

Title: The Signs of the Time

Text: Matthew 24:3-14

Take your Bibles and turn with me to the Gospel of Matthew. The gospel of Matthew chapter 24. Matthew chapter 24 and 25 is perhaps the greatest discourse that Jesus ever taught concerning ^{future events} ~~prophecy~~. Two tremendous chapters ~~about future events~~.

Please remember ^{from} ~~from~~ last Sunday that the disciples ask Jesus three questions: (1) One.. tell us when will these things be? This question is referring to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. And this question is answered in Luke chapter 21. It is not answered here in Matthew. And it has been fulfilled. The Temple was destroyed ⁱⁿ 70 A.D. by the Romans governor Titus.

(2) Question two.. "What will be the sign of your coming." And (3) question three: "What will be the sign of the end of the age?" are both answered here in Matthew 24 and 25.

Now, today, I want to look at that third question: WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF THE END OF THE AGE? And once again, please remember, that the phrase "end of the age" is referring to the end of the Jewish age. It is not referring to the end of the church age. This Jewish age will end when the Messiah comes in power and glory to establish His 1000 year reign here upon the earth. 7 years ^{event} ~~event~~ previous to that ~~event~~, Christians will be caught up to meet the Lord in the Air. This is recorded in I Thess. 4:17. This event is called the "rapture of the Church." Then will follow the 7 years of Great Tribulation. At the end of the tribulation the end of the Jewish age will happen as Christ comes in power and glory. And every eye will see the coming of Christ.

So, the signs that we are about to look at take place during the Great Tribulation.

Matthew chapter 24 beginning with Vs 3.. (Read Vs 3-14, 24)

PRAYER

I would like to share with you six signs concerning the end of the age. Six signs that Jesus said will show that the end of the age is about to happen.

(1C) Number one.. in verse 4, 5, 11, and 24, Jesus tells us about a misleading sign. A sign of deception. A sign of leading one astray. Vs 4 says: "see to it that no one misleads you."

Vs 5: "For many will come in my name, saying, I am the Christ and will mislead many."

Vs 11: "And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many."

Vs 24: "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect."

THE MISLEADING SIGN. Dear friends, we are living in a day in which deception is on ever hand. And false prophets and false Christs are crying out on every street corner.

Please notice...Jesus said that this will be so strong, this power of deception will be so strong, that if it were possible, which it is not, but if it were possible even the elect (in this case ^{people who come to Christ during the tribulation} ~~the nation of Israel~~), if it were possible they would mislead the very elect.

And let me tell you, we are living in a day that is absolutely set. All systems go.. for world wide deception..FALSE CHRISTS.....FALSE PROPHETS.

One of our larger demonations was holding their annual meeting...this happended a few years ago...They were in convention and the main issue befor the delates was a change in their doctrinal position concerning the Bible. They wanted to change thier statement of faith because they didn't like the stand of that statement on the INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE. So, they changed it. It now reads.."We believe the Bible contains the Word of God."

In other words, they no longer believe that the Bible is the Word of God. They believe that the Bible only contains the Word of God. *(We Believe Homosexuals is inconsistent with Bible Teach)*

Dear friends, we are living in an age of deception ..False prophets deceiving and misleading the many.

Well, I want you to know something today. I believe the Bible is the Word of God. I believe in a personal God. And I believe that Jesus Christ is God. And I believe that He will come again. And I trust you believe that also...(AMEN)

BEWARE, DEAR FRIENDS, LEST YOU BE MISLEAD...

There are some folks--(not in this church I hope)--who say we shaould not preach Christ because it will offend visitors. Let me tell you, if that becomes a major position of this church, then let's close our doors and go home. We are here to preach Christ and Christ crucied for our sins. We are here to preach the Word of God. WHY? Because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

I wonder, dear friends, if you fully realize that you are in a very small minority in America. Not many churches acturally believe that the Bible is the Word of God. That is a sad fact. Our nation is fast becomeing one great religious deception. And Jesus siad,

"BEWARE" It is a sign of the end of the age.

(20) Second sign: The military sign... Vs 6 says, "And you will be hearing of ward and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end."

Wars and rumors of wars. Now, there are two things intended here. Number one, there will be a lot of actual battles going on all over the world.... Two, rumors of wars. Everyone will be bothered by the fact that everywhere you turn there is a rumor of another conflict...SOUND FAMILIAR....

Everytime you pick up the newspaper, another war is about to start or in progress. One month the rumors were so bad I didn't know whether to pack my jungle-fatigues, my snow clothes, or my desert uniforms.

Friends, there is going to be wars and rumors of wars. The whole world will be living under the fear and threat of war. And regardless of where you go, there will be no security from this fear of war.

Thus, we are going to need....DID YOU HEAR WHAT I SAID...We are going to need someone to come forth and say, "I WILL PROVIDE SECURITY." And the great ANTICHRIST, the greatest deception that the world has ever seen, will come forth speaking very eloquently and all the world will follow after him, the Bible says. And this one man will rise to power and it will seem like he is the answer to all the needs of the world..... *For Peace*

And I remind you that this man will not be opposed to Jesus Christ. So, many people I have heard, and I must confess that I was one of them, so many people have the wrong meaning of the word "ANTI". In English it does mean "AGAINST". But, it is not so in Greek. In Greek it means "INSTEAD OF" OR "SUBSTITUTION FOR."

In other words this world leader, this Antichrist, substitutes himself for Christ. He becomes a counterfeit Christ. He is going to look like he is Jesus Christ. *And The World will follow him.*

WARS AND RUMORS OF WAR....A MILITARY SIGN.

(3C) A third sign is found in Vs 7. Let's call these outstanding signs. Outstanding things that will happen in this period of time. And they are signs. Vs 7 mentions three outstanding signs.

- (1) Number one, nation and kingdom will rise against nation and Kingdom.
- (2) Number 2, there will be famines.
- (3) And three, there will be earthquakes.

And they will be in various places..Meaning: they will happen where you least expect them to happen.

I am always amused by earthquakes. They seem to happen where the experts never thought they would happen. Have you notice that? It is becoming so widespread that there is no where free from earthquakes. Did you know that more earthquakes have occurred in the last 30 years than all previous recorded history? It is fascinating.

Some people will say, "Well, the nations of the world never recorded earthquakes like they do today. Are you kidding. They recorded earthquakes even before the time of Jesus. Anything like an earthquake was pretty important. And in the last 30 years more earthquakes than ever before in history. And Jesus said it is a sign of the time.

Now, let's look at a phrase in Vs 7 which I believe is often misinterpreted. And when I say that, I have to say this: that what I interpret this to mean might also be misinterpreted. You judge for yourself.

Vs 7 says, "nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." And the first thing that comes to the minds of people is War. ..And that could be true. It could tie in with Vs 6 and the sign of Wars.

But there is another possibility. This could be correctly looked at as through NATIONS ARE ARISING. A lot of new nations. The point is that you will see in the end times more nations and more new kingdoms than you have ever seen in the history of the world.

And are we not seeing that happen before our very eyes. With the break up of the former Russian empire, we have seen numerous new nations. Last year the United Nations, listed a new high of 145 nations in the world.

It seems that new nations are arising all over the world. That is why I believe what Jesus means is that in the end time, just before His revelation, there will be many, many new nations. There will be many, many treaties and alliances. In other words it is setting the stage for some sort of united Federation. A united federation of nations through which this one world political leader may find a box to preach from. ARISING NATIONS AND KINGDOMS.

Now, look at Vs 8. "But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs." Things that will happen during the first three and half years of the 7 year tribulation period. (4C) Vs 9..The fourth sign.. "Then" after the beginning of birth pangs, "then shall they deliver you." WHO?...WHO IS "YOU"? ..ISRAEL"... "They shall deliver you up to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of my name."

I want to call this 4th sign ..THE MAJORITY SIGN. I call this the majority sign because this is something different than all past history. WHY DO I SAY THAT?

You see, in the days of Jesus, the Jews could assume that because of the persecution of the nation of Israel by the Romans, that this was the end of the age. But, notice Jesus said, "in that day you will be hated of all nations." Dear friends, it will be a majority viewpoint in the last half of the tribulation period as explained in the book of Revelation. The majority sign is that Israel will be hated by all the nations of the world. And ^{part} includes the U.S. if we are still in existence.

(5C) Then we come to the moral sign. Vs 12 says "because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold."

Dear friends, when I read this it makes me wonder how far along we can really get until the fulfillment of this sign. Lawlessness shall increase. Sin will increase everywhere. And the love of many will grow cold.

You know, I think of this verse often in relationship to how our world is being prepared for the end of the age. But to me, the first phrase ^{doesn't} bother me at all.. "lawlessness shall increase." I could stand and thunder forth from this pulpit how sin is running rapid throughout the world, especially our own nation. But, folks, that willn't do any thng for us.

But, did you notice the last phrase? Because lawlessness will increase, THE LOVE OF MANY WILL GROW COLD....That should concern us.

Let me ask you a question. IS YOUR LOVE GROWING COLD TOWARD THE LORD JESUS? Let me give you a Bible principle: WHEN SIN IS INCREASING THE LOVE OF MANY WILL GROW COLD.

And you know, we are living in a day when people are so insincitive to sin. We accept it. We justify it. We overlook it. We are not bothered by it anymore. And because of the pressure of sin everywhere, Christians are finding the pressure so great that thier love is growing cold. And they wonder why they can't have that first love that they once had for Jesus Christ. Why does that happen? Because ^{there} ~~there~~ is so much sin in the life. We get to the point when we are so insinsitive that we can't see sin anymore. We practice a thing so often that pretty soon we accept it as alright. And only by the love and grace of the Holy Spirit can that hard ground be broken up. And we begin to see sin for what it is.

You know, there is a Bible principle that is trught in many different places in the Bible. And that is: WHEN YOU DRAW CLOSE TO THE LORD, HE WILL DRAW CLOSE TO YOU.

You see, his holiness demands our holiness. And if there is sin in your life, you are not really fellowshiping with Christ, No matter how hard you are trying to kid yourself. We try to convince ourselves that we are close to God and, yet, there is sin in our life and we know it is there. Beware! When lawlessness increases, the love of many grows cold.

I hope that is the principle we learn from that verse. Not just that sin is everywhere. We could leave this service and say, "YES! that is right. There is sin everywhere. Isn't that allfull."

But, there was sin in the days of Jesus, also. So, if we are to learn a lesson it must be that ^{when} ~~when~~ lawlessness increases, the love of many will grow cold.

So, where do you stand? How hot is the fire of love in your heart for Jesus.

(6C) One finally sign. Vs 14..I want to call this THE MIRACLUOUS SIGN. I think it is a miracle. THE MIRACULOUS SIGN. Vs 14 says, "and this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come."

You know, every time I hear a missionary appeal I can't help but reflect on this verse. Because it looks so sad today. We are losing out in the great missionary task of bringing the gospel to the world. There are more people being born each year than are coming to Christ. In 1990 , 29% of the world population was Christian. By 2010 - 21% of the world's population will be Christian. We are losing the battle. How can we ever hope to win the world. Only 10% of all Christian workers deals with 90% of the world's population, while 90% of the Christian workers deals with 10%. HOW CAN WE EVER WIN A WORLD TO CHRIST?

Well, I am thankful that one day the gospel will be preached in all nations, in every tongue, in every language. And even though there is still over 100 different languages that have not yet received the Word of God in their own tongue, there is coming a day when every nation, tongue and people will hear the gospel. AND THIS WILL TAKE A MIRACLE.

HOW IS IT GOING TO BE DONE? Turn in your Bibles to the last book, the book of Revelation. And I would like to look at Chapter 7. Revelation chapter 7 verse 3...

(Read 7:3-4).....144 thousand from each tribe of Israel.

(Read 7:9-10; 13-14)

What is the point? Notice, a great multitude comes out of all the nations of the World. Notice the phrase, "after this." "AFTER WHAT? After telling us about the 144 thousand Jews.

Now, come to chapter 14. Revelation chapter 14 verse 1.....(Read Vs 1 and 6)

What is the point? 144 thousand Jews will finally fulfill the great commission. And then, dear friends, the end will come. Every tongue shall hear the gospel. All ^{peoples} ~~nations~~ of the world shall hear the preaching of the 144 thousand Jews who will be supernatural empowered according to the prophecy of Joel chapter 2. And many..both Jew and Gentile will come to Christ during the tribulation period.

And just as the day of Pentecost, as Peter indicated in his sermon, the miracle of being able to speak in various languages will be upon the sons of Israel (Joel chapter 2.) And these 144 thousand will take the Gospel to every single nation, tongue, and language.... Friends, that is a miracle.

But, you say, I live today. I am here, right now. ^{Right! So} lift up your eyes. The end is drawing close. No question about it. We see the shadow of these signs that will find their fulfillment during the tribulation period.

And Praise God, before this tribulation starts, Jesus will come in the clouds for the believers, says Paul in I Thess. 4:17. The world, or the unbelievers, will not see this event. But, in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, believers will be caught up to meet Jesus. The dead in Christ will rise first. And we who are alive and remain will be caught up with them in the air. And we will be transformed into the likeness of Christ in a moment of time. And then the Great tribulation period will start...

And isn't it great to know that you will be part of the rapture? Isn't it great to have the assurance through faith in the person of Jesus Christ that you will be part of the rapture.... What tremendous hope in ^{Thus} an age of uncertainty....

But, Christians, beware.... do not be deceived.... do not be led astray.... Remain steadfast in your confidence and truth in the Lord Jesus Christ... Do not be tossed about by every wind and every doctrine that comes along. Stay close to the foot of the cross. And know in whom we believe that our redemption draws near.....

Let us close in prayer