

Prophecy - God's Time Map



Part 3/3

Toward the Climax

By Derek Prince

The theme of our study today is entitled *Prophecy: God's Time Map.* You see it there on the cover of this book which we will be opening and turning to as a visual aid to the message that we are going to present. I suppose that for present purposes you could define *prophecy* something like this: the revelation from Scripture by the Spirit of God of God's purposes for the human race and how they are to be worked out. I think I'll say that again: the revelation from Scripture by the Holy Spirit of God's purposes for the human race and how they are to be worked out. And I have given the title *God's Time Map* because I intend to use the analogy of a map to illustrate prophecy simply and in outline.

We'll begin by considering the basic purposes for which prophecy is given. As you will see here, we'll consider three main purposes of Bible prophecy. First of all, to understand God's purposes, secondly, to find our place in God's purposes, and thirdly, for warning and direction that we need. In the Prophet Amos, chapter 3 and verse 7:

> "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets."

The word *secret* could be translated his *innermost counsel.* So God never desires to do anything amongst the human race without revealing his counsel to his servants, the prophets. The prophets are the recipients and the channels of the revelation of the counsel of God for the human race. That word *secret* means his *innermost counsel.*

> "In John 15:15, Jesus said:
> From henceforth I call you not servants; [or slaves] for the servant knoweth not what his master doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

God does not want to treat us as slaves who simply receive orders and have to execute them without knowing any of the purposes for which those orders are given. God wants to take us into His counsel, share His counsel with us, and

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have us cooperate with Him intelligently on the basis of understanding His counsels. In Psalm 103 it says:

> "The Lord made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel."

It's one thing to see the outward demonstration of God's power in His acts. It's another thing to understand His ways —the reasons, the motives, the purposes behind what He does. Now all the children of God saw God's acts, but Moses understood God's ways. Moses was in that relationship of friendship and fellowship with God, which God desires to bring us into through Jesus Christ. So Jesus says, 'I'm not calling you slaves. You're not just the recipients of orders who have to run and fetch and carry without understanding why, but I have called you friends because I'm sharing My innermost counsel, purposes and secret thoughts with you.'

And then in the second epistle of Peter, the first chapter, we have a very beautiful statement about the purpose of prophecy which I want to read to you. Second Peter chapter 1 beginning at verse 19:

> "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:"

Peter says, and it surely is true of you and me today, we are in a dark place and the world is in darkness. It does not know what is going on. It does not understand the processes in which it is involved. It does not know its own end and destiny. The world is in a dark place. But in this dark place, Peter says we have the prophecy of Scripture given unto us as a light, and we do well to give earnest heed to prophecy until the day dawn and the day star arise in our hearts.

Now, the day star is the morning star, the star that comes immediately before the sunrise. When I was serving as a soldier in North Africa and slept every night in the open desert for about two years, this became so real to me that at certain seasons of the year the day star arises in the east immediately before the sun itself arises. And when you first see the light of the day star coming up over the horizon, it is so bright that you actually think the sun is rising. And so Peter says, 'You're in a dark place, but if you give heed to prophecy there will be a day star that will arise in your heart.' Not out in the world as yet, but in your heart. What is this day star? It is the realization that Jesus Christ is coming back soon. The day star brings the news that the next thing that's going to happen is that the sun itself is going to arise. And this is the purpose of prophecy. When you're in a dark place and you don't know what the future holds, if you'll give heed to the prophecy of God's Word, then the Scripture says it will be like the day star arising in your hearts. The world will be in darkness but you'll have this inner light in your heart, and the witness of the day star is the sun is going to rise very soon now.

Now the next great event is the sunrise, and this is what God is saying to us through prophecy: that Jesus Christ is coming back again very, very soon. And when you give heed to prophecy, this day star arises in your heart. You're no longer walking in darkness, you're no longer perplexed, concerned, depressed, wondering what the world holds. You know that Jesus is coming. This is the purpose for which prophecy is given.

Then again it is that we may find our place in God's purposes. If we turn on to the third chapter of the same epistle of 2 Peter—2 Peter chapter 3 beginning at verse 10 and reading through verse 14 quickly, we'll see these statements:

> "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.
> Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,"

What kind of lives must we be leading in the light of what prophecy reveals? We must be living lives that are holy and godly. This is the fist admonition. Secondly in verse 12:

> "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God..."

The more recent translations adopt a more literal rendering which is 'hastening the coming of the day of God.' So here is our attitude: looking for the coming of the day of God, our activity, hastening, promoting the coming of the day of God. And then in verse 14 Peter says again:

> "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

Prophecy awakens us to the fact that Jesus is coming back, that we need to be ready, that in the meanwhile we must have the right attitude, and we must be practicing the right activity. All this is the practical outworking of prophecy in our lives. It enables us to find our place and fulfill our appointed duty in God's program.

> "Thirdly, prophecy brings us timely warning and direction when we need it. In Luke 17:26 Jesus says: As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. And in Hebrews 11:7 it says:
> 7003 Prophecy: God's Time Map to the saving of his household;..."

Noah had a revelation from God of what was going to come, how he should make preparation, how he could save himself and his household. This was a prophetic revelation given to Noah that enabled him to escape God's judgment on a wicked world. And Jesus says:

> "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of man."

The people of God need this prophetic revelation to enable them to make preparation for what is coming on the earth that they may avoid God's judgment on the wicked and have a place of security and a way of escape when the time of God's wrath comes.

> "Just exactly as it was in the days of Noah [Jesus says] so shall it be also in the days when the Son of man is due to return."

Now, my primary theme today is New Testament prophecy and this message is essentially introductory, so I want to say this that I believe that the prophet revelation of Scripture could be compared to the anatomy of a human body. And as I understand it, in the human body, the center of all anatomy is the spine. This is where you begin, and all the other bones and members in one way or another are fitted into or related to the spine. So, if you want to get the correct picture of the human body and then relate the other parts of the body, you begin with the spine.

Now I believe this is true with prophecy. I believe that there's a spinal cord of prophecy given in the New Testament into which everything else must be fitted, and I believe that the spinal cord of prophecy is found in what is known as the Olivet Discourse of Jesus, the last great prophetic discourse that He gave sitting on the Mount of Olives looking over the temple area and the city of Jerusalem. It's usually called the Mount Olivet Discourse, and this is recorded in the three synoptic gospels. It occupies almost a complete chapter of each gospel. In Matthew it is chapter 24, in Mark it is chapter 13, and in Luke it is chapter 21. All these three chapters record the same discourse, but each one presents it from a slightly different point of view. So to get the total picture you have to study carefully all three chapters and then interrelate them, and when you do that you have the spinal cord of New Testament prophecy and all other prophecies in the New Testament must be fitted in to take their right place and relationship to this central spinal cord, which was the great prophetic discourse given by Jesus on the Mount of Olives.

Now if you turn to Matthew chapter 24 and look at the first three verses you'll find that this prophetic discourse was prompted by questions asked by the disciples. And on our outline here, which is before your eyes, we have on the left-hand side of this book the questions, and on the right-hand side the answers. Now let's look in Matthew 24:1 to 3, and see the questions:

> "Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to show him the building of the temple.
> And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

Now, for the disciples that was the most shocking statement. This beautiful temple which was the center of their national life, their spiritual life, which every orthodox Jew all over the world venerated and esteemed above all else on earth, this temple was to be so completely destroyed that Jesus said, 'Not one stone would be left upon another.' The disciples must have been absolutely overwhelmed at this revelation.

They got together and began to question among themselves. Jesus then left the temple, walked out east down the slope on the east side of the temple area, crossed the valley of the Kidron, walked up the west side of the Mount of Olives and sat on the summit of the Mount of Olives overlooking the very temple area about which He had been speaking. And there His disciples gathered around Him and they came out with the questions that had troubled them since He made this pronouncement about the temple. And in verse 3 of Matthew 24 the questions are brought forth:

> "And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

You see, as far as these disciples were concerned, if the temple was to be destroyed that would have

to be the end of the world. They couldn't imagine that civilization or God's people or God's purposes could continue in the earth if this sacred building was totally destroyed. So they asked a question which they thought all amounted to the same thing—'When will all this happen and when will Your coming be and when will be the end of the age?' They asked what they thought was basically one question. But I believe that in actual fact what they really asked consisted of three distinct questions, and Jesus answered each of these questions in the discourse that followed.

> "Let's look at these three questions—When shall these things be? That is, when shall the temple be destroyed?"

When shall be thy coming? Now the Greek word for *coming* is the one you see in parentheses there, *parousia* is a noun from a verb which means 'to be present.' Really the literal meaning is 'presence.' So probably the best translation would be 'presence' or 'arrival.' Now this is a word that is used very distinctly of the coming of Jesus Christ, but it does not necessarily mean that He comes all the way to earth. This is a familiar problem of interpreting prophecy, and I'm not trying to lead you into one particular theory, but I just point out to you that the word actually means 'His presence on the scene,' but not necessarily His arrival on earth or at the Mount of Olives—and I'll illustrate this from a Scripture in John chapter 11 which is very, very interesting.

John chapter 11 verses 27 and 28. This is just to illustrate the meaning of this word that's translated 'coming, presence, arrival.' After the death of Lazarus Jesus came to the village of Bethany where Mary and Martha were and this is what happened. First of all, He spoke to Martha, then Martha called for her sister Mary, who was sitting in the house weeping, and this is what Martha said—John 11:28:

> "And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee."

The word that's translated 'is come' is this word. The Master is present. He has arrived, He is here. Now notice what happens. As soon as Mary heard that, she arose quickly and came 'unto Him.' He was there but He had not come into the village. He was on the outskirts of the village in the place where the tomb was. He was present but He had not come to Mary. Mary had to go to Him. And I do believe, myself, that this is the correct interpretation of the word *parousia*—it's the coming of Jesus when He's present, but His people will have to go out to meet Him. I just take that as in illustration.

Then the third question—now we're turning back to Matthew 24 verse 3, is: When shall be the end.? Now, I have come to believe that the end is not one single abrupt moment, but it is the final period that closes this age. And I do believe that it can be related to the prophecy of Daniel chapter 9, the well-known prophecy that speaks of the seventy weeks, the seventy periods of seven, and all are agreed that these are years, not days. The seventy periods each of seven years which Daniel said were marked out by God. And as we study the prophecy we find that sixty-nine weeks of years have elapsed, Messiah has come, He has been cut off, and then there remains this mysterious seventieth week of Daniel. And in my mind, personally, there is no question that the end period is closely related to this final week that still has to elapse. Whether the end period is the whole of the week or the last half of the week, I'm not going to try to settle in this study today, but I am convinced in my mind that the end is very closely related to this last week, this last period of seven years in Daniel's prophecy in chapter 9.

So, though the disciples thought they were asking one question, actually they were asking three distinct successive questions: When will the temple be destroyed? When will be Thy coming, Thy presence, Thy *parousia*?

And, When will the end period set in, this final week or half week that has to elapse?

Now, in the discourse that followed, Jesus answered each of these questions, but you have to look very, very carefully to find out which question is being answered and where. Now the first question was When shall the temple be destroyed? and the answer to this is given in Luke's gospel chapter 21 verses 20 through 24. This is very clear—Luke 21 verses 20 through 24. They said, 'When will the temple be destroyed?' and He said to them in reading these verses:

> "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies [surrounded with armies, besieged by armies] then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.
> Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries outside enter thereinto.
> For these are the days of vengeance, when all things which are written may be fulfilled.
> But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! For there shall be great distress in the land of Israel, and wrath upon this people [the Jewish nation]. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all the gentile nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

Here is the answer to the question, 'When will the temple be destroyed?' When you see Jerusalem surrounded by besieging armies then know that the desolation of Jerusalem is at hand. Then He said, 'If you're still inside, escape, and if you're outside, don't come in.' Now this was historically fulfilled to the last detail in A.D. 70 when Titus and the Roman army set siege to Jerusalem. But for political reasons, for a brief period they raised the siege, withdrew their armies, and those Jews inside Jerusalem who believed in Jesus as Savior and Prophet, realized that the sign had come, obeyed Jesus' word, escaped quickly from the city and then the Roman armies returned, set siege to the city the second time, and never raised the siege again until the city had been totally destroyed. So you see these words of Jesus had a very definite application and a very definite practical purpose. They were a warning to Jewish believers in Jerusalem, When you see Jerusalem besieged then you've got to get out and quickly, because when the armies come back that will be the end of the city. And so it was.

And then Jesus said, 'There shall be great wrath on the Jewish nation, they shall fall by the edge of the sword'—it's estimated at least a million Jews perished in that war—'and the remainder of them will be sold as captives or slaves amongst the Gentile nations.' All this was fulfilled. And then Jesus said, 'The Jews will continue to be dispersed, Jerusalem will continue to be trodden down by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be completed.' So here we have the answer to question number one, When will the temple be destroyed? When you see Jerusalem besieged with armies then the destruction of the temple is ready to take place, get out. And remember that from then on Jerusalem, the Old City, and the Temple area will be trodden down by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. No one could have understood when Jesus spoke those words that something like nineteen centuries were going to elapse before the end of that period came.

Now the next question is 'When will be thy coming?' We turn back to Matthew 24 and in a moment we're going to analyze these verses in a little greater detail, but Jesus then begins to give them various indications of the approach of the close of the age. He says in verse 7:

> "Nation shall rise against nation...
> Vs. 9—Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you...
> Vs. 10—Many shall be offended...
> Vs. 11—Many false prophets...
> Vs. 12—Iniquity shall abound, the love of many Christians shall wax cold..."

He still has not answered the question, for the question was specific. What shall be *the* sign of Thy coming. He's given many signs—plural—but He has not given *the* sign. But in verse 14 He gives *the* sign, and the language is absolutely specific.

> "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

So *the* sign, the final conclusive sign, is the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom. Not some watered-down human version of the gospel, but the same gospel that Jesus preached in which the lame walked, the blind see, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised, devils are cast out and men see the supernatural power of God demonstrated —

> "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world to all nations; then shall the end come."

So *the* sign, the final indication that the presence of the Lord is at hand is Matthew 24:14—then shall the end come. Now we still are left with the question, What will be the sign of the beginning of the end period? Following the coming of the Lord and, as I believe, the taking away the true believers that are ready to meet Him at this time. I realize, of course, that there are many different opinions, but I'm only giving you a basic outline.

Now if you read on in Matthew 24 you'll notice a dramatic change in verse 15. The nature of the change is this: that from verse 15 onwards the setting is specifically in the land of Israel and the people primarily concerned are the Jewish people. The language makes this absolutely clear. Now we are not concerned with the Gentile world. The focus of all prophecy for the remainder of the age is on Jerusalem and the Jewish nation and the events that are going to take place there. And I'll show you from the language that this cannot be questioned. It is absolutely settled. Verse 15:

> "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place [that's the temple area, there's no question about where the holy place is.] (whoso readeth, let him understand:)
> [Then Jesus says in verse 20 to the people who are warned to flee,] pray that your flight be not in winter, neither on the Sabbath day:"

Now what would it matter in America or Canada if you had to flee on the Sabbath day? You might not even know it was Saturday. But in Israel the public transportation doesn't run on the Sabbath, you see, and any group of people suddenly taking an unexpected, hurried journey on the Sabbath would be extremely conspicuous, and it would be very hard to do it.

So you see that it's absolutely clear when we come to verse 15 Jesus has turned the focus of prophecy on the city of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. And then He says, When you flee, after that is coming *the* great tribulation.

> "For then shall be tribulation, such as never was since the world began unto this time, nor ever shall be again."

Those words specify an absolutely definite period of tribulation such as the world never knew before and will never know again. And the Jewish believers in Jerusalem are warned: 'When you see this abomination of desolation placed in the temple area, then get out and get out quickly and pray that you don't have to flee on the Sabbath because you'll be too conspicuous.'

So now we have the answer to the third question, When will the end period be taking place? The answer is, When the abomination is placed in the temple area. So you have the three questions and you have the three answers, and I believe there is no question. This basically is what the Scripture teaches:

When will the temple be destroyed, the answer is, When you see Jerusalem besieged. That was fulfilled in 70 A.D.

When will be the sign of Thy coming? The last great activity of the true church will be what? Not sitting at home singing hymns in church pews, but what? Preaching this gospel of the kingdom in all nations. That's the last responsibility of the church. That's the thing Jesus told them to do when He left. The church has been nineteen centuries getting on the way, doing the very thing Jesus said they ought to be doing all the time. And I do not believe that Jesus will take the church until the church has done what He told them to do.

And then we're left with God dealing with the Jewish nation in their own land and the particular specific sign here is one that affects the Jewish nation as no other—a desolation placed in the sacred area of the temple. I'll point this out to you that if you study all the prophecies in the Bible concerning the close of the age, whether they be Old Testament or New Testament, you'll find they all have one feature in common—they all assume the presence of Israel as a nation in their own land—every single prophecy related to the close of the age. None of those prophecies could have been fulfilled before World War II, because Israel was not a nation in their own land. It's only since World War II that those prophecies could be capable of fulfillment. That's why the events that have taken place in the land of Israel in

the last three or four or five decades are of absolutely unique significance for all believers in the Bible.

Now I want to go into this revelation of Matthew 24 a little more in detail. And here is the point where I want to illustrate it by the example of a map. So I've put here a very simple crude illustration of a map of a city, because in a certain sense prophecy is like a map. You see, a map is a special viewpoint. You know, of course, that the usual map is viewed directly from above. You see everything as you would see it directly from above. That's the point of view. Then a map shows you certain things you need to know, but it leaves a lot of other things that you do not know. You know that 97th Avenue is here, the next main avenue will be 73rd, the next will be 46th. But it does not tell you the height of the buildings. It does not tell you the names of the people who lived there. A map gives you certain specific practical needed information; it gives it from a certain point of view, but there are lots of other things that you will not find out by looking at the map. You will not find them out until you get to the place on the map where the map has shown you, and then you'll find out the rest that maybe you wanted to know and couldn't find out.

Now prophecy is like that. It's a revelation of human history from God's point of view. It does not tell you everything that your inquisitive mind might want to know, but it tells you the things that you need to know to find your place in God's dealings with you and with His people.

Now in this map I'm imagining a situation which often I have been in more or less. I'm driving into a strange city from the west and I'm going to a convention where I trust I'm going to be a speaker, and the convention is to be held somewhere in the northeast section of the city in a very beautiful hotel, the most wonderful Hilton Hotel that's ever been built. So I come in on the main drag, which we might say is Main Street, divides the city from north and south. North of this is north, south of this is south. The avenues in this city run from north to south, not from east to west, and the first main avenue marked on the map is 97th. Up till then I know that I'm driving along the main highway, I know I'm going in the right direction, but I don't know exactly where I am. The first indication of where I am will come when I see 97th Avenue, then I'll say, 'Now we're on the map. From now on we can see what's coming next.' The next main intersection will be 73rd Avenue, the main intersection after that will be 46th Avenue, and then we get to 27th Avenue and then what? Now I've got a very vital preparation to make. If I stay in the right hand lane I'm going to be compelled to get into Decision Valley. Decision Valley is a one-way street. Once you get into it you cannot turn round and go back. But I don't want to go to Decision Valley because it's headed to a place called Armageddon that I want to avoid. The only alternative and the place I want to go to is the convention that's going to be held in the hotel up here.

So when I see 46th Avenue, what do I have to do? I have to get into the center lane and I have to be looking very, very keenly for 27th Avenue, because when I see 27th Avenue I know the next main turn is the one I've got to take. And if I haven't taken the necessary preparation, if I stay in the right hand lane, I can see the one I want to take but I can't take it because I'll get a ticket, and all the other cars are going past me. I can't turn against the stream of traffic, so I'm forced into Decision Valley, and once I get into Decision Valley I just cannot turn back. There is no way back. It's a one way street. Now that's just a little simple illustration and I think it makes it vivid to you. I've actually been in situations like this where I've had to find out when I had to be in the center turn lane to make the left turn, and I knew if I missed the left turn I would have to wander all round the city and find my way back and be hours late.

Now, let's try to apply this to Matthew 24. You'll understand that we're more or less reproducing the same diagram but now it's not a street map, it's a map of history, and I will show you how this relates to the 24th chapter of Matthew. If you have your Bibles open at Matthew 24 you'll be able to follow. If not just listen to me. Let me explain to you this: that these figures down the main drag are the verses of Matthew 24. That's verse 6, that's verses 7 and 8, that's verses 9 and 10, that's verse 11, verse 12, verse 14, verse 15. And these names on the Avenues are the things spoken of in these verses. These things are spoken of in verse 7 and 8, these in verse 9 and 10, these in verse 11 and so on. Now Jesus said in Matthew 24:6:

> "Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet."

So when I hear of wars and rumors of wars (and how many of you hear of wars and rumors of wars these days?), I say, 'Look I'm getting near where the map begins, but I haven't actually got to a marked avenue yet.' This does not by itself indicate exactly where I am on the map. This is just wars and rumors which go on a long, long while before we actually get onto the map. What's the first indication that I'm on the map? Verse 7:

> "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in diverse places. [And then he says in verse 8:] All these are the beginning of sorrows."

But the word that translated 'sorrows' is the Greek word for a woman's birth pangs, and this is a very vivid picture, because Jesus says, 'A new age is going to be born.' And when you get to verses 7 and 8 this is the beginning of the birth pangs of a new age.

Now everybody knows that when a woman's birth pangs begin there's no turning the clock back. From then on, nature is gong to take its course, and normally the pangs will become more severe and more frequent until the birth takes place. And this is what exactly Jesus meant to show us. When you see these things starting, this is the beginning of birth pangs, from now on everything's going to become more severe and more frequent, closer together, until you come to the birth of the new age, and nothing can reverse that process once it starts.

All right. The beginning of birth pangs is Matthew 24:7 and 8—nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom, global wars. When did we have the first global war? 1914. Wasn't that right? Together with this we shall have earthquakes, famine, and pestilence. You know that there is scientific evidence that earthquakes are increasing in frequency and in severity over the last century in a very definite way. As for famine, about ten million people die every year at present of nothing but sheer hunger. And wherever it comes you can be almost sure that pestilence will follow, because people's physical resistance is broken down and epidemics will spread rapidly. See how accurate and practical the Bible is.

So global wars, earthquakes, famines, pestilences are the beginnings of birth pangs. When these start then you know the process is going to go on in a certain definite order until the new age is born. Actually I would say in this sense, in World War I was a major epoch in human history, and most history books and so on treat it that way.

> "All right then, the next main avenue is verses 9 and 10:
> Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, [who's you? The believers, the Christians] and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.
> And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another."

The next great mark is the persecution of Christians. Many Christians will be persecuted. Some will be killed, and many will be offended. That means they'll give up their Christian faith under the pressure of persecution. Now remember that this has been happening since World War I in all the nations that have come under the rule of communism. Systematically Christians have been persecuted, liquidated, killed and been put under intense pressure to deny their faith and to betray one another to the authorities. All this has happened and is happening today over one-third of the earth's surface. Then we move on to verse 11, the next main avenue:

> "Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many."

I would say this is the main problem with the communist world. This is the main problem of the free world. Here in America it isn't persecution at the moment, but a tremendous increase in false prophets, false teachings, false cults, mushrooming every day. I would say probably the United States is the world center of false prophets and false teaching. And if you have to look for a center in the United States I suppose we'd all agree it's the state of California, and that is exactly being fulfilled again before our eyes.

> "All right, then we move on to the next main avenue, verse 12:
> And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall grow cold."

Now the word used for *love* is word that's only used of Christian love. It's never used as the love of unbelievers. The word that's *iniquity* means literally *lawlessness*. So because lawlessness increases, the love of Christians will grow cold. Now if something had been hot and it starts to get cold, what does it become—lukewarm, isn't that right. And you remember the last church of Revelation, Laodicea? What was the great sin of Laodicea? Lukewarmness.

> "Because thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth [Jesus said]."

So the intense increase of lawlessness, rebellion, wickedness in the world tends to bring a decline in Christian love, and Christians become lukewarm. That's the next main avenue. That is very, very manifestly being fulfilled in the United States. Probably the greatest single social phenomenon of modern America is lawlessness. Almost every major periodical that comes out carries a major article (about once a month) on the increase in crime or some related aspect of it. The abounding lawlessness and at the same time Christians becoming lukewarm. And I want to tell you, you've either got to get hotter or you're going to get lukewarm. There is no neutrality left. Jesus said:

> "He that is not with me is against me.
> And He said right at the end of the age He said:
> He that is righteous, let him be still more righteous. He that is holy, let him be still more holy. He that is unrighteousness, let him be still more unrighteousness, and he that is unholy or filthy, let him be still more filthy."

You're either going to get better or you're going to get worse. The light is going to get brighter or the darkness is going to get darker, but there is no more neutrality. We've come to the parting of the ways right here. That's exactly where we're getting to today in the world and in the church. And then you see we come to this place where there is a division, and you're either going to go into the full-time tremendous activity of bringing this gospel of the kingdom to all nations, or you're going to miss the turn and find yourself in Decision Valley. And a little way down Decision Valley, on the right hand side there's a very sinister government building which is number 666, and you know who that stands for—the antichrist. But friend, when you get opposite building 666, it's no good trying to turn round because it's a one-way street, and all you can do is just carry on to Armageddon.

Now then, let's consider not merely the outward historical activities and events, let's consider the inner purposes of God. This is what we talked about at the beginning, so I want to go behind the outward events to the inner purposes of God. And we find that through all this God is working out His purposes. The purpose is to bring in the kingdom of God. Remember that Jesus, when He was asked how we should pray, said:

> "After this manner pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. [What's the next thing to pray?] Thy kingdom come..."

The great purpose of God throughout all history is to bring in the kingdom of God. And when we pray that prayer, *'Thy kingdom come,'* friends, that's not just a little polite language we're using. We are identifying ourselves with God's purpose. We are putting ourselves at God's disposal to be the instruments and the messengers to bring in the kingdom of God. This is the purpose of God. Now this great process by which God is bringing in His kingdom is described in outline very clearly in the book of the prophet Joel. We'll turn to that prophet and just look at a few passages in Joel. Now I have said many times the main theme of Joel is three successive phases related to God's people—first of all desolation, then restoration, and then judgment. And basically it goes chapter by chapter—chapter 1 desolation, chapter 2 restoration, chapter 3 judgment. The desolation affects every area of the inheritance of God's people. Furthermore, as we look at this picture of desolation, we find that there are two symbolic trees always in the forefront—the vine and the fig tree, and I do believe it is very true to say that each of these trees typifies one of God's people on the earth. The fig tree is God's natural people, Israel. The vine is God's spiritual people, the church, and God is doing a work of restoration equally in the fig tree Israel and in the vine the church in an amazing way, which I'll show you in a few moments, this restoration is proceeding exactly parallel in time.

> "Now Joel chapter 1 gives us the picture of desolation. Verse 7:
> He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree [notice the two trees]: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white.
> The tree is absolutely wasted and barren.
> Verse 9:
> The meat offering and the drink offering are cut off from the house of the LORD; [there's nothing to eat in God's house, nothing to drink.]
> [Verse 10:] The field is wasted, the land

> mourneth; the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth."

Notice these three great provisions—the corn of God's Word, the oil of the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the wine of joy, but all have been taken from God's people. The Word, the Holy Spirit, and the joy—the corn, the oil, and the wine are all wasted away. Verse 12:

> "men."

This is desolation and it is summed up in one phrase: *the withering away of joy.* When God's people have lost their joy they're withered, for Nehemiah 8:10 says:

> "...the joy of the LORD is your strength."

What God is doing today is restoring the corn, the wine and the oil, and God's people are coming back into joy.

Now in Joel 2 we have this great prophecy of restoration, and notice that it applies to the same trees. Verse 22 of Joel 2:

> "Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength.
> Notice, both are being restored and the key word occurs in verse 25:
> I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the canker worm, and the caterpiller, and the palmerworm..."

Notice, God is not merely going to just drive out the army, friends, He's going to restore the years which they ate. That's tremendous. I've seen Him do this in human lives. I've seen people grow ten years younger in front of my eyes when God did a miracle of physical restoration in their bodies. Remember, He's not just driving out the insects, He's restoring the years which they ate. This is part of restoration.

> "Then in the third chapter we have the declaration of judgment. Joel 3:12:
> ...for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about.
> [And verse 14:] Multitudes, multitudes [in that one-way street which is called] the valley of decision..."

When you get into the valley of decision you know what it means? You can't get out until you've made a decision. No more compromise. The decision will be very simple—either Christ or antichrist. And

the whole world will have to make its choice as Israel had to do. 'Which will you have? This man, Jesus? Or Barabbas?' God gave the choice to Israel nineteen centuries ago, but the world is going to be confronted with the choice: 'Will you have Jesus of Nazareth, My King, or will you have the man of your choosing, the antichrist?' That's the choice that confronts everybody that gets into that valley of decision, and no one will get out of the valley without making a decision for or against Jesus Christ. No more neutrality. All right, this is the process.

Now let's look at the time element, and we turn back again to another illustration from that street map that you saw before, but this time it's the process of restoration, not the historical events, that we're dealing with. The heading is Bringing in God's Kingdom. And the numbers in the main drag reading from west to east are dates—1900, 1914–18, 1948, 1967. This is the generation in which we are alive today.

Now north of this highway it's spiritual restoration—the church. South of this highway it's national restoration—Israel. But you see in both cases the process of restoration is going on side by side. And when you come to analyze this and you're a little familiar with the history of the church in recent years and of Israel, the parallel between the dates becomes literally amazing.

Let's take the opening of the century, 1900. The Zionist movement, which is the national political movement that got the Jews back to their land and made the original settlements and so on possible, started in 1897 with the Zionist World Conference in Basle, Switzerland. In 1904, Theodore Hertzel, the founder of Zionism, died at the age of 44, and when he died he said this:

> "People say I'm a dreamer and a visionary, but [he said] within fifty years my dream will have become a reality."

He died in 1904. 1948—44 years later—the state of Israel came into being. He was right, with six years to spare. In spite of all that politicians and learned men said would

never happen, it happened because God said it would happen.

Now you turn to the Pentecostals, the beginning of what we might call the Pentecostal Movement, there were major outpourings of the Holy Spirit towards the close of the last century in surprising places—Persia, Russia and Armenia. Before 1900 all these had experienced major supernatural visitations of the Holy Spirit with the restoration of the baptism and the gifts of the Spirit. But the first real public impact was made in the United States, Topeka, Kansas, 1900, and then 1904 in Azusa Street, Los Angeles, the great Azusa Street Awakening from which almost all the major Pentecostal denominations in North America have received their origin. So the year 1900 is the real beginning of awakening under the manifestation of the fig tree and the vine beginning to put on their strength—the church, the beginning of the Pentecostal Movement and Israel the beginning of Zionism.

Then we move on to World War II. Let's look at Israel first because it's most significant. The very significant year for Israel is 1917. Two things of vital significance happened. First of all, the British armies under General Allenby liberated the city of Jerusalem from centuries of Turkish Moslem dominion. Now Allenby was a real, born-again believer and when he led his armies into Jerusalem he dismounted from his horse and walked in on foot because he said, 'There's only person who has a right to ride into that city and that's the One whose city it is—it's the city of the Great King.' Allenby was a real born-again believer and God used him to liberate the city of Jerusalem from centuries of Moslem Turkish dominion, oppression and desolation. At the same time, the same year the British government came out with the Balfour Declaration, then got the Lord Balfour, who was the Home Secretary and also a born again believer and this opened the way for the return of the Jewish people to a home in the land of Israel. The Balfour Declaration came about through a remarkable set of circumstances in which Chaim Weitzman, a young Jewish chemist discovered a substitute for certain things that were needed to manufacture explosives for the forces which they could not attain because they were cut off by the blockade of the German forces. Weitzman discovered the substitute, went to Lord George, made it available to him, and it turned the tide of the war. When the war was being won, Lord George, the British Prime Minister, said to Chaim Weitzman, said 'What can we do for you? Would you like a peerage? How can we reward you?' And he said, 'I want nothing for myself, but I want you to remember my people, Israel.' And that was the motivation behind the Balfour Declaration that opened the way for the restoration for the Jewish nation to their homeland.

Now if you turn to the spiritual round about the time of the First World War, you'll find that the great world outreach of Pentecostal Missions began. 1913 two British Pentecostal missionaries, William Burton and James Salter, went to the Belgian Congo, waited there with apostolic zeal and success, and left well over a thousand indigenous, self-maintaining African full-gospel churches in that area. 1911, two first Pentecostal Missionaries went to the country of Brazil, two Swedish Americans—one of them was named Daniel Berg—arrived there with no backing, no support, no program. Today about one in every twenty persons in Brazil is baptized in the Holy Spirit. It is by far the most effecting and flourishing of all religious groups n Brazil. The same was repeated around the world.

In East Africa, where my wife and I have labored, round about this time, the first impact of Pentecostal Missionary zeal was felt in that area and right around the world. Then we're moving on quickly to the close of World War II, the year 1948. Let's look at the spiritual first, for a moment. This is the beginning of massive evangelism as we've known it for the last two or three decades. The beginning of the public ministry of Billy Graham and the many beginnings of the great revival and divine healing that is associated with the names of Oral Roberts, T. L. Osborn, and many other wonderful men of God, who first brought back the real demonstration of God's miraculous healing power to a church that by and large believed that these things had been relegated to the days of the apostles. A major epoch in the restoration of the people of God, the church.

And then here the great key date, the 15th of May 1948, the state of Israel reborn, and my wife and I had the privilege of being in Jewish Jerusalem the day that began to be, the Star of David, the Jewish national flag, went up over that city for the first time for something like two thousand years. A key date. A nation born in a day, Isaiah 66 verse 8:

> "Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such a thing? ...a nation born in a day..."

Then we're moving on very rapidly. The next great event—The Six-Day War—1967, and you know what happened then? The Jews, for the first time for something like two thousand, five hundred years, regained political control of the Old City of Jerusalem, the Jerusalem that Jesus knew. And Jesus had

7003 Prophecy: God's Time Map said, Luke 21:24:

> "...Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

This is the greatest single indication of how close we are to the end of the times of Gentile dominion in this earth. And here I think we could trace the beginning of what we call the Charismatic Renewal to about the year 1965. This is when it really began to get under way, and strangely enough we have here today with us Flo Dodge, in whose home in Pittsburgh in 1967, February, the first two Catholic Pentecostals received the baptism in the Holy Spirit—two professors from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. And from those two men, from that one movement, in the next two and a half years over thirty thousand Roman Catholics received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Now that is a sovereign act of God. I'm not saying those are the only Catholics that received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. I'm saying they all went back to that one little fountainhead of two Catholic professors from Duquesne University praying in an Episcopal prayer meeting, receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit—this is the rate at which God is now working.

We've come right here and what's the next thing ahead? It's the preaching of the kingdom gospel and the dividing of the ways. You're either going to be headed for God's kingdom in the heavenlies, or for the kingdom of God on earth if you acknowledge Jesus and not the antichrist. There's a key Scripture which I'd like to give you. We're coming very close to the end of our time. Isaiah 51 verse 16, Isaiah 51:16:

> "I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people."

That's a most amazing verse. For years I could never give any meaning to it. God says He's got two programs—to plant the heavens, to lay the foundation of the earth. You see, there's a double restoration— the spiritual restoration of God's kingdom in the heavenlies where the church of Jesus Christ is going to take over the area now occupied and dominated by Satan and his fallen angels, and the restoration of God's kingdom through Israel with its center at Jerusalem on the earth. This is the double process—planting the heavens, laying the foundation of the earth, and the dividing of the ways is coming just about here.

Now, mind you, I want to say very clearly, there are many, many things that are not revealed to me and a lot that are not revealed on this map, but you can get a basic orientation if you will grasp these simple facts. We've come, I would say, very near to the parting of the ways, and I believe it behooves each one of us to take stock of our spiritual condition, because prophecy is not given to scratch an itching intellect. It's not given to enable us to say, 'Well, I knew that was going to happen, and you see what's going to happen next.' Prophecy is given to enable us to be ready for what God is going to do to find our place in it to give us warning and direction that we need.

And in closing this message, I'd like to make this very real and personal to you in the words of Jesus at the end of this discourse in Luke chapter 21 verse 34 through 36. Will you take these words to yourself?

> "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, gluttony and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

That's the parting of the ways, and only those that are watching and praying, only those that get in the center lane to make the left turn, are going to read when the close of the age comes. Shall we pray? Almighty God, we praise You and thank You for this clear light from Your Word. Truly it is a light that shineth in a dark place. It is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. And I pray for everyone that hears these words, not only here in this congregation today, but everyone that hears them on this video tape and on this audio tape, I pray that they will make a deep penetrating abiding impact, that they will awaken the sleeping, that they'll call the lukewarm back to repentance, that they'll rouse the people of God to see how late the hour is, how critical the situation is and how necessary it is that each one of us shall watch and pray always that we may be accounted worthy to escape and to stand before the Son of man. Lord, we thank You; we praise You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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Sermon

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