

Abomination, Tribulation and Deliverance

A popular theory teaches that God's people will be secretly "raptured" before a final seven-year tribulation. During that time, a mysterious figure—the Antichrist—is said to arise in Jerusalem, make a covenant with Israel, and then break it midway through. But this un-biblical teaching relies on a misreading of Daniel 9 and separates God's plan for Israel and the church in a way the Bible never does.

In Matthew 24, Jesus unfolds a prophecy that ripples across time. He speaks of "the abomination of desolation" (v. 15), pointing back to Daniel and forward to events yet to come. At least three distinct fulfillments fit a consistent pattern: God's enemies bring in a blasphemous abomination, which heralds a persecution of God's people. God ultimately responds by bringing deliverance to those who are faithful to Him.

The first fulfillment came swiftly. In response to a revolt, in AD 66 the Roman general Cestius Gallus led the Twelfth Legion and surrounded Jerusalem. He penetrated the outer Temple walls, but then unexpectedly withdrew. God's faithful saw the sign Jesus had foretold: "When you see the abomination... flee to the mountains" (v. 16). History tells us the Christians fled to Pella, and were saved when Jerusalem fell in AD 70.

But Jesus' prophecy stretches beyond that moment. "Then shall be great tribulation" (v. 21). This reaches to a second application—the long age of persecution foretold in Daniel 7, when the little horn power would wage war on the saints for 1,260 years. This was a spiritual abomination, as a corrupted church supplanted Christ's priestly ministry and enforced worship through coercion. Many faithful Christians who dared to resist this corrupt worship paid the ultimate price. But even this persecution was "cut short" as the light of the Reformation broke through the darkness and the Bible began to shine again.

Prophecy warns of a coming final crisis. Revelation 13 describes a coming "abomination" when all are commanded to worship the "image of the beast"—or face economic penalties and even death (Revelation 13:15–17). Just as in Daniel 3, when a golden image was raised and all were commanded to bow, so too the world will once again face a test of loyalty. In that hour, the faithful—like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—must stand when all others bow. And just as then, we can know that Jesus will be with us in the fire!

What marks God's true people in that final hour? Revelation 14:12 gives the answer: "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." God's faithful remnant will honor Him by obeying His commandments, not bowing to the idolatrous image. They will not yield to fear or flattery. They will not trade eternal truth for temporary security. The Bible doesn't say how long this persecution lasts, but in the end, God's people "will be delivered" (Daniel 12:1).

The Bible truth is plain, and already we see events in motion for its fulfillment. Global trends are aligning. Religious liberty is eroding. The machinery of coercion is being rebuilt—quietly, steadily, deceptively. The question isn't when the tribulation will come. It's whether we'll stand when it does. Will we compromise, or will we follow the Lamb wherever He goes? The time to decide is now.

ANCIENT WORLDS *of the* BIBLE

Study Guide 10

by Pastor Daniel McFeeters

The Antichrist and the Tribulation

Atop a windswept hill in the Judean wilderness rises Herodium—an artificial mountain, a monument to a king's ambition and pride. Built by Herod the Great as both fortress and mausoleum, it was designed to immortalize his name. From its heights, Herod could gaze toward Bethlehem, where—ironically—he is now remembered for a massacre he ordered in a desperate attempt to destroy a newborn King.

Herod's ambition reshaped the land. He launched an unprecedented building campaign across Judea—fortresses like Masada and Machaerus, lavish palaces in Jericho and Caesarea, and most famously, the grand renovation of the Jerusalem Temple, transforming it into one of the wonders of the ancient world. He imported Roman architecture—amphitheaters, aqueducts, and harbors—blending Jewish tradition with imperial power. But his motives ran deeper than civic development: he sought to impress Caesar, pacify the people, and preserve his fragile throne through spectacle and control.

Herodium stands as a tribute to a man who tried to play god. Herod ruled with cunning and cruelty, eliminating all perceived threats—including his own sons and his beloved wife. Though he built with brilliance, he died despised, and his tomb was soon desecrated. His legacy crumbled with the very kingdom he tried to secure.

Herod was not the Antichrist, but his life embodied the same spirit—self-exalting, truth-opposing, and bent on destroying Christ from the beginning. Scripture warns of another coming power like him.

In this lesson, we explore what the Bible truly reveals about the Antichrist, the Tribulation, and how we can stand faithful in a world where the battle for our worship is very real—and growing.

Could Antichrist Already Be Here?

Behind every earthly power that has opposed Christ—whether Herod, Pilate, or others—stands a darker force: the arch-deceiver, Satan. Scripture shows that Satan rarely works openly. Instead, he operates through kings, systems, and religious institutions, blending truth with error and cloaking rebellion in sacred forms.

The Bible speaks of a mysterious enemy called “the Antichrist.” Over the centuries, speculation has abounded. Is he a future political figure? A charismatic leader from the Middle East? Or is the Bible pointing to something more subtle—already active in the world?

John gives our first clues in his first epistle. “Many antichrists have come” marking the “last hour” (1 John 2:18). The Antichrist is not just a single man at the end of time, but a spirit of opposition to Christ and His work, already at work in John’s day.

What does this spirit do? It denies the Father and the Son (1 John 2:22). It denies that Jesus came in the flesh (1 John 4:3). This deceptive power masquerades as truth, but distorts who Christ really is.

Paul echoes this in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12, warning of a coming apostasy in which the “man of sin” sits in God’s temple, “showing himself that he is God” (v. 4). Even in his day, Paul said that “the mystery of lawlessness is already at work.” (v 7).

Could it be that this deceptive power is not a future villain, but a corrupted form of Christianity? Not a man, but a system—a religious system that replaces Christ with human authority, and calls us to trust a faulty human being in place of our Savior?

An Old Testament prophecy sheds more light on this development. In Daniel 7, the prophet sees a series of beasts representing successive world empires—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. From the ruins of Rome, a “little horn” arises. This power has “a mouth speaking great things” (Daniel 7:8), exalts itself against God, and wears out the saints of the Most High (Daniel 7:25). It even seeks to change times and laws—a clear reference to usurping divine authority. This blasphemous power rules for a symbolic “time, times, and half a time” -- 1,260 prophetic “days” or years.

This same persecuting, blasphemous force reappears in Revelation 13, now symbolized as a sea beast that receives its power from the dragon—Satan (Revelation 12:9; 13:2). Like the little horn, it speaks blasphemies, makes war against the saints, and continues for 42 months—again, 1,260 prophetic days. It combines religious and political authority, and the world marvels after it.

These prophecies aren’t isolated—they are synchronized warnings of a single, composite power that would rise from within the church. It appears Christian, but opposes Christ. The question isn’t only who it is, but whether we’ve already seen it at work, far closer than we thought...

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

SCRIPTURE: *“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time ... but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.”* (Matthew 24:21-22)

“At that time Michael shall stand up, ... And there shall be a time of trouble ... And at that time your people shall be delivered...” (Daniel 12:1)

“He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.” 1 John 2:22

REFLECTION: How does it make you feel to think that true Christians could face persecution in the near future? What gives you hope?

REFLECTION: In what ways do you see the “spirit of antichrist” already at work in the world today?

EXPERIENCE: Have you ever felt pressured—socially, culturally, or spiritually—to compromise your convictions?

QUESTION: Who or what do you think that the “antichrist” is, or will be?

How can we avoid being deceived by the strong deceptions of Satan and the antichrist in the end times? (see 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12)

RESPONSE: Will you love the truth of God’s word and commit to stand firm like Daniel’s friends, even in the face of terrible persecution?

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Written by Pastor Daniel McFeeters with assistance from
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