

## ***Knowing the Signs of the Times (Part 1)***

### **I. THE COMMAND TO KNOW THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES**

- A. My premise: we are now living in [the beginning stages of](#) the generation the Lord will return.
- B. Many Scriptures emphasize the importance of prophetic signs at the end-of-the-age. Jesus taught more than any one on our need to discern the times. He gave severe rebukes to those who did not pay attention to the prophetic signs that pointed to His first coming.
- C. Paul taught that the Church should know the times and seasons related to the Lord's coming. He said that we are not in darkness that the Day of the Lord should overtake us as a thief.
- <sup>1</sup> Concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. <sup>2</sup> For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night (the unprepared suffer unnecessary loss)...<sup>4</sup> But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief...<sup>6</sup> Therefore...let us watch and be sober. (1 Thes. 5:1-6)*
- D. Jesus commanded us to know the generation that the Lord returns.
- <sup>32</sup> Learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. <sup>33</sup> So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near--at the doors! <sup>34</sup> Assuredly...this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place...<sup>36</sup> Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels...but My Father only...<sup>42</sup> Watch...for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. <sup>43</sup> Know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. <sup>44</sup> Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. (Mt. 24:32-44)*
- E. How long is a biblical generation? A generation in Scripture ranges from 40 to 100 years (Gen 15:13-16; Num. 32:13; Ps. 90:10; Mt. 1:17; Acts 7:6). Moses spoke of Israel's captivity in Egypt as lasting 400 years or four generations (Gen. 15:13). Thus, a generation could refer to [100 years](#). There were 14 generations from Abraham to David covering nearly 1,000 years (Mt. 1:17). These 14 generations averaged about 70 years. Adding 80 years to 1948 brings us to 2028.
- F. The Church will look up and lift their heads in encouragement knowing Jesus is coming soon.
- <sup>28</sup> When these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near...<sup>29</sup> Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. <sup>30</sup> When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. <sup>31</sup> So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near... (Lk. 21:28-31)*
- G. It is an expression of Jesus' great mercy to give us prophetic signs of His return because of our need to be fully prepared for the great and terrible events that must occur before He comes. Prophetic signs serve us like a weather station that signals coming trouble so people can prepare.

- H. Israel's unresponsiveness to God was partly related to them not knowing the time of their visitation. Jesus prophesied of the four-year siege of Jerusalem by the Romans in 66-70 AD. There is a relationship between the measure to which people are informed of coming prophetic events and the measure in which they respond to God in context to those events.
- <sup>42</sup> If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace...<sup>43</sup> For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, <sup>44</sup> and level you, and your children within you, to the ground...because you did not know the time of your visitation. (Lk. 19:42-44)*
- I. Jesus rebuked the people of His generation for being able to read weather signs while being unable to interpret the prophetic signs of His first coming.
- <sup>54</sup> Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west (Mediterranean Sea), immediately you say, 'A shower is coming'; and so it is. <sup>55</sup> And when you see the south wind blow (Negev desert area), you say, 'There will be hot weather'; and there is. <sup>56</sup> Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time? (Lk. 12:54-56)*
- J. Asking for a sign was a legitimate request because Joel prophesied that the Messiah would give signs from heaven (Joel 2:30-32). In hypocrisy, they were seeking signs beyond those done by Jesus and given by Scripture with the intention of testing God.
- <sup>1</sup> The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. <sup>2</sup> He...said to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; <sup>3</sup> and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. <sup>4</sup> A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign... (Mt. 16:1-4)*

## II. FOUR TYPES OF PROPHETIC SIGNS

- A. *Sign Events* – signs predicted in Scripture will alert the Church to the timing of His return.
- B. *Sign Trends* – in society and creation will escalate and thus signal the final generation.
- C. *Cosmic Signs* – highly unusual phenomena in the sky, this even includes weather
- D. *Personal Signs* – subjective prophetic experiences that alert believers to the End-Times. We do not put undue focus on them because they are subjective and not infallible.

## III. COMMON LIES AGAINST KNOWING THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

- A. *Lie #1*: we cannot understand End-Time Scriptures or the signs of the times because no one can. The Scriptures on the End-Times were written to be understood by all. The majority of people throughout history have been uneducated peasants. Any system of theology that takes the End-Times out of the hands of the people has not treated the text in the way God designed it.

- B. **Lie #2:** some think that understanding the End-Times will minimize the work of the Kingdom.
- C. **Lie #3:** since we are not able to know the day or hour of Jesus' return, we should not try to know the times and seasons or the signs of the generation in which Jesus returns. The truth is that the Scripture requires those in the generation the Lord returns to know it and prepare accordingly. Jesus and Paul emphasized the know-ability of the prophetic signs of the End-Times (Mt. 24:32-34; Lk. 21:25-29; 1 Thes. 5:1-6; 2 Thes. 2:1-11).
- D. **Lie #4:** that every generation believed they were the last one. It is probably true that a very small number (less than 1%) in each generation believed this. In only **one generation** have the majority of God's people believed in a sustained way (for decades) that we will see Jesus' return.
- E. I believe that there were occasional references to the end of the age by many through history. Some notable figures of Church history had a temporary emphasis of it in light of a great crisis. There was Millennial fervor for a short time just before 1,000 AD but it was not sustained.
- F. **Lie #5:** it will all pan out in the end. The question is how well will it pan out for you?

#### IV. THE THREE PROPHETIC TIME FRAMES: SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

- A. Scripture describes **3 prophetic time frames** related to the last 7-years of this age (Dan. 9:27). The last 7 years is made up of 2 distinct periods each lasting 3½ years.
- B. The first time frame is the beginning of birth pangs with **wars and rumors of wars** (Mt. 24:4-8). The second time frame is the increased labor pangs in the first 3½ year period (of the last 7 years) which is characterized by **counterfeit world peace** (1 Thes. 5:3; Dan. 9:27). The third time frame is the hard labor pangs in the final 3½ year period of the **Great Tribulation**.

#### V. UNDERSTANDING THE SECOND TIME FRAME: COUNTERFEIT WORLD PEACE

- A. The second prophetic time frame occurs in the first 3½ year period. Its main three activities are the counterfeit world peace (1 Thes. 5:3), the Harlot Babylon worldwide religion that persecutes the Church (Rev. 17:2-6) and the falling away from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1).
- B. The final 7 years begins when the Antichrist establishes a covenant with many nations bringing world peace that lasts 3½ years. When he breaks this covenant the Great Tribulation starts.

<sup>3</sup> **When they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains (Great Tribulation) upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. (1 Thes. 5:2-3)**

<sup>27</sup> **He (Antichrist) shall confirm a covenant with many (nations) for one week (7 years); but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice (in the Jerusalem Temple). On the wing (edge/extreme) of abominations shall be one (Antichrist) who makes desolate, even until the consummation (God's judgments), which is determined, is poured out on the desolate. (Dan. 9:27)**

- C. There are two stages in Satan’s End-Time plan to be worshipped by all nations and to rule them.  
***<sup>8</sup> All who dwell on the earth will worship him (Antichrist)... (Rev. 13:8)***
- D. First, he will establish the Harlot Babylon worldwide religion as a means to deceive the nations and cause Christians to fall away from the faith. Next, he will establish the Antichrist religion.
- E. Revelation 17:1-6 vividly describes the seductive power, cruel persecution, and destruction of Harlot Babylon’s one-world religious system. The Harlot’s system will cause the nations to be drunk with her seductions that offer great benefits including humanitarian aid, unified religion (that ends war) and a prosperous world economy. The nations will get drunk or intoxicated with joy with her “promises of goodness, prosperity, compassion and a theology of tolerance”.  
***<sup>2</sup> The inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication. (Rev. 17:2)***
- F. The Harlot religion will have great prominence. It will be arrayed in purple (royal status) and will be respected by the elite financial leaders of the earth who will give their allegiance to her.  
***<sup>4</sup> The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet (royalty), and adorned with gold...*having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. (Rev. 17:4)****
- G. The Harlot will be adorned with gold. It will be the wealthiest religious network in all history. The Harlot will have a golden cup in which she “serves” the nations. It will appear golden (valuable and good). She will bring unprecedented humanitarian service in helping the poor. The Harlot will bring religious unity that helps war to disappear. Her cup of service will be filled with abominations (demonic activity) and filthiness (moral perversions).
- H. The Harlot will cause multitudes to be drunk or intoxicated with the blood of the saints who expose her (v. 6). The more she kills the bolder she will become in killing the saints.  
***<sup>6</sup> I saw the woman (Harlot Babylon), drunk with the blood of the saints... (Rev. 17:6)***
- I. The Harlot Babylon will be a counterfeit “justice” movement and religion that will masquerade as an answer to injustice as it deceives the earth by feeding the poor, meeting humanitarian needs, loving peace, and championing the dignity of humanity with great moral tolerance.
- J. This religious system will boldly proclaim that all religions lead to salvation. Because of her ability to make people prosperous and because of her compassion on the poor many will leave their religion to join the Harlot Babylon religious system that will have no moral absolutes
- K. The Harlot religion serves as a “forerunner” to prepare the nations to worship the Antichrist. The Harlot Babylon religious system of “tolerance” will cause many to loosen their allegiance to the belief of their religious heritage. The Antichrist will understand that the leap would be too great for even a compromising and casual Christian, Jew, Muslim, Hindu, etc. to suddenly leave their belief system and become a devoted worshipper of Satan.

- L. Surprisingly, the Harlot worldwide religion will be hated and destroyed by the jealousy of the ten primary kings that serve the Antichrist (Dan. 7:7, 20, 24). They will burn the Harlot at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. In the middle of the last seven years, the Antichrist will destroy the Harlot religion in order to replace her with his own Antichrist religion.

***<sup>12</sup> The ten horns which you saw are ten kings... 16 The ten horns...on the Beast will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. (Rev. 17:12, 16)***

- M. The Harlot religion will be joined voluntarily and characterized by tolerance. The Antichrist religion will force all to worship him in a way characterized by strict rigidity.

- N. The emergence of this false worship movement will lead to falling away in the Church. The two signs that Paul gave to indicate the time of Jesus' Coming are a falling away from the faith combined with the revealing of the Antichrist on the world stage to establish peace (1 Thes. 5:3).

***<sup>3</sup> Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day (Jesus' Second Coming) will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin (Antichrist) is revealed... (2 Thes. 2:3)***

- O. Many believers and unbelievers will be deceived by the seductions of the *Harlot's religion*. There will be a falling away from the faith at the end of the age (Mt. 24:9-13; 2 Thes. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:1-7; 4:3-5; 2 Pet. 2:1-3). A doctrine of a demon is a teaching inspired by demons.

***<sup>1</sup> Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 3 forbidding to marry... (1 Tim. 4:1-3)***

- P. Sound doctrine teaches obedience to Jesus and His plans. It requires endurance. To turn the ear away means that the people will no longer hear what God intended in various Bible passages.

***<sup>3</sup> For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables... (2 Tim. 4:3-4)***

## VI. THE ORDER OF KEY END-TIME EVENTS

- A. Principle: by knowing the main events we can see trends leading up to them

- B. ***First time frame: Beginning of Birth Pangs*** (1948-?): Wars and rumors of wars (Mt. 24:4-8)

1. This is the time in which there is escalating turmoil in the nations. My first option is to see this period beginning in 1948 when Israel became a nation. My second option is to see it beginning in 1967 when Jerusalem came under Israel's authority.

2. Jesus gave twelve major trends that are to be discerned and received as prophetic signs to help the Church prepare for the coming years (Mt. 24:4-8; Mk. 13:5-8, Lk. 21:7-18). Matthew gives 7 major trends, Mark adds "trouble" and Luke describes four more which are "commotions, fearful sights, great signs from heaven and persecution."

- C. **Second time frame: Increased Labor Pangs** (First 3½ years): counterfeit world peace. This evil will occur during the first 3½ years of the seven years that leads up to Jesus' Coming.
1. The Antichrist is first revealed as a man of peace (2 Thes. 2:3) who brings world peace by confirming a covenant with many nations (1 Thes. 5:3; Dan. 9:27).
  2. The Harlot Babylon worldwide religion prospers and persecutes the saints (Rev. 17:1-6; Mt. 24:9-14) leading to the falling away of believers (2 Thes. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1).
- D. **Third time frame: Hard Labor Pangs** (Final 3½ years): Great Tribulation (Rev. 6-19)
1. **Chronological section #1** of the Book of Revelation in which the **seal judgments** are released (Rev. 6). At the first seal, the Antichrist is unveiled as a man of sin who begins to conquer (Rev. 6:1-2). It is the first fall of the Harlot Babylon religion as a voluntary worldwide religion of toleration (Rev. 17:16). Antichrist religion replaces the Babylon religion as a mandatory worldwide religion without toleration. All are forced by the threats of death to worship the Antichrist who sets his image in the Jerusalem Temple to begin the Abomination of Desolation (Rev. 13:4-18; 2 Thes. 2:4; Mt. 24:15).
  2. **Chronological section #2** of the Book of Revelation in which the **trumpet judgments** are released (Rev. 8-9)
  3. **Chronological section #3** of the Book of Revelation in which **Jesus' Second Coming** Procession begins with the Rapture (Rev. 11:15; 1 Cor 15:52)
  4. **Chronological section #4** of the Book of Revelation in which the **bowl judgments** are released (Rev. 15-16) including the final fall of Babylon (an economic network Rev. 18)
  5. **Chronological section #5** of the Book of Revelation in which Jesus makes His **triumphal entry** into Jerusalem (Rev. 19:11-20:10). The Antichrist will be defeated at the Battle of Jerusalem to end the Armageddon campaign.
    - a. The salvation of all Israel is after the leaders of Israel receive Jesus (Rom. 11:26).  
<sup>39</sup> ***I say to you, you (Israel governmental leaders) shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'*** (Mt. 23:39)  
  
<sup>26</sup> ***So all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion (Jerusalem), and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob... (Rom. 11:26)***
    - b. The Millennium follows immediately after Jesus is received in Jerusalem (Rev. 20:1-10). The New Heaven and New Earth follow after the Millennium (Rev. 21-22).