

Birth Pangs



The White Horse of the Gospel (Part 2)
by Derek Prince

Now, "Christ" is the Greek form of the Hebrew word "Messiah." And for Jewish people the word is Messiah. So Jesus said, "Many will come saying, 'I am the Messiah,' and will deceive many." Again, Jesus is a true prophet. The Jewish encyclopedia, that doesn't recognize Jesus as Messiah, lists about 40 false messiahs who've come to the Jewish people since the time of Jesus. I'm simply pointing out that history objectively testifies to the fact that Jesus was a true prophet. He said many false messiahs will come; they have come and they've deceived many.

And then He gives another warning. Don't jump to a conclusion immediately that the end is near when you see trouble. In verse 6 He says:

> "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not troubled, for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet."

It's not right at hand. And this has been true of this age. Ever since the time of the apostles to the present time the history of the human race is a history of wars and troubles. I don't believe there's been a single century from them till now that there have not been wars. But Jesus said that in itself is not a sign that My return is close at hand.

Having said that He then goes on to what I believe are the primary signs, the earliest signs in verses 7 and 8. He said:

> "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines, pestilences and earthquakes in various places."

Then He says in connection with that:

> "All these are the beginning of sorrows."

But all the modern translations say "birth pangs" or "labor pains." So, when we come to verse 7 Jesus said that marks the beginning of the labor pains. The labor pains of what? The labor pains of a new age. The labor pains that will bring

to birth the kingdom of God on earth.

If you have your finger in Matthew 24, keep it there but turn to Matthew 19 for a moment. Matthew 19:28. Jesus says to His disciples:

> "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration when the Son of man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

That will be the period when Christ's kingdom is visibly established on earth. And He calls it "the regeneration." Regeneration is a word for rebirth. So the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth will come through a birth. Actually, the New Testament makes it clear that the kingdom of God never comes except by a birth, whether it's for an individual or for the whole human race. Jesus said no one can see or enter the kingdom of God unless he's been born again, unless he's been regenerated.

But here He's speaking about regeneration of the whole earth, which will bring forth the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. So when we go back to Matthew 24:8 He says these are the beginnings of labor pains that will bring forth the birth of the kingdom of God on earth. Now, this is obviously a comparison to natural human birth. We all know that when a baby is due to be born the labor pains begin. And that's an indication that the birth is close at hand. And generally speaking, the closer the birth the more frequent and the more intense the labor pains until the birth takes place. So Jesus is saying when you see these things, in verse 7, that's the beginning of the birth pangs. And from then on the pangs will become more frequent, closer together, more intense, until the birth takes place. And basically, once the labor pains have started there's no way to reverse the process; it's got to go on until the birth takes place. So here is the picture of what is going to come on the earth. There is a birth coming and it's going to be preceded by birth pangs that will convulse the whole world and all nations. No section of the earth will ultimately be left unaffected by these birth pangs.

But the good news for us is out of the birth pangs will come the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. Which is, if you pray the Lord's Prayer, that's what you're praying for. You may not be aware but the Lord's Prayer, we pray "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth." What are we praying for? We're praying for the coming of the kingdom of God on earth. Which means we're praying for a birth because it can only come by a birth.

Now let's look at the initial labor pains. Verse 7:

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

So the first major birth pang is nation at war against nation, kingdom against kingdom. I would say that you could say it would be major international wars, not just small-scale wars. One of the significant things about this century is that we have had two world wars. Never before in human history was there such a thing as a world war. There couldn't have been because the means of travel and communication were not sufficient for a whole world to be engulfed in a war at one time. But twice, and I was born in the first world war and I lived through the second—twice in this century we have had world war. We've had to coin the phrase because it didn't exist before. And I would say to you my personal opinion, World War I from 1914–1918, was the beginning of the birth pangs. And since then they have been increasing and intensifying. World War II was far more destructive than World War I, involved far more nations and also exhibited horrors that were never associated with World War I. The main horror being what is called the Holocaust in which six million Jews were horribly killed and probably more than six million others, many of them Christians. Since that time Stalin has been responsible for the death of—nobody can estimate the number of millions that have perished under Stalin. And under Mao Tse Tung, he himself estimated that he was responsible for the death of 60 million persons. This is something that did not happen in previous generations. It is all part of the birth pangs.

Now the other associated events in verse 7 are earthquakes, pestilences or plague diseases, and famines. Now, it's outside the scope of this message but every one of those things has increased dramatically in this century. The record of earthquakes is more intense and more frequent. Famine is now a major part of human experience. It's a terrible thought but a quarter of a million babies die every week of famine. That's 13 million babies. That's only part of the picture of famine. There are whole areas of Africa that are being absolutely devastated by famine. And wherever there's famine you'll find disease because famine breaks down the capacity of the human body to resist sickness.

We're now going to go on, I'm not going to dwell on this. In the next few verses Jesus repeats the word "then" several times. In other words, once this process of the birth pangs begins then various things are going to follow quickly. And most of these things concern us as Christians. Verse 9:

> "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake."

Let me ask you a simple question. Who is "you"? "You" is us, isn't it? That's not good grammar but it's the truth. "You" is us.

Now, the particular congregation here probably has not experienced much of that but let's bear in mind that in major areas of the earth and in some of the largest nations on earth this is already happening. It's not going to happen. If we've been spared, we can be grateful to God, but let's not be ignorant of the fact that it's a major feature of the present international situation.

And then in verse 10:

> "And then many will be offended, will betray one another, will hate one another."

Many who? Christians, that's right. They will find the price too high to pay. They will give up their faith and to save themselves they will betray their fellow believers. Again, this has happened. In Soviet Russia, China, other nations. It's all part of the contemporary scene. And we haven't come to the end of it yet.

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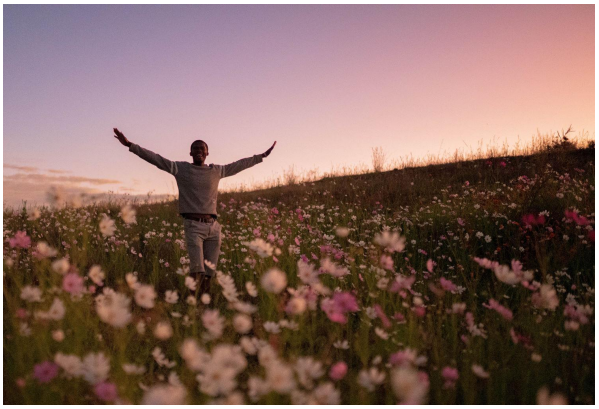

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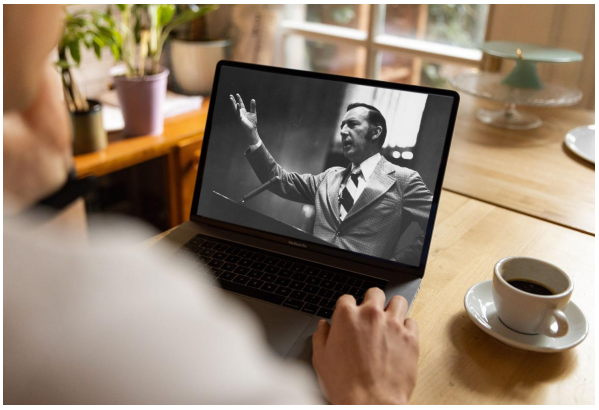

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