

Session 10

Why Will God Allow the Antichrist to Rise Up?

A. Introduction

1. Scripture makes it clear that God will allow the Antichrist to arise at the End of the Age.
2. While Satan and the Antichrist are fully responsible for the evil that they will do, it is ultimately only by God's decree that the Antichrist will be allowed a 3½-year reign here on earth.
3. Scripture is clear that the Antichrist will be granted these 3½ years of reign by God (Matt. 28:18; Rom. 13:1–2; Zech. 11:16–17).
4. God will also allow Antichrist to “overcome” and persecute His people for a period of time. God will allow Antichrist to have some measure of power and authority. However, God is never out of control even when He gives Antichrist this authority.
 - a. *“It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation...He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.”* (Rev. 13:7, 15)
5. This may be a new concept and idea for some of us and may seem to contradict our idea of a loving, merciful and gracious God. However, we want to see what Scripture says about how God has acted in His dealings with His people in human history, and how that does not contradict His nature.

B. Why Will God Allow the Antichrist to Rise Up?

1. To Purify the Church
 - a. God is looking for a church that is blameless and spotless when He returns.
 - b. Throughout history, the Lord has often used persecution to test and refine His people. The church needs an adversary to resist as part of the process of becoming pure and righteous (Isa. 26:9).

- c. During the End Times, the combination of the Antichrist's persecution and God's End-Time judgments on the Antichrist's empire will provide the optimum setting for us as His bride to flex our spiritual muscles.
 - i. As we resist evil and engage in spiritual warfare, we will be prepared and strengthened to reach the fullness of our glory at the End of the Age.
 - ii. The book of Acts gives us a prime example of how the church grew strong and stood fearless even in the midst of persecution.
 - iii. Even through the greatest persecutions and tribulations that we will face at the End of the Age, His grace is sufficient. God promises that His strength will be in us and that His power will be made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9–10).
- d. This is God's perfect process of refining and purifying the church to become overcomers in Christ. We become the overcoming Bride of Christ through experiencing hardships, temptations, options, and pain.
 - i. If Jesus had to learn obedience through suffering, what more so us as His Bride (Heb. 5:8)?
- e. God also uses and allows persecution to perfect our love for Him.
 - i. It provides a context and platform for us to display our love for Jesus through the choices that we make. Will we still choose to love Jesus even when it costs us?
 - ii. Persecution and discipline also serve to remove everything that hinders wholehearted love for Jesus. God uses the least severe means to produce the deepest level of love from the greatest number of people.
 - iii. We are only able to choose love and stay in love as we lean on His grace, and encounter the reality of His love towards us. We are loved by Him more than we can ever imagine and it His love for us that will empower and enable us to love Him to the end (1 Jn. 4:19).
- 2. To usher in the greatest ingathering of souls
 - a. The Great Tribulation provides the optimum setting to bring in the Greatest Harvest (Rev. 7:9–14; 14:14–16).
 - b. In the midst of the greatest darkness, light will shine the brightest. The glory of God will be manifested in and through His people that would

cause many to see, experience, and encounter the worthiness and the glory of Jesus, causing hearts to be stirred and call upon the name of the Lord.

- c. The book of Acts gives us a glimpse of how even in the midst of great persecution, many souls were saved as they saw the works of the Holy Spirit in and through the early apostles (Acts. 2:47b; 16:5).
 - i. In the book of Acts, the church of Jesus Christ was constantly being persecuted, with martyrdom being a common occurrence (Acts 7:54–60). Yet, the numbers grew because the Holy Spirit was moving through them, even in difficulties and tribulations.
3. To bring in the fullness of Israel's salvation (Rom. 11:26; Zech. 12:1–3; 13:7–9).
- a. The nation of Israel will play a vital role at the End of the Age and the salvation of Jerusalem and all of Israel will come to pass.
 - b. Scripture is clear that “*all Israel will be saved*” (Rom. 11:26) and that it is in the midst of intense persecution that they will come to know the Lord: “... *I will bring the one-third through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them. I will say, ‘This is My people’; And each one will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’*” (Zech. 12:1–3)
 - c. When the Antichrist turns on Israel and persecutes her, she will realise that he is not the Savior they initially thought that he was.
 - i. When they see the Church standing with her, many will begin to call upon the name of Jesus.
 - ii. Finally, Jesus will show Himself strong on their behalf as their Messiah when He returns. They will finally see Him rightly and call upon His name (Rom. 11:26).

C. Why Do We Need to Know?

1. The reason that Jesus warns about the seriousness of the times and calls us to develop understanding in His Olivet Discourse is so that we will not be offended at God.
 - a. We need to understand the ways of God — He uses the least severe means to produce the deepest level of love from the greatest number of people.

- b. We need to develop confidence in God and root and ground ourselves in the reality that in all things, God is in control.
 - c. Understanding how God works will guard our hearts from being offended when things begin to become more intense.
2. As His Bride, developing understanding will help us embrace and agree with His ways, and be able to partner with Him in perfect understanding of His heart.
- a. We will love Jesus even in the midst of persecution and not yield to the schemes of the Antichrist.
 - b. When we understand what He will do, we will not resist Him (by, for example, praying for God to remove all persecution) or do anything that is outside of the will of God (such as praying for Antichrist to be converted or attempt to assassinate him).

D. A Biblical Precedent — King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon

1. There are two books in the Old Testament that are key to see how God allowed and raised up an evil ruler in order to discipline the nation of Israel.
2. The books of Habakkuk and Joel give us a picture of how God can use evil men to discipline and refine His people.
 - a. In 586 BC, God used an evil king — King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, together with his army, to discipline the nation of Israel for their stubbornness and their rebellion towards God.
 - b. This gives us a picture of how God can use adversity to discipline and refine His people.
 - c. God's discipline and love are not mutually exclusive. It is out of His love and mercy that He disciplines us, so that we will walk close to Him and in His ways.
 - i. Heb. 12:5-6 says, *“And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.’”*
 - ii. Just like how a parent would discipline their children out of love, so that they would learn from their mistakes, God disciplines His children out of His tender love and mercy over us.

3. In Joel 2:11, God calls the Babylonian army “His” army, indicating that He is the One who has allowed this army to arise: *“The LORD gives voice before His army, For His camp is very great; For strong is the One who executes His word...”*
 - a. This army in Joel 2:11 does not refer to His church, or His angels, as is sometimes thought. Instead, it refers to the Babylonian army that God would eventually use to discipline Israel if they did not turn to Him.
 - b. The earlier verses of Joel 2 talk about the dread of the Babylonian army that will come upon Israel.
4. In Hab. 1:6, it is clear that it is the Lord’s hand upon King Nebuchadnezzar and his army: *“For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, a bitter and hasty nation...”*
 - a. We cannot deny what Scripture says in this verse: *“I am raising up the Chaldeans...”*
 - b. We need to understand and know that God can use various ways and means to discipline His people out of love and mercy. (However, this does not mean that King Nebuchadnezzar was not responsible for His evil ways. In fact, God later judged him for his pride (Dan. 4).)
 - c. How we define discipline needs to be aligned to the love and mercy of God. We must seek to understand that in all that He does, He does it for our good.
 - d. In Hab. 1:12, the prophet Habakkuk was himself shocked at how God would allow such severe means of discipline over the nation of Israel.
 - i. This prompted Habakkuk to wrestle with the Lord for greater understanding of how He deals with His people even in discipline and judgment (Hab. 2:1).
 - ii. We can learn from Habakkuk’s response to the Lord, especially if we too are shocked by the intensity of the End Times and how the Lord would allow the Antichrist to persecute His people.
 - e. God is sovereign. His plan is the best and in all that He does, He does it for our good.
 - i. God uses ways and means that our human wisdom may not fully grasp and understand.

- ii. In Isa. 55:8–9, the Lord says, *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’”*
- iii. It’s important to place our confidence in His love and mercy, as well as in His leadership, His plan, His will and ultimately in who He is, so that we would not be offended, fearful, confused, or deceived.
- iv. Ultimately, when our understanding fails us, we still trust that God is good, and we can turn our hearts to worship the One who works all things out for the good of those who love Him.

E. Conclusion

1. Why God would allow the Antichrist to arise at the End of the Age is something that as His people, we want to grow to understand, since it is part of His plan.
2. He promises to give understanding of His heart to those who seek Him diligently.
3. It is crucial and important in this time so that we will not be offended or resist Him, but we will be able to partner with Him fully as His Bride.