

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Text: Matthew 24:1-3

As we continue our study in the second coming of Christ we see that people are still asking the same question the disciples did while standing in the presence of our Lord: "...Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24:3b). Although we do not know the "...day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh" (Matthew 25:13b), we observe the climate changing and we have entered the atmosphere of the time of Christ's coming. However, don't take my word for it. Our Lord teaches us, when that time comes we will see:

I. Ubiquitous Deception

Matthew 24:4, 5, 11

We are battling false teaching and deception on many fronts. Please observe six:

A. Eastern Embrace

America began to cozy up to these teachings in the 1960s. The epicenter is located in Buddhism and Hinduism. Many have been turned from the only truth in Jesus to be deceived by following a path, a plan and a method of meditation and certain deeds to bring about a nirvana (peaceful existence) and a reincarnated state of bliss (in another life beyond this one) that is more pleasing than the present state in which you now live. It is the belief that if you remove the bad karma (the effect of the deeds and actions of your life) you will do better in another reincarnated state. These Eastern teachings have taken on a western accent, but the root is still most definitely heathen. The Word of God warns us, "...Cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?..." (Proverbs 23:24b,25a). Prov. 3:5,7a: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. Be not wise in thine own eyes...." And rest assured, after this life there are only two destinations, Heaven or Hell. There are no "re-dos"! Hebrews 9:27 is dogmatic: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." The apostle Peter was quick to point out, "...Why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" (Acts 3:12b). In Christianity, all power is attributed to God as well as all glory! Goodness comes from God through Jesus Christ, not within ourselves.

B. Atheistic and Agnostic Eruption

Millions of Americans are buying into belief that there is no God or the non-acceptance of God unless they are given proof empirically otherwise according to their own satisfaction. I am convinced that the main, underlying reason people deny God is to excuse themselves to live their lives without the obligation to answer to God when this life is over. More than one atheist has admitted to this. The seventeenth century, English Puritan, Steven Charnock said, "Men do evil with both hands earnestly, but do good with one hand faintly." Psalm 14:1 says, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." Virtually, the same truth is repeated in Psalm 53:1.

C. Socialistic Stopgap

This deception slipped in rather subtly. This is the belief that government can take care of you from birth to grave. Think of it, if government becomes your god, it can also determine when you live and when you die. Is that not what abortion rights and euthanasia ("mercy-killing" of the infirm and aged) is all about? Wicked Rabshakeh had no better form of government than Egypt, but what he said of national trust was true and could just as easily be said today, "...Now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me? Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him." (II Kings 18:20b, 21). Amos 5:19 says, "As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him." Any form of government that attempts to take the place of God or usurp His authority will be doomed as nation. In 1961, long before Ronald Reagan became the 40th President of the United States, he said, "Back in 1927, an American socialist, Norman Thomas, six times candidate for President on the Socialist Party ticket, said that the American people would never vote for socialism but he said under the name of liberalism the American people would adopt every fragment of the socialist program." In his first inaugural address, President Reagan said, "In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem."

D. Barbarianism Revisited

We find that as the "huddled masses yearning to be free" came to America, some brought with them the old enslaving religions. There has been a rise in Wicca, the witchcraft of ancient Britain and the Celtic countries of the British Isles. We also see a revival of animal worship that was in Egypt, as seen from their hieroglyphics and propagated to the rest of Africa and throughout other cultures. We have even had a renewal in the belief system of the American Indian with their holding to the sacredness to animals and plants.

E. Ecclesiastical Compromise

Paul prophesied to his preacher-boy Timothy that in the last days there will be those, “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (II Timothy 3:5). This is now epidemic! How dangerous can this deception become? Jesus said in Matthew 24:24, “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”

II. Escalating Wars

Matthew 24:6,7a.

In my youth I recall Dr. Lee quoting a famous scientist who said, “The world is now on the verge of global cremation.” We have enough atomic energy to launch nuclear warheads into our skies to fall back on our planet and virtually decimate every square foot of exposed land. Luke recorded Jesus saying it like this, “But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by” (Luke 21:9). This is the only time the word “commotions” is used in the Bible. It is the Greek word, “akatastasia” meaning instability, i.e. disorder— commotion, confusion, tumult. Think of it: commotion! I could not choose a better word to describe the volatile world we are living in at this hour.

III. Ecological maelstrom

Matthew 24:7b

On every hand we are now seeing an increase of exactly what Jesus prophesied: “famines, pestilences and earthquakes.” According to U.S. Geological Survey statistics, approximately 330 major earthquakes (6.5+) occurred across the world from 1900 to 1950. From 1950 through 2010, over 1,000 major quakes occurred. As we approach the coming of the Lord these events will be rising. The secular world tends to blame the earth’s changing conditions on what man has done to the world. God puts the emphasis on what man has done to himself by sinning without restraint. In Joel 3:13 the prophet foresees the earth reaching a tipping point when God’s longsuffering mercy runs out and He will tolerate man’s iniquity no longer and upon seeing the earth ripe with her sins cries, “Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great.”

IV. Moral depreciation

Matthew 24:8-12

Moral values have dropped at break-neck speed as the flaunting of immorality has dipped to new lows. This was prophesied in II Timothy 3:1-9.

Conclusion:

There are facts we should know: II Timothy 3:10-12

There are things we should continue: II Timothy 3: 13-15

There is something we should believe: II Timothy 3:16a

There is a truth we should apply: II Timothy 3:16b-17

Doctrine: what is right

Reproof: what is wrong

Correction: how to get right

Instruction: how to stay right

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the name.