



THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES AND THE BEGINNING OF THE END

Preaching and Teaching Resources

ADRIAN ROGERS





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The Signs of the Times and the Beginning of the End

SERMON REFERENCE: Matthew 24:1-14

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #2454

Mankind has always been fascinated with knowing the future; our only reliable source of prophecy is the Word of God. In Matthew 24, Jesus prophesied His literal, physical return to earth, offering signs of the times and the beginning of the end. “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.” (v. 2)

The temple was the center of the Jewish life – spiritually and socially. No one could believe it would ever be desolated. Yet, Jesus had prophesied its destruction and it came to fruition. In response, the disciples ask Jesus three questions: When shall these things be? What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? (v. 3) Jesus gives them seven marks of the beginning of the end.

1. Deceptions of counterfeit christs

One of the marks of the last days will be a time of great deception, in which all the world will be deceived by the antichrist.

2. Division of continuing conflicts

The generations to come will see more terrorism, hijackings, bombings and assassinations than ever before.

3. Disasters of cataclysmic consequence

Jesus spoke candidly of famine, plagues and earthquakes.

4. Defamation of committed Christians

Religious persecution will increase, particularly toward those who follow Jesus Christ.

5. Distortion of christless cults

Adrian Rogers reiterates G.K. Chesterson’s statement: “When men choose not to believe in God, they do not thereafter believe in nothing, they then become capable of believing in anything.”

6. Disposition of carnal coldness

Adrian Rogers says, “When you take away moral limits, you destroy the fire and the glow of true love and you substitute that with the false fire of lust, and theology turns to me-ology.”

7. Discharge of Christ’s commission

Before Jesus left this earth, He commissioned us to take the Gospel to all of the world.

Jesus calls these marks “the beginning of sorrows.” (v. 8) In this context, the word “sorrow” also translates to, “birth pangs.” As these sorrows multiply and intensify, we know we are nearing the return of Jesus Christ, and the Great Tribulation that comes with it.

LIFE APPLICATION

Knowing Jesus could return at any moment, the wisest thing to do is follow Jesus and spend time in His Word.



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- 1) INTRODUCTION
 - a) Mankind always wants to look into the future, but the only book that prophesies the future with complete accuracy is the Word of God.
 - b) The next great event that we're looking for is the literal, bodily return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
 - c) The coming of Christ is a major doctrine in the Word of God.
 - i) It is mentioned no less than 1,200 times in the Old Testament and 300 times in the New Testament.
 - d) Today's message will focus on the words of Jesus as He leads us on a journey of prophecy as we look to our age and then to His coming.
 - i) We will see from the Word of God the fate of planet Earth.
 - e) Matthew 24:1-3
 - i) This passage contains the setting of the prophecy we will study today.
 - ii) The temple was magnificent and the center of the Jewish life, both spiritually and socially.
 - iii) The temple sat on Mount Moriah, the temple mount.
 - iv) Matthew 23:37-39
 - (1) The disciples could not believe that this temple would ever be desolate.
 - (a) The prophecy of the desolation did not make sense to the disciples.
 - (2) Jesus had prophesied destruction, and it did not seem reasonable.
 - f) The Romans were going to destroy Jerusalem, and there was already an increase of rebellion against Roman rule.
 - i) Jesus prophesied this, also.
 - (1) Luke 21:20
 - (2) Forty years later, the Roman army under Titus compassed Jerusalem, just like Jesus had said.
 - (3) The Romans were not destroyers of temples, they were preservers of temples.
 - (4) Titus had commanded that the temple not be destroyed.
 - (5) Somehow the temple caught fire and burned to the ground.
 - (6) Plunderers came and turned over every stone looking for gold; leaving not one stone upon another.
 - ii) What Jesus said, that so many thought unthinkable, happened.
 - (1) Not one stone of the temple was left upon another.
 - g) We do not live by reason; we live by revelation.
 - i) Don't try to explain away the prophecies of the Word of God.
 - h) Matthew 24:3
 - i) The disciples asked three questions:
 - (1) When will this be?



- (a) When will the temple be destroyed?
 - (2) What will be the sign of thy coming?
 - (a) The Greek word for “coming” in this passage means “His coming in power and glory.”
 - (b) They are asking Jesus when He will set up His kingdom and rule and reign.
 - (3) What is the sign of the end of the world?
 - (a) The word “world” in this passage literally means “the end of the age.”
 - (i) The disciples thought that they were coming to the end of an old age, and the new age (the Messianic age) was about to begin.
 - (ii) These were Jewish Christians who were asking Jesus these questions, and we’re going to see the signs of the times as they relate to Israel and the church.
 - i) Jesus gives the disciples seven marks of the signs of the times.
 - i) The signs of the times are the intervening days and ages between the time the disciples lived and when Jesus Christ is going to come again.
 - ii) We will look at these seven marks today.
- 2) THE DECEPTIONS OF COUNTERFEIT CHRISTS (Matthew 24:4-5)
- a) Jesus said that one of the marks of the last days will be a time of great deception.
 - b) Many people have been deceived, though the Bible warns us not to be deceived.
 - i) 1 John 4:1-3
 - c) Two thousand years ago, the spirit of antichrist was already in the world.
 - i) “Anti” means “against” and “instead of.”
 - ii) The antichrist comes against the true Christ and presents himself instead of Christ.
 - d) There have been many false christs and false messiahs through the years.
- 3) THE DIVISION OF CONTINUING CONFLICT (Matthew 24:6-7)
- a) One would think that by now, man would have solved the problem of war; but Jesus said that will never happen.
 - i) Matthew 24:6
 - b) In the time since Jesus made this statement in Matthew 24:6, the world has been plagued by war.
 - i) Wars are growing in number and in intensity.
 - (1) In the six-thousand-year recorded history of man, it is estimated that half of all people killed in war have died since 1900.
 - c) More wars have been seen by current generations than by other generations.
 - i) This includes terrorism, hijackings, bombings, assassinations, war, etc.
 - ii) All of this seems to center ultimately in Jerusalem.
 - (1) Zechariah 12:2-3
- 4) THE DISASTERS OF CATAclysmic CONSEQUENCE (Matthew 24:7-8)
- a) Jesus, looking down through time, said that there would be famine.
 - i) The problem of famine is two-fold:



- (1) The failure of agriculture itself.
 - (2) The bottleneck of distribution.
 - ii) We don't have granaries filled with food like we once did.
 - iii) A well-known biologist and sociologist said that with the world population doubling twice in the past century, the world's land is being worked so hard for food that one-quarter of the soil is turning sterile and eroding away.
 - iv) Revelation 6:6
 - (1) In the Great Tribulation, a quart of wheat (which would make about two loaves of bread) will cost approximately \$80 - \$100.
 - b) Jesus also speaks of plagues.
 - i) Different plagues like SARS and Ebola continue to come.
 - ii) Biological and chemical warfare is a specter that we face, also.
 - iii) Plagues are a sign in these days in which we live.
 - c) Jesus mentions earthquakes.
 - i) There has been an increase in earthquakes in the past decades.
 - ii) Seismology historians have calculated that megalithic earthquakes have increased over 2,000% since Columbus discovered the New World.
 - iii) Jesus said that in the ensuing age before He comes again, there will be earthquakes.
- 5) THE DEFAMATION OF COMMITTED CHRISTIANS (Matthew 24:9-10)
- a) We are going to be defamed if we love the Lord Jesus.
 - i) This is one of the marks of the age.
 - b) Jesus said that religious persecution will increase at the end of the age, and it's going to be centered on Christianity.
 - i) The world does not mind religion, but it does resent the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - c) More Christians have died for their faith in the past century than in all of the other centuries since the time of Jesus' death upon the cross.
 - i) It is estimated that more Christians were tortured and slain in twelve months of World War 2 than died under Rome in all of the early churches.
 - ii) Some authorities claim that over 50 million Christians have died in Russia and other communist countries because they named the name of Christ.
 - d) Since Jesus' ascension, no generation has seen such worldwide persecution as is now in progress.
 - e) Christians today are widely mocked in media and entertainment.
 - f) Persecution in the last days will turn to a white-hot heat.
 - i) When this happens, how many Sunday morning church-goers will vacate Bible-believing churches?
 - ii) The persecution in the last days will separate those who are true believers from those who are cultural Christians.
- 6) THE DISTORTION OF CHRISTLESS CULTS (Matthew 24:11)
- a) C.K. Chesterson pointed out that when a man ceases to believe in the one true God, it doesn't



mean that he will believe in nothing; it means that he will believe in anything.

- b) Matthew 24:11
 - i) The word “prophet” in this passage does not mean a person who is religious but somebody who speaks with authority.
 - (1) It could be a philosopher, a college professor, a scientist or statesman.
- c) There are people today who want to shape and mold society into their way of thinking, and they will deceive many.
- d) Genesis 6:5
 - i) The word “imaginings” here does not mean daydreams; it speaks of carefully crafted philosophies.
 - (1) It’s the word that was used to describe the molding of a piece of pottery.
 - (2) These philosophers that Jesus warned about are trying to fit society into their mold.
 - (a) All of this comes down to New Age humanism.
 - (i) New Age humanism takes the teachings of all the world’s religions and tries to synchronize them into its own system.
 - 1. New Agers believe that God revealed Himself in Jesus, but that He also revealed Himself in Buddha and others.

7) THE DISPOSITION OF CARNAL COLDNESS (Matthew 24:12)

- a) People will be cold-hearted in the last days.
- b) The teaching of the false prophets will bring about this cold-heartedness.
 - i) These false prophets will take away the moral base.
 - (1) When you take away the moral base, it then becomes “alright” to kill babies, to perform homosexual marriages, to euthanize the aged, etc., because you have taken away the fixed standard of right and wrong.
 - ii) When you take away moral limits, you destroy the fire and the glow of true love, and you substitute the false fire of lust.
 - (1) Theology turns to “me-ology.”
- c) Matthew 24:12
 - i) The word “iniquity” literally means “lawlessness.”
 - (1) When there is a crime wave, we become unfriendly.
 - (a) We become afraid to help others, and our hearts become hardened.
- d) Our society has replaced Godly love with selfish protectionism and lust.

8) THE DISCHARGE OF CHRIST’S COMMISSION (Matthew 24:13-14)

- a) Before Jesus ascended and left the Earth, He commissioned us to take the Gospel to all of the world.
 - i) We are to go into every nation with the Gospel.
- b) Nowhere has the Bible taught that we are going to win everybody to Christ.
 - i) The Gospel was not given to save civilization from wreckage, but to save men from the wreckage of civilization.
- c) Jesus said that we’re to take the Gospel to the whole world, and it will be done and has



been done.

- i) Matthew 24:13-14
- ii) From the time of Jesus' ascension until the time He comes again, there is the proliferation and the preaching of the Gospel worldwide.
- iii) The Gospel has been preached in all of the world; not to every person, but into all of the world through radio, television, the internet, books, leaflets, crusades, etc.
 - (1) Not every individual, but all nations have heard the Gospel.

9) CONCLUSION

- a) Matthew 24:8
 - i) Jesus said that when we see all of these things, they are the beginning of sorrows.
 - ii) The word "sorrows" is the word for birth pangs.
 - (1) When these birth pangs multiply and intensify, we know that something is about to come forth.
- b) We do not have to wait on any signs for Jesus to come; He could come at any moment.
- c) The wisest thing anyone could do would be to give his or her heart to Jesus Christ, even if Jesus didn't come back for another thousand years.
- d) We can trust the Word of God.
 - i) Some question why there are earthquakes, wars, etc., if there is a God.
 - (1) Jesus told us that all of these things would happen.
 - (a) If you stand before God unsaved, you cannot say that you never knew or that you never heard.
- e) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
 - i) Romans 3:23
 - ii) Romans 10:9-10
 - iii) Romans 10:13
 - iv) Acts 16:31
 - v) John 3:16



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Be finding Matthew chapter 24. Mankind always wants to look into the future. We have the prognosticators, the guessers, the pundits, the so-called prophets without divine inspiration, but the only book, the only book that has a batting average of 1000 is the Word of God. And the next great event that we're looking for is the return, the literal, visible, bodily return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And may I tell you that this episode, the coming of Christ, is a major doctrine in the Word of God. It is mentioned no less than 1,200 times in the Old Testament and then again 300 more times in the New Testament. God is telling us that this same Jesus who has come is coming again. And we're going to study today the words of Jesus as He leads us on a journey of prophecy as we look to our age and then through our age to His coming, and we're going to see from the Word of God the fate of Planet Earth. Now, it's so important for our age because those of us who are living in this age can say it and mean it, the future is here.

And I want you to notice the setting of the prophecy that we're going to read. Matthew chapter 24, let's read the first three verses, "And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple; and His disciples came to Him for to show Him the buildings of the temple." Now, don't you think Jesus had seen the temple before? Why would the disciples be showing Jesus the buildings 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.'" And as He sat upon the Mount of Olives," and, by the way, the Mount of Olives looks down upon the temple, "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 age?'" Now, when you keep this prophecy in mind, remember this is the setting.

Now, the temple was absolutely magnificent. The temple was the center of the Jewish life, spiritually and socially. All of their hopes were based there in that temple. And it sat there on Mount Moriah, the temple mount, like a mountain of gold. That's what Josephus said, or like a mountain of snow. There as it dazzles in the sun as the sun rose from the east coming over the Mount of Olives. Well, why had the disciples come out and said, "Lord, look at this temple and the stones of it?" Why were they showing Him this? Well, if you go backward in Matthew chapter 24, Jesus had made a prophecy in Matthew 23. Look in Matthew 23 beginning in verse 37 through verse 39. Jesus, coming down that Mount of Olives, begins to weep great salty, copious tears coursing down His cheeks as He looks at Jerusalem and there is the temple right before Him. He's coming down the Mount of Olives and He sees Jerusalem and the temple, and here's what He says, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not! Behold, your house," He was talking about the temple, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.'" They could not believe that this temple would ever be desolate. And it didn't look



like it would ever be desolate. But to make matters worse, Jesus said of this temple in Matthew 24 verse 2, “Not one stone would be left upon another.” They couldn’t believe this.

If you have seen even the remnant of the temple, the great stones that have been tossed off into the valley, you see these massive stones and it didn’t make sense to these disciples at all. They said, “Jesus, you’re saying this place is going to be desolate? Not one stone is going to be left upon another? Well, Jesus, look at these stones.” Ladies and gentlemen, I’ve seen some of those stones even in the foundation wall. Some of those stones are as big as this carpet here that I’m standing on, literally that big. And if it were a stone, it would be that thick. How they even moved these stones into place I cannot conceive because they did not have the tools of modern construction that we have. And they said, “Jesus, look at this. Look at these stones.”

Now, Jesus had prophesied destruction, and it didn’t seem reasonable. The Romans were going to come and destroy Jerusalem and there was already this fomenting there of rebellion against Roman rule, and Jesus also prophesied that. As a matter of fact, in Luke chapter 21 and verse 20, Jesus said, “And when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, know ye that the desolation thereof is nigh.” That is, the temple is going to be desolated. How are you going to know when this is going to happen? When you see the temple compassed about with armies. Well, forty years after Jesus said that, a little longer than I’ve been the pastor of this church, the Roman army under Titus came and they compassed Jerusalem, just like Jesus said, with armies all the way around the city. They said, “We don’t need to waste any lives going in there and waste any Roman soldiers’ lives. We’ll just build a circle around the city. They won’t be able to come in. They won’t be able to go out. They won’t be able to get any food.” Starvation stalked the city. “We’ll just wait them out.” Jesus prophesied all of this. It all happened.

The Romans were not destroyers of temples; the Romans were preservers of temples. And Titus had given orders that the temple, that Josephus described like a mountain of snow, was to be left untouched. But somebody shot a flaming arrow, or something happened, one of the mishaps of war, and those great cedars of Lebanon began to burn and this building went up in flames. And it was layered with gold, and it was rumored that there were hidden subterranean chambers with treasures, and all of this just melted together and caved in on itself. The plunderers went in there with their mighty crowbars and apprising equipment and began to pry apart those stones one at a time looking for treasure collecting melted gold in the seams of those cracks. And what Jesus said that so many people thought was unthinkable, they said, “Lord, it’s just unthinkable. Look at these stones. Look at this. Do You understand what You’ve said?” Jesus knew exactly what He was saying.

And, friend, I’ve been there many times to the temple mount, and if you look for Herod’s temple, you can find other temples. I’ve seen the ruins of other temples. You will not find, listen to me, one stone left upon another, not one, exactly as Jesus said. That ought to teach us something. We don’t live by reason; we live by revelation. Don’t try to explain away the prophecies of the Word of God. Now, this is the setting of this prophecy concerning the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The setting is they were questioning this.

Now, notice the subject of the prophecy. Look in Matthew 24 verse 3, “And as He sat upon the



Mount of Olives, His disciples came unto Him privately, saying, 'Tell us,'" number one, "when shall these things be?" Number two, "What shall be the sign of thy coming?" Number three, "What shall be and of the end of the world." The disciples asked three questions. First of all, "When will this be? When will the temple be destroyed?" Number two: "What will be the sign of Thy coming?" The word 'coming' here is the Greek word *parousia* and it means "His coming in power and glory." That is, "When are You going to set up Your kingdom? Lord, when are You going to take over and rule and reign?" And then, last of all, "What is the sign of the end of the world?" The word 'world' there literally means the end of the age. They thought they were coming to the end of an old age, and the new age, the Messianic age was about to begin. So they asked Jesus this question. Now, these were Jewish Christians who were asking Him this question, and we're going to see here the signs of the times as they deal with Israel and with the church.

Now, what Jesus does here, Jesus looks down through the tunnel of time and Jesus gives them the signs of the times, the intervening days and ages between the time that they existed and when Jesus Christ is going to come again, and He gives them seven marks. And that's what we're going to talk about today, okay? Now, here they are.

First of all, Jesus said the first mark is going to be the deceptions of counterfeit christs, the deceptions of counterfeit christs. Now, look in Matthew 24 verses 4 and 5, "And Jesus answered and said unto them, 'Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, 'I am Christ;' and shall deceive many.'" Jesus said, "One of the marks of the last days, the end of the age and the continuing age, will be a time of great deception." And so many people have been deceived, though the Bible warns us not to be deceived. Let me give you an ancillary Scripture, First John chapter 4 verses 1 through 3. Here's what the apostle John said, "And, beloved, believe not every spirit, but try," or test, "the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Thereby know ye the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God. And this is, this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof, ye have heard that it should come, even now already it is in the world." 2,000 years ago, the spirit of antichrist was in the world. The word anti-Christ takes the word Christ and puts the prefix anti, A-N-T-I in front of it. Anti means against or instead of. It can mean either. And it means really both. The antichrist comes against the true Christ and presents himself instead of Christ and, therefore, there're many false Christs and many false messiahs. In the past 50 years no less than 1,100 people have professed to be Christ. I'm amazed at what people will believe.

Not only is there going to be the deceptions of counterfeit Christs, number two, there will be the divisions of continuing conflict. Would you think that in 2000 years man would have solved the problem of war, to make the world safe? Well, as young as I am, I've heard so many promises of wars to end all wars and to bring in safety, and to make the world safe from war. But Jesus said that will never happen. Look in Matthew 24 verse 6, "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end has not, is not yet." Now, the world, from the time that Jesus made this statement to this present day, in two millenniums



has been plagued by the specter of war, and wars are growing in number and wars are growing in intensity. Since World War I, at least every month there has been an attempt to take over a country and bring about political, economic, racial, or religious change.

You think about what's going on in our day and in our age. Think of the conflict in the Middle East. Consider what is happening in Iraq. Consider what is happening in Iran. Consider what is happening in Afghanistan. Consider what is happening in North Korea. Consider what is happening in Red China, to name some places. In the 6,000 year recorded history of man it is estimated that 600 million people have been killed in war, but, friend, half of those, half of those have died since 1900. Half of those who've died in 6,000 years have died since 1900. Now, we seem to find these things coming together in a climax. More wars have been seen by this generation, the generation in which we live, than any other generation. Terrorism, hijackings, bombings, assassinations, sabotage, war. And all of this seems to center ultimately in Jerusalem. Does the Bible have anything to say about that? It does indeed. Zechariah 12 verses 2 and 3, "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in siege against both Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people; all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the peoples of the earth be gathered together against it." Continuing conflicts. Divisions.

Number three: the disasters of cataclysmic consequence. Skip on down now, Matthew 24 verses 7 and 8, let's jump in again, "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be," here they are, here are the cataclysms, "famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows." Now, Jesus, looking down through time, said there would be famine. You would think that perhaps man, with increased agricultural skill and genetic engineering, would be able to solve the problem of famine, but the problem of famine in our world is really two-fold. Number one, there's the failure of agriculture itself, and number two, there is the bottleneck of distribution. Even when we have the food we cannot get the food to the people who need the food. But before long, we will not have the food. We are now living on Planet Earth from field to mouth. We don't have granaries filled with food like we used to. A well-known biologist and sociologist has said, and I quote, "Planet Earth is no longer a sustainable society. With world population doubling twice in the past century, the world's land is being worked so hard for food that one quarter of the soil is turning sterile and eroding away." The Bible teaches that in the tribulation, which may be just a few years away, Revelation chapter 6 verse 6, that you would pay for a quart of wheat 80 to 100 dollars which would make about two loaves of bread. A famine is coming here upon this earth. China, for example, which was once a net exporter of grains has become the number two importer of grains.

But not only does did Jesus speak of famines; Jesus spoke of plagues. Now, you would have thought that in 2,000 years we would do something about plagues. I can remember when I was a kid, they said, "We've conquered polio," and I thought well, isn't that wonderful. It won't be long before every disease like polio and smallpox, and these other things we'll know how to deal with those. And then along comes AIDS. And then along comes SARS. And along comes Ebola. And along



comes this thing and that thing. And then to cap all of that off, biological and chemical warfare is a specter that we face. Jesus said plagues are going to be a sign of the day in which we live.

And then He mentions earthquakes. Well, that ought to tell us something. Did you know there has been a dramatic increase in earthquakes in the past decades? Now, seismologists speak of something called plate tectonics. That is, there are these great plates, thick, 70 mile thick rock plates that float on the molten surface of the earth. And these rock plates come together there at points where they meet. And there is great pressure there. And, as these plates move just a little bit, then we see what we call an earthquake. It's like a break up of ice on the Great Lakes in the northern part of this continent. Seismology historians have calculated that megalithic earthquakes have increased over 2,000% since Columbus discovered the New World. As many have died in earthquakes in the last 40 years had died in the previous 120 years.

Jesus said that in the ensuing age before He comes there will be earthquakes. It seems that the Earth itself is heaving in pain.

Now, number four: there's going to be the defamation of committed Christians. We're going to be defamed if we love the Lord Jesus. It's one of the marks of the age. Look in Matthew 24 verses 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's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another." Jesus said that religious persecution will increase at the end of the age and it's going to be centered on Christianity, those who follow the Lord Jesus Christ. This world does not mind religion, but it does resent the Lord Jesus Christ. Did you know that more Christians have died for their faith in the past century than all of the other centuries since Jesus Christ hung on the cross? It is estimated that more Christians were tortured and slain in twelve months of World War 2 than died under Rome in all of the early centuries. We think of those Christians who died when Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven and the Christians were persecuted under Rome. More people have died for Christ in our generation, in our age. Some authorities claim that over 50 million Christians were slaughtered in Russian and other communist countries because they named the name of Christ. Since the ascension of Jesus Christ, no generation has seen such worldwide persecution as is now in progress. Open your eyes and look around. Bible-believing Christians are the whipping boys. The Christian bashing has become the favorite sport in newspaper, radio, and television. Can you imagine this? It's sad to see what is happening. But this persecution in the last days will be turned to a white-hot heat, and I wonder how many Sunday morning benchwarmers will vacate themselves from Bible-believing churches. Now, there's going to be a persecution of believers in the last days and it's going to separate those who are true believers from those who are cultural Christians.

Number five: the distortion of Christless cults. Look, if you will, now in Matthew 24 verse 11, "And many false prophets shall rise and deceive many." C.K. Chesterson has pointed out that, "When a man ceases to believe in the one true God, it doesn't mean that he believes in nothing; it means that he will believe in anything." Now, when the Bible speaks of a prophet here, it doesn't mean a person who is even religious. The word here means somebody who speaks with authority. It could be a philosopher. It could be a college professor. It could be a scientist. It could be a statesman. But these are people today



who want to shape and to mold society into its thinking and they will deceive many.

It's like it was in the days of Noah when the Bible says there in Genesis chapter 6 and verse 5, "God saw the imaginations of men's hearts was evil continually." The word 'imaginations' there does not mean daydreams, but it speaks of carefully crafted philosophies. It's a word that was used to describe the molding of a piece of pottery. These philosophers are trying to fit society into their mold. And what all of this comes down to really is New Age humanism. When New Age humanism just takes the teaching of all the religions of the world and tries to synchronize them into its mystical system. Let me say what, let me tell you what one of them said. "We honor the truth and beauty of all the world's religions, believing that each has a seed of God, a kernel of the spirit that unites us." Now, the New Agers believe that God revealed Himself in Jesus, but He also revealed Himself in Buddha and Krishna and a host of other people.

Now, let me give you the sixth sign that Jesus spoke about, and it is the disposition of carnal coldness. People are going to be cold-hearted. Notice again in Matthew 24 verse 12, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Now, what brings about this cold-heartedness? It's the teaching of these false prophets. These false prophets take away the moral base. When you have no moral base, when it's alright to kill babies, when it's alright to perform homosexual marriages, when it is alright to take away life from a person who has lost consciousness or euthanize the aged, why is this alright? Because you have taken away the fixed standard of right and wrong. And when you take away moral limits, you destroy the fire and the glow of true love and you substitute that with the false fire of lust, and theology turns to me-ology. And the Bible says because the iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. When you have a bounding iniquity that you have a crime wave, and the word iniquity literally means lawlessness, what do we do? We get unfriendly. Somebody knocks at your door and says, "Look, can I come in and use your phone? My battery is dead." You say, "No, I'm sorry." You see somebody on the road with a thumb up. You have an empty seat. You want to pick them up. You, you say, "Well, I'm afraid." And you find yourself hardening your heart because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. And our society has replaced godly love with selfish protectionism and lust.

Number seven, the next mark, and I love this one, the discharge of Christ's commission. Before Jesus left this earth He gave us commission, and the commission was that we were to take the Gospel to all of the world. And we were to go into every nation with the Gospel. Nowhere has the Bible ever taught that we were going to win everybody to Christ. The Gospel was not given to save civilization from wreckage, but to save men from the wreckage of civilization. And the Bible prophesies that there's going to be the Master's minority, that little flock that's going to be saved. But Jesus said we're to take the Gospel to the whole world. Will that be done? Absolutely. It has been done. Matthew 24 verses 13 and 14, "But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved. And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be," doesn't say ought to be, He says, "shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come." And Jesus said that in the ensuing time, from the time that He left till the time that He came back, there is going to be the proliferation and the preaching of the Gospel worldwide. Has this happened? Indeed, it has! Friend, the Gospel has been preached in all of



the world; not to every person, but into all the world, to all the ethnic by radio, by television, by books, by tapes, by leaflets and by crusades the world has heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This does not mean all, every individual, but it means all nations have heard the Gospel.

Dr. Bill Bright was a personal friend of mine, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. Before he died, he invited me to join a celebration of praise to give God all the glory for the fulfilling of the great commission in our age. And he said, and I quote, "New Life 2000 has now been implemented in 220 countries, representing 98% of the world's population. More than two billion people have been exposed to the Gospel." And you think of the Jesus film alone. More than 850 million people have viewed the film, which has been dubbed into more than 400 languages, making it the most widely translated film in history. I participated in a hookup, and I had the privilege of doing this, to broadcast through the Internet to every nation on Earth the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Today, what I am saying, what I'm preaching will be telecast around the world. The sun will not set on this message. It will go around the world. Through the Internet, everybody on Earth has access if they have a computer and are hooked into the net to hear the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, Jesus says something very interesting. He says, "When all of these things begin to come to pass." Look, if you will, in Matthew chapter 24 and verse 8. He says, "All these things are the beginning of sorrows." Now, what does He mean by that, "All these things?" When you see all the things that I've mentioned, when, you say, "Pastor, there have always been wars. There have always been famines. There's always been persecution." Yes, but Jesus said, "When you see all these things, all these things are the beginning of sorrows."

Now, you look at that word sorrows. That word sorrows is the word for birth pangs. All of these things are the beginning of birth pangs. Now, those of us who are genuine fathers, like I am, you know what it is when your wife begins to talk to you about those birth pangs. You know, you see this thing happening. And somebody said, "Is your wife expecting?" I said, "No, it's a sure thing." You see this happening. But then that time happens when she says, "Adrian, I think I felt something." I said, "Whoooo! And then she says, "Yes, I felt something. There's something stirring." And then you know that when those birth pangs do what? When they multiply and when they intensify, you know something's about to come forth, isn't that right? When they multiply and when they intensify, you know something's about to come forth. Jesus said, "All these things are the beginning of birth pangs."

Now, we don't have to wait on any sign for Jesus to come. He could come at any moment, and has always been willing to do that. But, precious friend, listen to me. The wisest thing anybody could do would be to give his heart to Jesus Christ if we knew Jesus Christ was not coming in a thousand years. But when we know that our Lord may come at any moment, and when our Lord has given us the signs of the times, and when our Lord has looked down through the ages and helped us to be aware, don't you think that the wise thing to do would be to give your heart to Jesus Christ? I love the Bible. We can trust the Word of God.

And, you know, when I see all of these things, all of these things that happened, I don't get stampeded when people say to me, "Well, if there's a God, why the earthquakes; if there's a God, why the wars; if there's a God, why the famines; if there's a God, why the plagues?" Well, even if you don't



know why, I can tell you one thing. None of them took God by surprise. There is no fine print in this. I mean, God said, "There it is." Jesus said this is what's going to happen. Then shall the end come. If you stand before God unsaved, you won't be able to say I never knew or I never heard, will you?

Would you bow your head in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. If you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ now, you need to know Him. "Pastor Rogers, are you trying to frighten me?" Would to God I could. If I could, I would. The Bible says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Jesus said, "Fear him who is able to destroy body and soul in hell." But I don't want to merely frighten you. I want to encourage you. I want to tell you there's a God that loves you so much that He sent His Son to die for you and has promised to save you if you would trust Him. Are you ready to do that? Now, you may already be a member of a church. For some people, they've been vaccinated with a mild form of Christianity and never catch the real disease. You need to be saved. Church membership won't save you. A moral life won't save you. Believing the facts of the Bible don't save you. It's Jesus that saves.

And if you don't have Him in your heart, I want you to pray this prayer, "Dear God, I know that You love me and I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me and promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus. I give You my heart and life and I receive You now by faith as my Lord and Savior. Come into my life. Forgive me. Cleanse me and save me, and begin now to make me the person You want me to be. And help me, Jesus, to be willing to make it public, not to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen."



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