

Signs Given by Jesus



Facing the Future (Part 8)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue with our theme for this week, "Facing the Future."

But first, let me say "Thank you" to those of you who have been writing to me. Before I finish this talk we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. Feel free to share with us your personal needs, your problems, your prayer requests.

In my talks this week I'm singling out some of the main elements in the Bible's picture of the condition of the world in these closing days of the age and presenting them to you. As far as possible, I'm presenting this picture to you in an objective way and I'm leaving it to you to compare the picture I present with the scenes that you yourself actually see in the world around us today.

In my previous talks this week I've explained how Jesus compared the period leading up to the close of this age with two previous periods of human history recorded in the Bible: the days of Noah and the days of Lot.

Today I'm going to be dealing with a comprehensive series of signs of the end of the age given us by Jesus Himself and I'm going to turn to Matthew 24, which records the great prophetic discourse of Jesus after He had gone out from the temple area in Jerusalem, crossed the brook Hydron and walked up the western slope of the Mount of Olives. And apparently, He was seated on the Mount of Olives with His closest disciples looking out over the city of Jerusalem and the temple area -- a position in which I've had the delight of sitting many, many times in my life. Then this is what we read in Matthew 24, beginning at verse 3:

> "As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. 'Tell us,' they said, 'when will this happen [that was the destruction of the temple], and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?' [Note the question: 'What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?'] Jesus answered: 'Watch out that no one deceives you.' [That's always the first emphasis in Scripture, a warning against deception as the age closes.] 'For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ [or the

> Messiah],' and will deceive many.'"

A well-known Jewish authoritative book records over 40 false Messiahs who've come to the Jewish people since the time of Jesus and today. Then Jesus goes on:

> "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come."

The mere fact of wars and rumors of wars is not by itself an indication that the end is immediately at hand. Then He goes on with what is the first actual major sign of the close of the age in verse 7:

> "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places."

Side by side with that, we could put a verse from Luke 21:11, which records the same discourse of Jesus and in that verse it says there will be great earthquakes, famines, and pestilences. So, in addition to the famines and earthquakes, we can add the pestilences. So here we have, in verse 7, the following major signs: international wars, world-wide wars; famines, earthquakes; and pestilences. Well, in my life I've lived through two world wars. Today famine is endemic in many areas of the world and probably over ten million people perish yearly through famine. Wherever famine comes, pestilence will almost always follow. There are areas of Southeast Asia where all this is being enacted just before our eyes.

And then the scientific record of earthquakes shows an amazing increase in the frequency and intensity of earthquakes in the last 100 or 50 years.

Now, having given those initial signs: international wars, earthquakes, famines and pestilences, Jesus says, "All these are the beginning of birth pains." There's an analogy there: When a woman is going to shortly bring forth a baby, the birth pains set in and we all know that the nearer the birth of the baby, the more frequent and more intense the birth pains become until the baby is eventually born. And so Jesus says when these signs come into human history, they are indications of the birth of a new age which is at hand. And once these birth pains start, they'll become more frequent and more intense and there'll be no way of reversing that process until the new age is born.

Then He goes on in Matthew 24:9-12, with a whole series of other signs:

> "'Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me.' [There's a clear statement that Christians are going to be subjected to world-wide opposition, hatred and persecution. Verse 10:] 'At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other,'"

When it speaks about turning away from the faith, clearly it means the Christian faith. Under the pressure of that persecution that Jesus has spoken, some Christians will renounce their faith and they will actually betray their fellow Christians and hatred will develop between the Christians who remain loyal to Jesus and those who betray Him. And those who betray their fellow Christians will betray them to the secular authorities for judgment. Verse 11:

> "...many false prophets will appear and deceive many..."

That's another major feature. When we speak about the word "false prophets" we probably should associate it with the word "cult" for the product of a false prophet is a cult. And then verse 12:

> "Because of the increase of wickedness [but, more correctly, lawlessness], the love of most will grow cold."

The word used for "love" there, in Greek, is agape which is normally used for the love of Christians. And we have to face this very solemn fact that under the tremendous pressures of lawlessness even the love of Christians will grow cold unless, of course, they are forewarned and take the necessary precautions to maintain their love for the Lord and for one another.

Let me sum up now that list of signs of the end of the age contained in that discourse of Jesus in Matthew 24 that we've been looking at.

Verse 7: international wars, famines, earthquakes and also, from Luke 21, pestilences.

Verse 9: world-wide persecution of Christians

Verse 10: apostasy and betrayal among Christians

Verse 11: false prophets and cults, and

Verse 12: abounding lawlessness leading to lovelessness

How important that we see that! That lawlessness leads to lovelessness. The world has got a false idea of love. The world thinks of love as free and uninhibited and you do what you please. That's not God's kind of love. God's kind of love requires discipline and self-control; it's not selfish; it's not aggressive; it's not self-seeking; it doesn't please itself. And only discipline will produce that kind of love in Christians. So lawlessness and the love of God are opposites. Where lawlessness abounds, the love of God is pressured out of people.

Let me now point out two main elements in this scene Jesus paints. There are two main sources of pressure. The first is satanic spiritual pressure from the occult realm and the second is pressure brought about by the progressive degeneration of human character. We can compare two passages in the epistles of Paul to Timothy with regard to satanic supernatural pressure. Paul says in 1 Timothy 4:1:

> "The Spirit [that's the Holy Spirit] clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons."

Again, abandoning the faith refers to Christians. So, under intense satanic, demonic pressure, some Christians will turn away from their faith and be deceived by demons. That's the pressure from the occult.

Now, going on into 2 Timothy 3:1-5, we find the concurrent degeneration of human nature.

> "But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them."

You see, there's a list of eighteen major moral blemishes that will become more and more obvious and more and more blatant as this age draws to its close because the corruption of human nature initiated by sin is taking its full course. Note particularly, the first and last items in that list: lovers of themselves, lovers of money (those are the first two items); the closing item, lovers of pleasure. Put those three together: lovers of themselves, lovers of money and lovers of pleasure.

How far does that describe the world we see around us in contemporary Western culture? How far are people given over to love of self, love of money and love of pleasure? And yet, notice they're not irreligious people. They have a form of religion but they don't let it change their lives. Is that a true picture?

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be speaking about special signs that concern God's people in the earth.

Radio Program

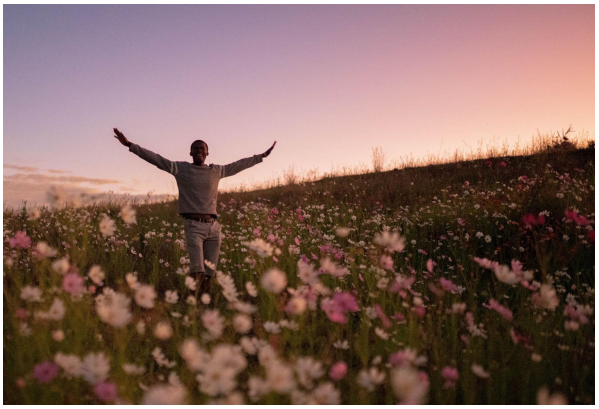
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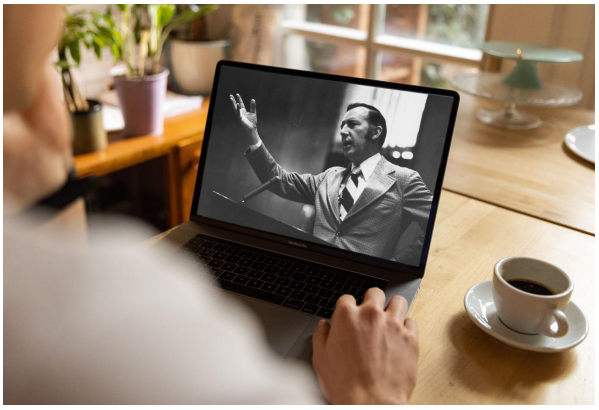
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