

The Pinnacle of Wickedness and God's Judgment Of The Nations

For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

Luke 21:22

When we consider the events of 70 AD, we must consider the main redemptive story-line of the Bible. It began with Adam and Eve, when, after their fall, God promised a coming 'seed'. Paul interprets this 'seed' as Jesus Christ, and, indeed, all of the Scriptures testified of Him.

So, we see the progress of mankind through time. He grew exceedingly wicked, and God chose to slay the entire generation of Noah, saving only eight through water, which is a type of our baptism today. In terms of wickedness, this was the height of wickedness.

After the flood, man spread out, and eventually, returned to their old sins. Man congregated on the plain of Shinar and began to build the tower of Babel. Yet, God scattered the nations, confusing their language, and spread them across the Earth. Of course, today, we have the same things 'un-done' in our time. We are baptized into one body through water, and we have our language 'unconfused' in the representation of the baptism of the Spirit through the speaking with other tongues, as it says, we speak with the tongues of men and of angels.

But, the redemptive story was only beginning. God had determined to bring Christ forth through a man named Abraham. Abraham against hope believed, and so became the father of many nations. It was his faith that was counted as righteousness, and as many as believe are children of Abraham through faith.

But, after Israel had sojourned for many years in the land of Egypt, God called him out from that land, into his own. It was in this time that Moses, the man of God, led the children, and gave them the law.

Now, we know the law was never intended to cease sin, but merely to help to restrain it. The blood of bulls and goats only covered over sin in the mean time, until the true sacrifice of the Lamb of God could come and take it away. But, the pattern set forth in the tabernacle prophesied of the man to come. What was done in shadow and in form through the time of Israel was done in the light through the sacrificial death of Christ on Calvary.

So now, Israel grew and became a great nation. They filled the land they had been given, and yet, eventually, they grew to desire a king.

Saul was the first king they received, but his line was removed, and David took his place of leadership. Yet, when David reigned, God did something special. We read in the books of Chronicles four times (1 Chronicles 28:5, 1 Chronicles 29:23, 2 Chronicles 9:8, 2 Chronicles 13:8) that the throne that David sat upon, and the Kingdom in which He reigned, as actually the Lord's own throne and kingdom.

Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king instead of David his father; and he prospered, and all Israel obeyed him.

1 Chronicles 29:23

When David, and the subsequent kings reigned, they reigned in the very Kingdom of God, and sat on the very throne of God in the heavens. Remember, of course, Paul indicated that thrones are, indeed, spiritual things, when he talked about them in Colossians 1:16. Additionally, Daniel 10:13 also indicates a correlation between earthly thrones and the spiritual powers that govern them from the

invisible world. God was slowly beginning to reveal to His people the true nature of the conflict as being spiritual.

Yet, the sons of David, who ruled after him, did not stay true as their Father did, but chose rather to pursue the fallen things of this world, and went after other gods.

And, so, we read in the course of the history of the nation of Israel, that God decided he would have to send Israel into exile to serve Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

Yet, here is where the story takes an interesting turn.

It was by the prophet Jeremiah that God's people were told that they would serve Nebuchadnezzar. God had Jeremiah prophecy this by wearing a wooden yoke around his neck, symbolizing the yoke of oppression in serving a foreign nation.

Yet, the people would not listen. Instead, in Jeremiah 28, we learn that the false prophet Hananiah took the yoke from off Jeremiah's neck, and broke it, saying that God would break the yoke off the people and they would be delivered within two years time.

After the prophet Hananiah had broken the yoke off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: "Go and tell Hananiah, 'This is what the Lord says: You have broken a wooden yoke, but in its place you will get a yoke of iron. This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I will put an iron yoke on the necks of all these nations to make them serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and they will serve him. I will even give him control over the wild animals.' "

Jeremiah 28:12-14

So, while Hananiah broke the yoke of wood, God replaced that oppression with a greater one, a yoke of iron. This mean Nebuchadnezzar would have even greater power, dominion over the entire Earth, and even control over the wild animals themselves.

This began, as we begin to study the prophecies of Daniel, nearly 1,000 years of a continuous rule of a system called Babylon, as represented by four successive kingdoms. This was represented by the statue in Daniel 2, comprised of four elements, and the four beasts of Daniel 7. While they were four successive kingdoms, they all ruled over the entire world, and, since what you call the head, you also call the foot, are all 'Babylon'.

But, realize this. It was not the greatness of the men, nor these kingdoms, that elevated them to world-dominating status, it was God. It was not Nebuchadnezzar ability that promoted him, it was Hananiah's sin.

Finally, we read in Ezekiel 21,

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are discovered, so that in all your doings your sins do appear; because, I say, that ye are come to remembrance, ye shall be taken with the hand. And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.

Ezekiel 21:24-27

So, the Kingdom that was given to David was removed from the Earth. When Israel was restored for

their 490 years at the Word of the Lord to Daniel (Daniel 9:24), they did not possess the Kingdom anymore. So, too, we read of the disciples question to Jesus, in Acts 1:6, they did not ask when the Kingdom would be given to Israel, but when it would be 'restored' to them, or brought back to its former state.

In the course of time, the four-part statue of Daniel was broken, of course. As we see in Daniel 2:35, all four of the parts of the statue were broken 'at the same time'. So, in history, we see that when Rome fell, the outward glory of all the nations of the world was shattered, and we read of the decline of Rome, as Babylon was 'broken small' and 'no place was found for it', and it was scattered by the wind.

For the next 1,500 years, after Rome fell apart, the Jews, their power shattered, would wander the Earth, with no homeland. Promises would lie seemingly abandoned, and the Jews, seemingly forgotten.

Yet, for all of this, the redemptive plan of God was still in effect. He had promised that so long as the sun and moon endured, Israel would continue to be a nation before Him.

But, be reminded, at no time has man ever gained real dominance over the Earth. As Nebuchadnezzar himself bore witness, it is God alone that exalts a man, and none other.

You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes.

Daniel 4:32

The dominion that Nebuchadnezzar had, and hence, the subsequent kingdoms, was not the ability of man, but the punishment of God. Further, when we read of the terror of the fourth beast of Daniel 7, it's dominion and authority were the end of the punishment of God upon His people.

Yet, we read in this, the undercurrent of God's plan. In it, we understand that the devil gave his authority to the beast, the emperor of Rome (Revelation 13:4). Later, when Rome fell, we see that the dragon was then bound and locked in the Abyss for 1,000 years. So, we see the plan of God throughout, both to bring about His promised seed, the then future church, and, through it all, to condemn the great dragon, having given all of his authority into the hands of the fourth beast. Thus, the wisdom, forbearance, and providence of God, to work all things together for good, and to be perfect in justice and righteousness throughout.

So, too, we come to today. And, while many see a 'future-conflict' through the reading of the prophecies of Daniel 2 and 7, it appears clear to us that this is, in fact, a historical one.

Let us never confuse these issues. God is sovereign over the Kingdoms, and He gives them to anyone He wishes.

Men have constructed, as it seems, an idea of the devil, that he has any authority whatsoever. Yet, even in the height of wickedness, with Nebuchadnezzar through Rome, we see it was only the hand of God, working in and through His redemptive plan, that elevated any nation or ruler to any position. Not only that, but from the beginning, to Nebuchadnezzar himself, God announced His plan, through the revelation of the prophet Daniel, to let us know that it was not man and the devil which had so prospered, but rather, the due just reward of the disobedience and rebellion, even of the prophetic house of Jacob.

As we look, then, at the prophecies, the destructions, the devastations, and the desolation of Jerusalem,

we see that the power of the Holy People, the Jews, was completely broken. Like David had to wait until the death of Saul before assuming the Kingship, so, too, there was a certain waiting period, after the coming of the Kingdom at Pentecost, to the fall of the Jewish nation. When it came, the kingdoms of the world truly became the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ, even if it is not yet evident, Christ sits upon His Throne, the Throne of the LORD, until all His enemies are made His footstool (Hebrews 10:11-13).

But, the story of redemption continues, even as the church for the next 1,000 years after Constantine suffered little persecution, and grew and became a great mountain filling the Earth.

The idea of an end-times antichrist, a great one-world power, and a powerful devil, then, flow directly and only from the mind of man, which gives the devil the power that God Himself only possesses. The devil had his great kingdom for nearly 1,000 years, and, at the coming of a man named Jesus Christ, and the establishment of the rock cut out without hands (Mark 14:58), it was shattered altogether, 'broken small'.

Had the devil any power to do these things, he would have. And, in fact, he did. And, yet, throughout the demonstration of redemptive history, God showed Himself strong. When the world grew wicked exceedingly, He saved the elect, by the ark. When man proved to be capable of building a gate to heaven with baked bricks and slime for mortar, he confounded them. When man had a great empire of iron, ruling the entire known world, and the dragon himself gave his authority into the hands of the Roman Caesars, it was the presence of the church of Jesus Christ which shattered it, and scattered its dominion to the wind.

The destruction of Jerusalem, in 70 AD, was the Great Tribulation, the greatest trial the Earth will ever see. These were the 'days of vengeance', those prophesied, coming against God's people. The greatest evil, and the greatest judgment, comes, not at the hands of the devil, because the devil himself is subject to the justice of God. Were the enemy to step beyond justice, as he did at the cross in executing an innocent man, Jesus Christ, God would be right to condemn him.

No, it was only in response to the failure to live up to the light that they had that brought about the swift and complete vengeance upon the house of Israel. It is said that over one million Jews perished in that holocaust. Since the siege was laid during the feast of Passover, people from all over the nation were gathered and concentrated into the city. It was the worst, perhaps not numerically, but in proportion of the whole and degree of suffering, as, towards the end of the siege, Titus' army crucified 500 Israelites daily outside the city.

This, then, is the pinnacle of wickedness and God's judgment upon the nations, a nation that turned its back on what it knew, was punished, and, even in their 70 years of captivity, did not repent, by Daniel's prayer. And, it was this nation, that after living in their land, again, for 490 years, they still did not humble themselves, and admit their own guilt, but stiffened their necks, and killed the Lord of Life.

Never forget, it is not the power of the devil that we need to fear as Christians. Once, and for all, He was defeated and disarmed at the cross. No, the work of redemption is the power of the cross, and only fight we fight is the fight of faith. But, it is the inner-workings of the heart, that, after God has poured out such mercy, will we not, in the words of Luke 6:48, "dig deep", to the rock, and perfect holiness out of reverence for God? For, God knows whose are His, and all who name the name of the Lord should depart from wickedness. *