

Religions and Nations Disappear before Jesus Returns

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I know the title of this article is outrageous, but Revelation 13:14 and Revelation 17:12 do predict the world's religions and nations will be abolished before Jesus returns. If God's Word did not state it, I would not believe it. Since this may be the first time you have ever read this prediction, I am sure you are wondering how these events will happen.

Apocalyptic prophecy predicts a series of coming events which are stranger than fiction. During the Great Tribulation, the world will be very different than it is today. The Bible predicts a coming world order unlike anything people are anticipating. The same situation occurred in Noah's day.

In Noah's day, no one believed that a significant change was in the offing. This is the advantage of studying and understanding the "the more sure word of prophecy." God wants His people to understand His Word so that when He steps into the affairs of mankind and alters everything we know, we will not be discouraged or deceived.

Revelation 9 indicates a time is coming when God will permit Lucifer (the devil himself, the Antichrist) and his demons to physically appear on Earth. As I understand this subject, Jesus will only permit the devil and his angels to exit from the spirit realm (the Abyss) when two-thirds of the time allotted for the Great Tribulation has expired.

God holds the devil and his angels back until the 891st day of the Great Tribulation arrives. When these supernatural beings are released from the spirit realm, they will have physical bodies. The devil and his angels unexpectedly will descend to Earth from the sky. (Revelation 9:3) Their appearing will be glorious and intimidating.

The devil's angels will be so numerous that they will fill the sky from horizon to horizon like a swarm of locusts. At first, the people of Earth will run for shelter to escape their glorious presence, but before long, millions of people will go out to see "the greatest deception" to ever occur on Earth.

The Bible tells us that God is love. He is not willing that anyone should perish. This may sound strange, but God intends to use the physical appearing of the devil to save people who would not otherwise chose His salvation! Please consider some of God's objectives during the fifth and sixth trumpets.

1. Searching among the Wicked for Precious Souls

Long ago, God thoughtfully and deliberately designed the Great Tribulation to accomplish several objectives. One of God's objectives is to save as many people as possible during the 1,260 days allotted to the Two Witnesses. There are at least two problems with this objective. First, from God's point of view, the religions of the world are blasphemous.

Mankind is basically ignorant of God and His truth. Second, each person on Earth has been given the power of choice. To judge the living and determine who will be saved, God intends to enlighten the world with His truth (using 144,000 servants) so that each person can hear and understand the properties of salvation and sin. Once a person receives this knowledge, he/she will be in a position to make an informed and intelligent decision about his/her eternal destiny.

The first two and a half years of the Great Tribulation will be agonizing. The Bible reveals that the first four trumpets will devastate the whole world and reduce the population of Earth by 25%. In response to God's wrath, all nations will implement martial law shortly after the Great Tribulation begins.

To make matters worse, the religious and political leaders of the world will create a crisis government in an attempt to appease God so that His judgments will cease, and this crisis government which the Bible calls Babylon will persecute everyone who refuses to obey its blasphemous laws. Given the dire circumstances that remain after the first four trumpet events, survival will be questionable. For 890 days, the survivors will hear the 144,000 and by the 891st day, most people will have made their decision for or against God.

God mercifully keeps the devil and his angels in the Abyss for the first two-thirds (890 days) of the Great Tribulation which lasts 1,335 days. Lucifer and his demons will be released after a majority of the people on Earth no longer listen or consider the 144,000's testimony. The release of the devil and his angels will be a powerful "game changer."

When Lucifer and his angels physically appear, the devil will masquerade as Almighty God. Claiming to be God, he will travel the world for five months, winning the confidence of billions of people by *appearing* to be holy, righteous, generous, forgiving, and gracious. His appearance and actions will deceive a large number of survivors from the first four trumpets.

Pretending to be Almighty God, the devil will perform amazing miracles. He will even call fire down out of Heaven to prove his assumed divinity. His popularity will quickly grow and millions of wicked people will admire, adore, and worship him. Millions of wicked people will bow down before him in humble obedience. They will be the people who defied the gospel of Jesus presented by the 144,000.

Currently, there are many non-religious people on Earth (atheists, agnostics, etc.). These people do not believe there is a god and they will continue to deny there is a god even when Lucifer is walking on the earth! During the five months allotted to the fifth trumpet, Lucifer's demons will be at work by attempting to eliminate the infidels and torturing them with indescribable pain.

During the fifth trumpet, the demons will force many non-religious people to capitulate and join ranks with those who believe that Lucifer is Almighty God. There will be an antidote for this demonic torture. If a person surrenders to the gospel of Jesus, Jesus will not permit the devil's demons to torture him any further. So, the fifth trumpet will eliminate many infidels. Most of the infidels will join forces with Lucifer, but a few will surrender to Jesus Christ and be saved!

Notice Paul's comment about this coming event. Paul describes Lucifer as the "lawless one" or "man of sin" (KJV) because Lucifer will not be subject to any law but his own. He will do as he pleases, and because of his incredible powers, no one will be able to obstruct or thwart his actions:

"The coming of the lawless one [will appear to be a divine event, but the devil's actions] **will be in accordance with the work of Satan [who he really is] displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.**" (2 Thessalonians 9:9-12, insertions and emphases mine)

Several things can be said about this passage, but we will consider two: First, Paul says the wicked **"refused** to love the truth and so be saved." His language indicates something that many people overlook: The appearing of the lawless one occurs for a specific reason. Before Lucifer can appear, the world will have had to hear the gospel and reject it. We know the world heard the gospel and rebelled against it because God does not assign guilt to a person for something that he does not know and has not heard. (See James 4:17.)

Second, because the wicked refused to accept the truth and be saved, God sends a "game changer," a powerful delusion so that both groups of wicked people (religious and non-religious) will believe the lie and be condemned. You see, long ago God predetermined that the living will be thoroughly tested during the Great Tribulation to see who will choose to live by faith and be saved. Every person has the power of choice and each person will be required to make a choice. Our response to the testimony of Jesus, spoken through the lips of the 144,000, will determine our eternal destiny.

2. Abolishing the Religions and Nations of the World

When the five months allotted to the fifth trumpet ends, the devil will suddenly change behavior and character. His deceit is over. His change of character is prompted and empowered by the fact that during the sixth trumpet, the devil and his forces are permitted to kill people. In fact, the Bible indicates that he will kill a third of mankind, those who oppose him. (Revelation 9:15)

Surprisingly, many saints, remaining infidels, and a host of religious people will make a large group of people who will continue to oppose him. The saints will defy his authority and blasphemous claims. They know Lucifer is the devil. The infidels will defy Lucifer's move to abolish the nations of the world, and religious people will defy Lucifer's move to abolish the religions of the world.

Lucifer will give orders to abolish the religions and governments of the world at the sixth trumpet. He does this because when "God Himself" lives among men, there will be no room for religious plurality (people having different views about God). Lucifer intends to rule over mankind as Almighty God since he is opposed to all religions. (2 Thessalonians 2:4) Lucifer will

demand that everyone worship and obey him or die. The image to the beast mentioned in Revelation 13:14 will be Lucifer's one-world-church-state.

He will rule over the world as "King of Kings" (political matters) and "Lord of Lords" (spiritual matters). He will claim that there is only one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. Anyone resisting membership in Lucifer's one-world-church-state will be considered part of the opposition and will be killed. (Revelation 13:15) A one-world government cannot exist when governments and national boundaries exist. Lucifer will eliminate the governments of the world and divide it into ten sectors, appointing ten puppet kings over these ten sectors.

The first four trumpets (Revelation 8) will destroy much of the world's infrastructure. Communication, travel, banking, manufacturing, and energy will be non-existent. When the devil appears on Earth at the fifth trumpet, his agenda is to destroy the world in general and God's saints in particular.

This is why he is given the titles, Abaddon and Apollyon in Revelation 9:11. These titles mean "the destroyer." The devil will set up his one-world-church-state by dividing the world into small groups of a thousand people and he will place captains over each group that are loyal to him. (Dividing people into groups of a thousand was a common practice in ancient times. It is an efficient way to logistically manage many people. It also keeps any one group from becoming very powerful. See Exodus 18:21,25; Numbers 31:14; 1 Samuel 22:7 and 1 Samuel 29:2.)

Remember that one of God's objectives for the Great Tribulation is to save the largest possible number of people. Jesus allows the religions and nations of the world to be abolished during the sixth trumpet so that people will realize their need of a Savior. One of the greatest impediments to a new gospel is an old gospel, or as some people call it, "old time religion."

Many good hearted people would rather cling to their "old time religion" than embrace God's advancing truth. When all of the "old time religions" are abolished and outlawed, a huge obstacle for accepting God's present truth will be removed. People will find themselves having to choose between God's truth or the devil's lies. Past traditions and the practice of "old time religion" will not be possible!

The time of the sixth trumpet will be chaotic and horrific. All governments will be in disarray and ineffective during the Great Tribulation. In the United States, there will be no constitution, no Bill of Rights, and no Congress or court of appeal. The devil will have total control over the people of the world.

Only when he has achieved this will the devil offer survival to everyone who swears total loyalty to him and his government. Those who refuse to go along will be killed. The good news is that during this final hour of salvation, a few people will give up their "old time religion."

They will wake up and realize their desperate need of a Savior, a God whose ways are righteous and whose eternal government is based on principles of love. When these last few sheep come out of Babylon, God's offer of mercy ends. The seven bowls will then begin and Jesus will appear.

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