



THE COMING WORLD DICTATOR, WHO WILL IT BE?

A HUNGER FOR CERTAINTY

TRY JESUS COURSE BOOK 19

“People are being dumped into this incredibly unintelligible society, and they are swimming, barely staying afloat, and then trying to catch on to whatever is going to give them a little safe ground.”

– Bruce Springsteen, Rolling Stone Interview



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19 – THE COMING WORLD DICTATOR, WHO WILL IT BE?

Cult leader **David Koresh** (alias Vernon Howell) of the Branch Davidians believed he was Jesus Christ in sinful form. He said he was the Lamb of Revelation who alone could open the seven seals and foresee the end of the world. He would hold his followers in awe as he quoted large Bible passages from memory. Such was his power over his followers that they gave him their wives and daughters as concubines.

He told Nicole Gent she could be married to Christ, be queen of the world, and her children would be as kings and queens. One of his wives, Robyn Bunds, 23, said: "He had this amazing ability to recite verse. He just has a good way of interpreting the Scriptures. He is very believable."

When the authorities came with a warrant to search their compound in Waco, Texas, Koresh's followers shot and killed four officers and wounded 16 others. Ten days later he sent the FBI two letters signed

"Yahweh Koresh." "I AM your God," he wrote, "and you will bow under my feet," After holding authorities at bay for 51 days 74 died in the fires as the compound went up in flames.

Time described him as "equipped with both a creamy charm and a cold-blooded willingness to manipulate those drawn to him... He was the most spectacular example since Jim Jones, who committed suicide in 1978 with more than 900 of his followers." Former cult member Allison Manning said: "The people who died are not fruit cakes; just people who really wanted to serve God," and go to heaven. "Their sincerity was taken by a person who abused it."

Cult researcher David Millikan's comment is pertinent: *Some people have "a hunger for certainty and are prepared to sacrifice personal liberty to a group they believe holds the answers."* They want others to make their decisions and they will follow.

Why Are We So Insecure

Bruce Springsteen, on his album *The River*, sings, "Everybody's got a hungry heart." He's perceptively in tune with the times when he said, in a *Rolling Stone* interview:

"People are being dumped into this incredibly unintelligible society, and they are swimming, barely staying afloat, and then trying to catch on to whatever is going to give them a little safe ground."

Why is our society so "incredibly unintelligible" and insecure? Historian **Manning Clark** gives us the answer: *"We are in a period of human history when no-one has anything to say and the certainties have melted away.... The difficulty is how to put forward answers when we do not know what we believe."* Western scientific reasoning has concluded that we are a biological accident and thus an absurdity. The trouble is something inside us rebels against this concept. People can't live with this position. Our loss of God has left us insecure, homeless and vulnerable.



Jesus' Last Message

In His last talk to His disciples, Jesus discussed two events: the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (70 AD) and events leading up to His second coming (Matthew 24). At His coming He would end this present world and set up His eternal kingdom. Jerusalem's destruction illustrates, on a small scale, what will take place worldwide in the last days.

1. What warning did Jesus give concerning last-day deceptions? Matthew 24:1-5 (page 700 in NIV Bible: International Bible Society, 00195)
Watch out that no-one _____you. For many will come in my name, claiming, "I am the Christ," and will _____.
2. In what way did Christ say that false prophets and false Christs would deceive many? Matthew 24:11, 24 (page 701)
For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great _____and _____to deceive even the elect - if that were possible.
The elect are the true followers of Jesus who will not be deceived.
3. What time of distress, did Jesus say, would come upon the world? Matthew 24:21, 22 (page 701)
For then there will be _____, _____from the beginning of the world until now and never to be equalled again ... but for the sake of the elect those days will be _____.

The Antichrist of the Last Days

4. Taking up the theme of Jesus, what did Paul say was to happen before Jesus comes again?

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 (page 838)

Don't let anyone _____ you in any way, for that day [the second coming of Jesus] will not come until the rebellion [Greek, apostasy = falling away] occurs and the _____ is _____, the man doomed to _____.

This "lawless man" is portrayed as the ultimate false Christ who will counterfeit Jesus' second coming to deceive the world, setting himself up as the final world dictator. This counterfeit is described using the same terms as for Jesus' coming. To be deceptive, a counterfeit has to be very close to the real. Who would be fooled by a counterfeit \$15 note!

5. What position will this lawless one claim as his? 2 Thessalonians 2:4 (page 838)

He will _____ and will _____ himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple,

God's temple is the church (1 Corinthians 3:16, page 808).

6. What position did Lucifer [Latin for "morning star"] want when he rebelled against God in heaven? Isaiah 14:12-15 (page 493)

How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star [Lucifer], son of the dawn! ... You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; ... I will make myself _____."

The term "antichrist" means not only "against", but also "in place of Christ". While the Bible says there are many antichrists through whom Satan has worked (1 John 2:18, page 862), the ultimate antichrist is Satan himself. He wanted God's position in heaven, and as we approach the end he hasn't changed. Satan knows he has no hope, but he's trying to take as many people with him as possible.

7. In accordance with whose work will be the coming of the lawless one (antichrist)? How will he deceive those who perish? 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10 (page 838)

The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of _____ displayed in all kinds of _____, _____ and _____, and in every sort of _____ that deceives those who are perishing.

8. Why will some people perish when Jesus comes? 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 (page 838)

They perish because they _____ to _____ the truth and so be _____. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who _____ believed the truth but have _____ in wickedness.

When we take ourselves outside of God's protection, then we are at the mercy of Satan. By our choices each day we're either opening our hearts to God's will or hardening ourselves against it. It's not enough to know the truth—the devil does that (James 2:19, page 855). Many, sadly, will be lost who know the truth. We need to love Jesus who is the truth (John 14:6, page 764).

Revelation on the Antichrist

The book of Revelation enlarges Matthew 24. It expands the concept of a counterfeit Christ in chapters 13-18. In chapter 13 **two beasts** are portrayed: one from the sea and one from the earth. These are

Satan's henchmen to help him in his final attack on God's people. The three together constitute a **counterfeit trinity**, symbolised as Babylon. The final antichrist is a worldwide false religious coalition that will combine with secular, political powers to enforce its false gospel and religious system on the world.

The Beast Out of the Sea

The **sea beast** is pictured as having 10 horns with 10 crowns and seven heads each with a blasphemous name. It resembles a leopard, has feet like a bear and a mouth like a lion. It receives its authority from the dragon (Satan, Revelation 12:3-4, 9). It's a composite of the four beasts and horns in Daniel 7, that represent the powers Satan has used against God's people down through the ages. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon

(605 BC), imposed idol worship on God's people (Daniel 1-3). Satan used the Roman governor Herod to try to destroy Jesus at birth (Matthew 2:13-16). During the Middle Ages the church, in apostasy, used civil power to enforce its false gospel and religious system.

The sea beast has all the characteristics of these previous powers and culminates in its final stage - the seventh head (Revelation 17:7-11). Its fatal wound that is healed (Revelation 13:3) is a counterfeit of Jesus, death and resurrection.

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The Beast Out of the Earth

The land beast is lamb-like but speaks like a dragon. It's a wolf in sheep's clothing - counterfeit religion used by Satan to carry out his devious plans.

9. What does the land beast do? How does it deceive people? Revelation 13:11-14 (page 874)

He exercised all the _____ of the first beast on his behalf, and _____ the earth and its inhabitants _____ the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. And he performed _____ and _____, even causing _____ to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he _____ the inhabitants of the earth.

Fire from heaven was used, in the time of Elijah, to show who was the true God (1 Kings 18:38, page 254). At Pentecost it indicated the giving of the Holy Spirit to Jesus' followers (Acts 2:1-3, page 771). Here it is used to deceive people into thinking God is acting. The land beast is a counterfeit of the Holy Spirit. As the Holy Spirit points people to Jesus (John 15:26; 16:14, page 765) so the land beast, through miraculous signs, will deceive the world into worshipping the sea beast.

10. Jesus predicted a time of great distress. What will happen to those who refuse to worship the image of the beast and receive its mark? Revelation 13:15-17 (page 874)

He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who _____ to worship the image to be _____. He also forced everyone ... to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no-one could buy or sell _____, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.

The antichrist sets up a religious dictatorship - not like Hitler or Stalin - but through deception and subtlety, forcing the world to worship the image to the sea beast. Because of insecurity many will be prepared to sacrifice freedom for certainty. Could a subtle dictatorship happen today? Note what renowned thinker Francis Schaeffer says: "What of tomorrow? In the United States, for example, a manipulating authoritarian government could come from the administrative side or from the legislative side. A public official ... at the highest level has wisely said, 'Legislative dictatorship is no better than executive tyranny.' . . . 'When freedom destroys order, the yearning for order will destroy freedom.'" (*How Should We Then Live?*)

To illustrate, **Wikileaks'** founder, **Julian Assange**, love him or loath him, had his bank accounts frozen when he raised the ire of the U.S. by publishing embarrassing leaked diplomatic cables. The US vice-president, **Joe Biden**, likened him to a "hi-tech terrorist." **Sarah Palin** called on the US government to hunt him down like an al-Qaeda or Taliban leader, calling him "an anti-American operative with blood on his hands". Former Arkansas Governor and presidential candidate **Mike Huckabee** said he should be tried for treason and executed if found guilty. This, despite Defence Secretary **Robert Gates** saying: "Is this embarrassing? Yes. Is it awkward? Yes. Consequences for U.S. foreign policy? I think fairly modest." According to analysts, the leaks show how well the diplomats function. A number of newspapers have also published the leaked information, without such repercussions. *Time* said, "Wikileaks' revelations could change history." (Massimo Calabresi. *Time*, Dec 13, 2010)



The terrorist bombing of the New York World Trade Center and the Pentagon (Sept 11, 2001) has heightened our insecurities. The world will never be the same again!

The Issue in the Final Crisis

11. Whom are we called to worship? Revelation 14:6, 7 (page 874)

Worship who the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.

The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle in the longstanding controversy concerning the law of God. Will we choose to follow human laws or God's laws? Those who have accepted Jesus' free gift of salvation will honour Him in keeping His commandments and remaining loyal to Him. They will worship the Creator rather than the beast, and worship God's way rather than human being's way!

12. Which commandment is referred to here?

For in six days the Lord MADE the HEAVENS and the EARTH, the SEA, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the SABBATH day and made it holy.

(Exodus 20:8-11, page 54)

Deliverance: The Antichrist Defeated

As we have stated, God's claim for worship is based on the fact that He made us. The word worship comes from Old English "worth-ship". God, as Creator, is worthy of our adoration and allegiance. This gives life meaning and purpose. It gives value to human beings, in contrast with evolutionary theory, which says that life is just a gigantic accident, and therefore has no significance.

13. Who will overthrow the lawless one? 2 Thessalonians 2:6-8 (page 838)

And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be _____ at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be _____, whom the _____ will _____ with the breath of his mouth and _____ by the splendour of his _____.

14. Who has the promise and assurance of eternal life? 1 John 5:11-13 (page 864)

I write these things to you who _____ in the name of the Son of God so that you may _____ that you have _____ life.



Standing for What You Believe

Revelation 13 draws its message from the story in Daniel 3 (page 627). Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the image of four metals (Daniel 2, Guide 11) made a great impression on him. But he didn't like the view that his great empire would end. He made a similar image, but all of gold - to show that his kingdom would last forever. The image was 60 cubits high and six cubits wide (27 x 2.7m; a cubit is about 0.45 m). Nebuchadnezzar ordered everyone to bow down to the image under threat of death for refusal.

Daniel and his friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, were among the princes Nebuchadnezzar took as captives when he conquered Jerusalem in 605 BC. Out of all the thousands of Jews, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were the only ones who refused to bow in worship of the image. (Daniel must have been away on some other business at the time).

They could've rationalised and said, "We can't be much use to God if we're dead. We'll bow down, but we won't really be worshipping this image." But they didn't do that. They stood for all to see them.



Nebuchadnezzar was furious. He couldn't believe that anyone would defy his decree. He gave them a second chance, because he obviously liked them. They, along with Daniel, had shown such promise in their training (1:18-20).

"If you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good," said the king. "But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace." Defiantly he added, "**Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?**"

Their reply to the king was courageous, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

The king couldn't believe his ears! How dare these captives defy him. He ordered them to be tied up and thrown into the furnace. So hot were the flames that

the soldiers were killed by the heat.

Then, to the king's amazement he saw "four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods." He shouted to them, "Servants of the Most High God, come out!" When they came out of the fire they were unharmed.

Nebuchadnezzar, quite overwhelmed by the experience, said, "*Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.*"

Such will be the attitude of those who worship and follow Jesus in the last days. Here is the safe ground Springsteen sees us needing. Faith in God brings certainty and security without surrendering freedom. As you talk with Jesus about the issue of your loyalty and worship of Him in the final crisis, indicate below how you feel you will respond to Him.



- Jesus, this guide has helped me understand about the antichrist.
- Lord Jesus, I want to be among those who stand true to You in the last days.
- Jesus, I have chosen You as my Saviour and I am willing to follow You and worship You.

How does the way we worship show our loyalty to God?

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