

SIGNS OF THE END

Matthew 24:3

INTRODUCTION:

A great French chemist said that within a hundred years, God is going to come down to this earth with his big ring of keys and will say to humanity, "Gentlemen, it is closing time."

One morning on the Mount of Olives, when the disciples were alone with Jesus, they asked him three very important questions. Tell us, when shall these things be. And what shall be the sign of thy coming. And of the end of the world.

The disciples had accepted the fact that Jesus would return. And now they wanted to know when, and they wanted to know if there would be any signs preceding his coming.

They knew that the Old Testament was filled with signs of his coming - his first coming. And they prophesied in detail.

If only the world had studied the signs of the Old Testament, they would have known that Jesus was coming and would have welcomed him. But their ignorance and blindness concerning the teachings of the Scriptures led them to fail to recognize him.

Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the Old Testament revealed --

He would be of the tribe of Judah - Gen. 49:9.

He would be born in Bethlehem - Micah 5:2.

He would be born of a virgin - Isaiah 7:14.

He would be called out of Egypt - Hosea 11:1.

He would come as a prophet - Deut. 18:18.

His own people would reject him. Isaiah 53:3.

He would make a triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Zech. 9:9

He would be betrayed and sold for 30 pieces of silver. Zech. 11:12.

He would be put to death by crucifixion - Psalm 22.

His hands and feet would be pierced. Psalm 22:16.

Soldiers would cast lots for his clothing. Psalm 22:18.

He would be raised from the dead. Psalm 16:9.

He would ascend into Heaven. Psalm 68:18.

Jesus told his disciples that there would be signs for which they could watch.
He warned them on two occasions to beware of setting dates. V. 6 - But of that day
and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of Heaven, but my father only.

It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the father has put
in his own power. Acts 1:7.

Although he warned them about speculation on the exact time of his return, he assured them there were signs in the Scriptures, as well as his own words, that they would have eyes to see that the time was near. When these things began to come to pass, then lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh. Luke 21:28.

Now the word sign is used in various ways. It may be as a wonder, a miracle, but these things which Jesus talked about as signs, were to serve as evidence in the Bible revelation. It was to inform men and enlighten the hearts and minds of people. And today it would seem that these signs are converging for the first time since Christ ascended into Heaven.

What are some of these signs.

✓ First, the mental state of the world. Jesus said there are going to be two things in reference to this. First, upon the earth, the distress of nations with perplexity. Luke 21:25. To be distressed is to be oppressed or under pressure. It means bewilderment. In other words, the generation before his return would be under severe pressure from every point of view. And there would be no apparent way out. *Flooding Worst in U.S. history - cities without water - Richmond - 250,000 persons had to leave their homes in worst disaster in hist. & state of Penna.*

Jesus said the world would reach a state of international impass when nations would go down blind alleys and find dead end streets. Men's hearts failing them for fear and looking after those things which are coming on earth. There will be world-wide frustration. A great abundance and millions starving at the same time.

✓, 10 Second, Jesus said and then shall many be offended and betray one another, and shall hate one another - V. 10.

There never was a time when people were so on edge, so easily hurt, and offended.

And there never was a time when we tired so hard to patch up our jangled nerves. The pressure of the modern life is devastating. In some parts of the world as pressure builds up, some families actually betray their own members.

This sort of mental pressure is felt everywhere. I read an amusing story where something like this happened even in the hospital not so long ago. Joseph Feenan, a former city health commissioner for Patterson, N. J., had been suffering severe pains in his abdomen and the doctor determined that the trouble was his gall bladder. He advised having an examination and X-rays, and the diagnosis was correct. He had a rather large gall stone. So they went ahead with surgery and he had his gall bladder removed. As expected, the Doctor removed the stone and after a brief time in the recovery room, he was returned to his own room to recuperate. The following day, Mr. Feenan, was feeling well enough to talk on the telephone. While he was talking, a nurse walked in with a small paper cup, in her hand. Feenan motioned for her to put the cup on the bedside table while he finished his conversation. She put the cup down and left the room. When Feenan finished his conversation, he picked up the cup to see what it contained. There was a little gray object in the bottom of the cup - so he reached for his water glass and gulped it down, assuming he was taking a pill. At that moment, the nurse, re-entered the room and seeing what Feenan had done, she turned pale and dashed into the hall screaming for the doctor. Poor Joseph Feenan had swallowed his own gall stone. The doctor assured him that everything would be alright and even suggested that what his gall bladder couldn't do, his stomach might well be able to take care of. This confused state seems to be everywhere you turn. All sorts of mental problems.

✓ V. 37 Second, the (moral state) of the world - V. 37. In the time of Noah it was written that God saw that the wickedness of man was great. And every (imagination) of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. God said to Noah the end of all flesh has come before me. For the earth is filled with violence through them and behold I will destroy them with the earth. Gen. 6:5-12, 13. Jesus said, as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the son of man. They eat, drank, they married wives and were given in marriage. Luke 17:26.

V. 39 Despite God's warnings through Noah they were so occupied with themselves and their wickedness, they knew not until the flood came and took them all away. V. 39.

Jesus also said it was going to be like the days of Lot. They eat, drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from Heaven and destroyed them all. Even so, shall it be in the day when the son of man is revealed. Luke 17:28.

Never has there been a time when men tried so desperately (to have fun) as they do today. We are (all bored). The great enemy of the modern world - public enemy number one is boredom. Mankind is bored. Perhaps this is the underlying cause of all troubles. We (no) longer know what we do with ourselves.

People are even tired from their (vacations). It is not that T. V. programs are so bad - we have become sick from too much. Long ago Job said, the triumph of the wicked is short. And the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment. Job 25.

The world is on a (moral binge), such as was not known even in the days of Rome. We have at our finger tips every pleasure that man is capable of enjoying. And man has abused every gift, that God ever gave him, including sex - which he no

longer finds joy and satisfaction in them.

Time Magazine reported recently on a festival of free expression in a parish youth center where young men and women performed before audiences immoral acts that cannot be recounted in words at this moment. Now this is man doing what he wants to do. This is the human nature without God expressing itself. According to the Bible, this is a sign of the end.

✓ V. 11. Third, a (falling away). V. 11. Jesus said, and many false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many. Now the spirit speaks expressively that in the (latter times), some shall depart from the faith -- giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. I Tim. 4:1. Paul warned for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts will they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears, and they will turn their ears away from the truth and they shall be turned unto fables. 2 Tim. 4:3.

This all seems to point to a time of wide spread hypocrisy. When multitudes of people will be herded into the church without having had a personal experience with Christ Jesus.

(Sex) will grow. (False teachers) will be in the church. The (Bible) will be under severe attack.

(Satan) has not changed, since he asked Eve in the Garden of Eden, yea, hath God said. There are some teachers of religion who try deliberately to destroy the (authority of Scripture) and the faith of the church. They are (wolves) in sheep's clothing about which Jesus warned his followers. They are the leaders of

the falling away and this he said, will come at the end of the age.

Jude 1:4, for there are certain men crept in unawares who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men turning the grace of our God into denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

The word, crept in unawares, is an unusual Greek word occurring only in this place. Literal translation means "to creep in side ways" - like a burglar in the house. The burglar has come not to steal material possessions - he has come to rob us of our faith in God, and in His Word. When faithful men of God rise and cry against the presence of the burglar, they are accused of disturbing the peace. They are accused of old forms of error, known in earlier times.

The Apostle Paul said that day shall not come, except there be a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed the son of prediction. 2 Thess. 2:3. Falling away refers to abandoning the belief. Many Scriptures speak of this. Amos wrote about it. "The day comes, said the Lord God, and I will send the famine in the land - not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the word of God. And they shall wander from sea to sea and North even to the East. They shall run to and fro to seek the word of God. And they shall not find it." Amos. 8:11-12. There will come a time when people hunting for the truth will seek it where it is supposedly given out. But they will not hear the word of God. Instead of receiving a message to satisfy the spiritual longing, they will hear sermons on current political and social problems, or about art and literature. They will not hear sermons on the Bible and God's Word, and the stories of God's great men. And so they will wander from one place to another. Going from hope to despair and eventually giving up.

V. 12
H. 14th
An increase in lawlessness. V. 12. As lawlessness spreads, men's love for one another will grow cold. This know also that in the last days perilous times will come for men shall be lovers of themselves and covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, fierce, despisers of those who are good, traders, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of Godliness but denying the power thereof from such - turn away. 2 Tim. 3:1-5. You will notice that this passage teaches that these are the characteristics of the last days. Our newspapers are filled with accounts of rebellious youth, of the over throw of governments and riots in almost every country on the earth. We have only to quote the crime record to show that lawlessness is increasing, at a frightening rate around the world. Jesus taught that just before the end lawlessness would be worldwide. You would hear of wars and this carries the idea of rebellion, and is a sign of the end of the age.

✓ Fifth, the coming of scoffers. There will come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of this coming, for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. 2 Peter 3:3. Many professing Christians say this is a false teaching since the second coming of Jesus did not take place as the early church expected. They say why hasn't Christ already come. Did not Jesus say, surely, I come quickly. But that promise translated says, I am actually on the way.

In our skyscrapers which are as high as 70 or 80 stories - an executive on the top floor may call to the basement and say, I am on my way, get my car ready. Now this does not mean that he has actually arrived at the garage. He is on the

way and by the time the car is ready, he will be there. Now this is the meaning conveyed to us, I come quickly. Those Christians who are now in the basement or in the grave, shall be raised first. And when they reach the ground floor, in a moment - in the twinkling of an eye, we shall be taken up together to meet the Lord in the air.

This is why the scoffers in Noah's time refused to believe in the flood of which he warned them of. This was a sign of his coming.

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V. 9-10
Sixth, wide-spread persecution.

V. 9 and 10 - Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted and shall kill you, and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name sake and then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another and shall hate one another.

But take heed to yourselves, for they shall deliver you up to counsels and in the synagogues, and ye shall be beaten, and brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. The brothers shall betray the brothers to death. And the father, the son. And the children shall rise up against their parents. And shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name sake. Matthew 13:9, 12, 13.

Notice the emphasis Jesus puts on for my name sake. Thousands of Christians compromise their faith and deny him. This is a sign - Jesus said.

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Seven, (affluence.) James 5:1-3. Go to now ye rich men, weep, and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them

shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

While millions starve, other millions grow richer. A few years ago when we heard of a millionaire, we thought of him with awe. Today in the Western world, there are thousands of millionaires. No longer with a man of \$100,000 considered wealthy. There is nothing wrong with being wealthy if the wealth was acquired honestly. However, neglect of one's stewardship of one's resources is a sin in the sight of God. And of course, Paul warned, the love of money is the root of all evil.

This is of course one of the great appeals of communism - the disciples of materialism have gone into the poverty stricken areas of the world and called the people their comrades. This appeals to those who live in sub-standard conditions - while at the same time they see pictures of prosperous wealthy nations. Paul says this will be one of the signs.

✓ V. 6
Eight, the (preparation of Armageddon) V. 6. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars. The Bible indicates that toward the end, wars will become more (wide spread). More destructive and more frequent.

There is no doubt that the nations of the world are setting the stage. For one of the most terrible scenes in the drama of human strife - and the world being pushed toward a war far greater than anything known before. In the Scriptures it is called the Battle of Armageddon - Rev. 16:14, Joel 3:9.

Now (modern war) is the most highly developed of all sciences - we have perfected our weapons but we have failed to perfect the men that use them. There have been

men as Hitler who would have used any means whatever to conquer the world. Can we believe that there are no such men living today.

✓ Nine, knowledge and travel - Dan. 12:4. But though, oh Daniel, shut up the word, seal the book even til the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall increase. "The meaning of Daniel's words could not possibly been understood until this generation in which we live. The Scripture says that they are closed up and sealed until the time of the end. Today we know what Daniel meant. This is surely the age of speed and travel and knowledge. Human knowledge doubles every 15 years at least. And man has gone from the horse and cart to missiles in less than two generations. We will gain more knowledge in the next 10 years than we have acquired in the last 200 years. When we think about the automobile, the airplane - it was hard to understand what Daniel meant. Run to and fro. But now there are millions of cars on the highways - countless planes in the air day and night. This passage could mean that knowledge will increase. There is greater interest and more study than ever before. This is just another sign.

✓ Ten, peace conferences. I Thess. 5:3. For when they say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail with woman with child and they shall not escape. Never has there been so much talk of peace. The world longs desperately for peace. But no peace seems to be in sight.

Even the news writers admit that most people continue to believe that the war will continue. That there will be no peace.

In Psalms 2 - David asked, why do the nations rage. Because they do not know which way to turn, in the age of violence and destruction. The kings of the earth

set themselves and the rulers take council together against the Lord and against his anointed. Now this matter of taking council together speaks of a desperate effort to establish world peace but God is left out of their plan. The prince of peace is never consulted. And foolish men pursue their own programs. Claiming boldly that they will settle it without God.

✓ Eleven, the (coming of the world dictator). There are so many interesting references to this in the Bible, about the future of world government, and of one man rule. In a conference recently the historian Arnold Toynbee said, living together as a single family is the only future mankind can have now that Western technology has done away with distance. The only thing left is to combine all nations under one head. There is also the trend toward dictatorship in many of the merging nations - and this means a break down of democracy. Government in the hands of a large group has often failed to function, adequately. Endless differences, debates, and discussions. One of the dictators in Africa said of his state people have to be informed. He said we will not be ready for a democracy for a hundred years.

Rev. 17:17, for God hath put in their hearts to fulfill his will and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beasts until the words of God shall be fulfilled. He tells us there has been lawless power at work through the ages. And that toward the end of the age when people have pleasure in unrighteousness, the Holy Spirit will restrain until the believers are taken away. Then Satan called the anti-Christ in the Scriptures would be permitted to take world control. The Bible teaches that the world will reach a point where it will set up a world government and the world dictator or president will emerge. And this news will be flashed around the world that here is a man of peace, the universal ruler. The word peace in Rev. 13, is used to express the idea that this would be a man of great strength and ability, to force his will upon the world. The term is not

meant to indicate repulsiveness. On the contrary - this man will be admired, feared, and worshipped. He will dominate the world with a cleverness the world has never known. He will temporarily be able to put down war that has been destructive. He will put in economic methods to help and prosperity will return. And money will be plentiful everywhere and tears will be taken away.

✓ V. 14
Twelve, (world-wide evangelism.) V. 14. This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached into all the world and witnessed in all nations. Then shall come the end. In the year 1500 the Bible had been printed in only 14 languages. By 1800, it was in 71 languages. By 1965, it was more than 1250 languages. There are a few places today where the Gospel cannot be heard, because of modern travel communications, it is possible that this prophesy is being fulfilled in our own generation.

There are many signs of the end revealed in the Bible. And space does not allow the mention and time. But this we know, Jesus will come. I do not know when. I do not know the hour or the day, the month or the year. It is wrong and unScriptural to try to set a day. God alone knows the date. Yet the Bible says he will come back to this earth. And there is no possibility that the nations of this world can solve the problems of human nature until he comes again.

There is a great meeting going on in Dallas, Texas, this week with upwards of 100,000 young people. And they are claiming it as their last chance to evangelize this world. Each person in the conference is supposed to go and tell and win five people to Christ. And to invite those five people to win yet another five. (One thing we do know,) the coming of Christ is near. And nearer than when we first believed. It may be that many of those events will transpire before our generation passes away. What we see happening in the world today maybe well

be the preparation of God to intervene in human affairs with the coming of Christ.

Therefore, as Paul said to the Christian friends - comfort one another with these words. I Thess. 4:18.

Now let me take just a moment with this question - what should you do. Is all hopeless, for the Christian. All is not hopeless. If you have been living a life dedicated to God, laying up treasures in Heaven, then you have no reason to despair. This could be the hour before the dawn when Christ appears. I think

V. 44 (your attitude) ought to be along this line. ¹⁵⁸ ~~34~~ Preparing to meet him. V. 44.

Therefore, be ye also ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the son of man cometh. Are you ready to meet him if he should come today. In many places in the Bible he warns us to be ready. You may say that this is an appeal based on fear.

By faith, Noah, being warned of God of things not yet seen - moved with fear - prepared an ark for the saving of his house.

The word fear could be translated terrified. Terrified at the prospect of the coming events. And it was this fear that drove him to build the ark.

Second, waiting with patience. For we have need of patience that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive a promise. For yet a little while and he that shall come, will come. And will not tarry. Heb. 10:36-37. God's promises did come to pass., that he made to Isaac, Abraham, Sarah, and to others.

Third, watching with anticipation. To watch implies not only a belief that

coming. Looking for his coming as sure - even though the year and the time is uncertain.

Phil. 3:20, we are waiting with longing and expectation for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul wrote looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God, our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

After hearing a minister preach on the second coming, Queen Victoria said, "I wish he would come during my life time so that I could take my crown and lay it at his feet." Is there not a desire in your heart that he would hasten and come.

✓ V. 46
Fourth, working for him. V. 46. Blessed is the servant whom his Lord when he cometh, shall find him so doing. Some people have the idea that if Christ is coming, then why should we tarry. Why not quit working and watch. Now this was one of the problems that Paul dealt with. He explained some of the details of the last days. He urged them to get to work. The hope of the coming of Christ should make us work all the harder so that we shall not be ashamed for him at his coming. I John 2:28.

The Christian, at the coming of Christ, will be a glorious moment. To those outside of Christ it will be the great calamity. A tragic separation, and unbelievable disappointment. But to those who are ready - what a glorious consolation. You remember down almost to the last words of the Bible, we have words about his coming. Surely I come. Even so, I come, Lord Jesus.

WHAT THEN?

When all the great plants of our cities,
Have turned out their last finished work;
When our merchants have made the last bargain,
And dismissed the last tired clerk;
When our banks have raked in the last dollar,
And have paid out the last dividend;
When the Judge of the Earth says,
"Close for the Night!"
And asks for a Balance, -- WHAT THEN?

When the choir has sung its last anthem,
And the preacher has said his last prayer;
When the people have heard their last sermon,
And the sound ~~has~~ died out on the air;
When the Bible lies closed on the pulpit,
And the pews are all empty of men;
When each one stands facing his record,
And the Great Book is opened, -- WHAT THEN?

When the actors have played their last drama,
And the mimic has made his last fun;
When the movies have flashed the last picture,
And the billboard displayed its last run;
When the crowds seeking pleasure have vanished,
And have gone into darkness again;
And the world that rejected its Saviour,
Is asked for a reason, -- WHAT THEN?

When the bugle's last call sinks in silence,
And the long marching columns stand still;
When the captain has giv'n his last order,
And they've captured the last fort and hill;
When the flag has been hauled from the masthead,
And the wounded afield have checked in;
When the trumpet of Ages is sounded,
And we stand up before Him, -- WHAT THEN?