.” (2 Thessalonians 2:6-7)

A large part of the Holy Spirit as the “restraining force” keeping Antichrist (the “man of lawlessness”) from being revealed is believed to be the Church. (Matthew 5:13a, 5:14a) When she is “taken out of the way” through Rapture, that’s when the Tribulation starts.

Again, this understanding of Rapture (pre-tribulation) and the end times is held by many.

PRE-WRATH RAPTURE

The pre-wrath understanding of Rapture is different (of course). This point of view sees the Church undergoing trials and troubling times (as depicted in especially 5 of 6 of the seal judgments portrayed in Revelation chapter 6 and then in 6 of 7 trumpet judgments portrayed in Revelation chapter 8 and 9.) These trials and troubling times (tribulations) are age long beginning in the first century up until our day. Thus, the Church endures tribulation up until the time the wrath of God is poured out (as depicted at the sounding of the 7th trumpet which is the 7 bowls of wrath portrayed in Revelation chapter 16.) This is the “pre-wrath” understanding of the Rapture.

One verse used to back this belief is found in John 16. This is our Lord speaking (note italics)...

“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have *tribulation*, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

And then there are Paul’s words in 1 Thessalonians 5 (note italics)...

“For God has not destined us for *wrath*, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thessalonians 5:9)

And so is it a pre-tribulation or pre-wrath Rapture?

My answer: Whichever it is, the only thing I really have control over is making

sure I'm ready. (1 John 3:2-3)

On Divine Restraints and the Revelation of Antichrist

DIVINE RESTRAINT

I want to talk to you about "divine restraints."

To restrain means "to hold back from action; keep in check or under control; repress; to limit or hamper the activity, growth, or effect of" according to dictionary.com.

And there are numerous times where divine restraints came into play in the Bible.

ON NATURE

There was a divine restraint that brought the Great Flood to an end so that Noah, his family and all the animals on the Ark could step out on dry land. (Genesis 8:2)

ON MAN'S DESIGNS

There was a divine restraint at the tower of Babel where the people had decided to build a skyscraper to Heaven and God came down and stopped it. (Genesis 11:6-8)

ON CHILD BEARING

There was a divine restraint put on Sarai (Sarah), Abram's (Abraham's) wife so that she couldn't bear a child until the timing of God was right for Isaac to be born. (Genesis 16:2)

ON THE WICKED

There was divine restraint that overtook the Assyrian King Sennacherib who was to destroy Israel, but God declared, "I will put My hook in your nose, and My

bridle in your lips, and I will turn you back by the way which you came.” (2 Kings 19:20-21, 28)

ON THE REVELATION OF ANTICHRIST

Probably the most popular (well known) divine restraint is written about by the Apostle Paul in the New Testament.

In 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 Paul mentions a man (Antichrist) that will appear at the end of the world and directly prior to the return of Jesus Christ to the earth.

This man will be so full of himself (arrogant) that he will ultimately take his place in the very temple of God while demanding to be worshiped as God. (2 Thessalonians 2:4)

But there’s a divine restraint (Paul tells us) holding him back from taking center stage.

2 Thessalonians 2:6-8a reads...

“And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. Then that lawless one will be revealed.”

Now there are those who believe that the divine restraint (“restraining force”) keeping Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:3; Revelation 13:1-8) from being revealed is the Holy Spirit.

And a large part of the Holy Spirit as the “restraining force” is believed to be the Church. (Matthew 5:13a, 5:14a)

When she is “taken out of the way” through Rapture, that’s when the Tribulation starts and Antichrist appears.

PRE-WRATH RAPTURE INSTEAD?

But what if the Church is not caught up (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) prior to the Tribulation as some believe?

What if she leaves prior to the pouring out of the wrath of God instead? (Revelation 16:1-8)

Won't that mean that the divine restraint is just God alone (as we saw by the Old Testament examples) and that Antichrist is revealed while the Church is still on earth?

Is he here and operating already?

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