

## Signs of the Times

Many people believe there is nothing that can be known about the timing of the Lord's return because Jesus said He would return like a thief in the night <sup>42</sup>"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. <sup>43</sup>But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. <sup>44</sup>So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." (Matthew 24:42-44).

And <sup>32</sup>"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." (Mark 13:32)

And 'So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

<sup>7</sup>He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.'" (Acts 1:6-7)

But Paul made it clear in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 that Jesus' statement does not apply to believers: <sup>1</sup>Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, <sup>2</sup>for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup>While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

<sup>4</sup>But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. <sup>5</sup>You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. <sup>6</sup>So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.

So though we know that the time will come like a thief in the night, yet we are not to be surprised. How can that be? Because we are sons of the light. We have the Holy Spirit in us. We have God's Word. God has given to believers a way to be prepared and to discern those times. God's Word gives us spiritual understanding through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Bible is a spiritual book. It can only be understood by the opening of our minds by the Holy Spirit. That is why so often, we come across a passage that we might have heard or seen before and at that time, it either didn't make sense to us or we just passed by it, but now we read it and we get a completely different view on it. When we read the Bible as unbelievers, we see the physical things but cannot discern the spiritual things. Since the Bible is a spiritual book, the unbelievers think it is fairy tales and made-up. Something written in invisible ink cannot be read in the usual way – it needs to have some other tool to make the words visible. Something written by the Spirit of God cannot be read in the usual way – it needs to have the Spirit to make the words visible. 1 Corinthians 2:14-15a (<sup>14</sup>The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. <sup>15</sup>The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, ) It is in this way that we are able to recognize the signs of the times, while our unbelieving friends walk around blind to what is going on.

So what are these "signs of the times?" These are prophecies concerning events that we are told to watch for, prophecies that will identify the season of the Lord's return. They will not tell us the day or time. But they will tell us the season. There are about 500 prophecies in the Old Testament that relate to the Second Coming of the Messiah. In the New Testament, one out of every 25 verses is in regards to the return of Jesus.

<sup>12</sup>The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. <sup>13</sup>Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. <sup>14</sup>Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. - Romans 13:12-14 In the previous passage from 1 Thessalonians, Paul tells us that we are sons of light and sons of day. Now he tells us that our behavior should match who we are – that we should behave as in the daytime. Those who are in the dark will continue to act as if in the night. *Drunkenness, orgies, sexual immorality, dissension, jealousy.* Does any of this sound familiar? It should, because we see this every day, obviously not in our own lives, but in the lives of others around us, on television and in the movies, on the Internet and the news. And through all this, let's not lose track of the point that Paul is making – that the night is nearly over and the day is almost here. Of course, Paul is speaking of Jesus' coming again to judge the world.

Jesus said that society will become increasingly *wicked* and *unloving* as the time approaches for His return. He compares it to Noah's day when God was so disgusted with humanity, that He started over. Those people also did not know Him and although he gave them 120 years to repent, they instead mocked Noah and his prophesy and continued in their day to day activities as if Noah never said a word. Jesus tells us that at the Time of the End, it will be the same way. Do we see this today? Are people mocking us as we tell them that the day is near? Are they ignoring our warnings? Are they continuing in their ways as if there is no problem? (Matthew 24:12,37-39). <sup>12</sup>Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, <sup>37</sup>As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup>For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; <sup>39</sup>and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

Paul tells us what the end time society will look like: 2 Timothy 3:1-5. <sup>1</sup>But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. <sup>2</sup>People will be *lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,* <sup>3</sup>*without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good,* <sup>4</sup>*treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—* <sup>5</sup>*having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.* Earlier, we are told that in the last days it will be a loveless society. Here we are told that what they will love is themselves, their money and their pleasures. Philosophically, we call those things humanism, materialism, and hedonism. This type of lifestyle results in what we philosophically call nihilism. Encarta defines nihilism as follows: "the general rejection of established social conventions and beliefs, especially of morality and

religion.” Nihilism and the belief that we don’t need to worry about God results in depravity (Romans 1:28) “<sup>28</sup>Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.” Additionally, since we then become the keepers of what is morally and ethically right, people can now call evil good and good evil. We know this will happen and Isaiah tells us what God thinks about that (Isaiah 5:20)

Woe to those who call evil good  
and good evil,  
who put darkness for light  
and light for darkness,  
who put bitter for sweet  
and sweet for bitter..

This is not the first time that people will have done this. We see at the end of the book of Judges that this same thing happened to the Israelites before God sent judgment to that nation. Judges 21:25 “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” We can use this verse in a similar way today – there is no God in America; everyone did what was right in our own eyes.”

What other signs are there? There are spiritual signs that we need to heed including the appearance of false christs and their cults (Matthew 24:5,11,24) (<sup>5</sup>For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.; Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many.; For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect)., the apostasy of the professing church (2 Thessalonians 2:3)(<sup>3</sup>Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for (that day will not come) until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness<sup>[a]</sup> is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.), an outbreak of Satanism (1 Timothy 4:1)(<sup>1</sup>The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.), and the persecution of faithful Christians (Matthew 24:9)(<sup>9</sup>"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me.)

Looking at false christs and cults, we see several cults forming beginning in the mid-19th Century. First came the Mormons, then the Jehovah's Witnesses, and then a great variety of spiritualist groups like the Church of Christ Scientists and the Unity Church. Today, there are many false christs and false prophets. Benny Hinn and his false teachings; Kenneth Copeland and Kenneth Hagin with their Prosperity Gospel , which is today the fastest growing cult in Christianity; Oprah Winfrey with her New Age positive thinking; Deepak Chopra; Madonna...the list goes on.

The definition of apostasy is “a falling away, a withdrawal, a defection. Not found in the English Versions of the Bible, but used twice in the New Testament, in the Greek original, to express abandonment of the faith. Paul was falsely accused of teaching the Jews apostasy from Moses ([Acts 21:21](#)); he predicted the great apostasy from Christianity, foretold by Jesus ([Matthew 24:10-12](#)) which would precede "the day of the Lord" ([2 Thessalonians 2:2](#))” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. The apostasy of the mainline Christian denominations began in the mid-1800’s, continued in the 1920's when the German school of higher criticism invaded American seminaries and undermined the authority of the

Scriptures, teaching that the Bible is Man's search for God rather than God's revelation to Man and continues today as evidenced by Barna's survey. In the survey, he found that only 5-percent of all adults have a Biblical worldview, 8-percent of Protestant Christians and only one-half-percent of Catholics. A Biblical worldview, according to Barna, is the believe that "absolute moral truth exists; that the source of moral truth is the Bible; that the Bible is accurate in all of the principles it teaches; that eternal spiritual salvation cannot be earned; that Jesus lived a sinless life on earth; that every person has a responsibility to share their religious beliefs with others; that Satan is a living force, not just a symbol of evil; and that God is the all-knowing, all-powerful maker of the universe who still rules that creation today". Not having a Biblical worldview would be a falling away, a withdrawal, a defection from the faith. This is the definition of apostasy. We are currently witnessing the prophesied apostate church of Laodicea which Jesus warned in [Revelations 3:14-28](#).

Next is Satanism: Dabbling in the occult has become commonplace in the form of astrology, numerology, crystal gazing, transcendental meditation, and channeling. The whole trend has consummated in the appearance of the New Age Movement with its teaching that Man is God. We need to be careful as we recognize that this Satanism comes in deceptive, pretty packaging.

As society has secularized, true Christianity has come under increasing attack. Judeo-Christian values, once the foundation of Western Civilization, are now openly mocked, and those who still adhere to them are castigated as "intolerant fundamentalists" by the media. At [www.christianpersecution.info](http://www.christianpersecution.info) there are 170 articles regarding persecution of Christians spanning at least 28 countries including Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, China, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Columbia, Mexico, Eritrea, Vietnam, Nigeria and Russia. These persecutions include false arrests, church burnings, torture, beatings, Church closings, kidnapping, and murder. Statistics show that more Christians have been martyred over the past 100 years than all of history combined.

The most frequently repeated prophecy in the Old Testament is the prediction that the Jewish people will be regathered from the "four corners of the earth" in the end times (Isaiah 11:10-12). <sup>(10)</sup> In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious. <sup>(11)</sup> In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, <sup>[a]</sup> from Cush, <sup>[b]</sup> from Elam, from Babylonia, <sup>[c]</sup> from Hamath and from the islands of the sea.

<sup>(12)</sup> He will raise a banner for the nations  
and gather the exiles of Israel;  
he will assemble the scattered people of Judah  
from the four quarters of the earth.)

The Bible states that a consequence of this regathering will be the re-establishment of the state of Israel (Isaiah 66:7-8). <sup>(7)</sup> "Before she goes into labor,

she gives birth;  
before the pains come upon her,  
she delivers a son.

<sup>8</sup> Who has ever heard of such a thing?  
Who has ever seen such things?  
Can a country be born in a day  
or a nation be brought forth in a moment?  
Yet no sooner is Zion in labor  
than she gives birth to her children.)

The Scriptures say that once the Jews are back in their land, the land itself will experience a miracle of reclamation (Isaiah 35). The desert will bloom and people will exclaim, "This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden" (Ezekiel 36:35).<sup>(35)</sup> They will say, "This land that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden; the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited.")

"[The Jews] will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). The first half of this prophecy was fulfilled in 70 A.D. Jerusalem remained under Gentile occupation for 1,897 years until June 7, 1967, when Israel won the city back during the Six Day War. Jesus said it would mark the end of the times of the Gentiles.

2 Tim 4:3

<sup>3</sup>For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,

Paul tells us that the time would come that people would rather not listen to the gospel message and instead make up their own concept of salvation and follow those who come up with the message that best fits them. This is why we see so many people listening to Madonna and Oprah – these people are telling us that God is only loving and that everyone is going to heaven if we all just love each other. It sounds good to us – or as Paul says, it tickles our ears. But it is not sound doctrine. This is not biblical and is nothing more than the ideas of people – or even the ideas of Satan.

So we see that we are truly living in the last days. The prophecies that Jesus and the apostles gave us all seem to be upon us. So how are we expected to live? What are the things we should be doing? Well, the best way to answer that is by recognizing that the New Testament writers believed that the End Times was right around the corner from them as well. We realize in retrospect that this has not yet happened 2000 years later. Although we can see through the prophecies that we seem to have all the making of the End Times, we need to take our lead from the apostles and the early church. Though they thought the End Times were near to them, they never stopped teaching the proper way to God, that we should love our God and our neighbor, and that we should preach the Good News. In other words, they were prepared for the rapture to occur five minutes from now, but they lived and taught as if their children's children would need to live in a world inherited from us.

We must never stop being and doing those things that we have been taught in the Old and New Testaments. After all, Jesus said that not one jot or one iota would disappear from

the Law until all has been accomplished. (Matthew 5:18) We must continue to live our lives in accordance to God's commands. By doing so, we stay prepared for Jesus to take us up at any moment while at the same time, working to build God's Kingdom and helping others.