



# Signs of the Times

*“But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.” (1Thessalonians 5:4)*

Note: Scripture used in this Bible Study is from the New King James Version.

Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

## Why is the weather forecast most people’s favorite part of the news?

- People are fascinated with forecasting the future and weather reports are the closest mankind can come.
- People were like this in Jesus' time as well. Let's see how Jesus related weather forecasts to more important signs of the times...

### Introduction Reference: Matthew 16:1-4

1 Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven.  
 2 He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red';  
 3 "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.  
 4 "A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah." And He left them and departed.

### 1. Verses 1-3 - Why did Jesus call the Pharisees and Sadducees hypocrites?

- they could predict the weather but could not "discern the signs of the times"

### What signs of the times should the Pharisees been able to discern?

The Pharisees should have been able to discern the coming of the Messiah... Jesus was born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth, etc. Daniel 9 even tells when He would come.

### 2. Verse 4 - What sign did Jesus say would be given to them?

- "the sign of the prophet Jonah"

### So what was Jesus referring to by "the sign of the prophet Jonah"?

- His own death and resurrection. On another occasion, Jesus made this clear...  
 Matthew 12:40 - "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the

### On this occasion, Jesus even took the Jonah analogy a little further...

#### What does Nineveh represent in the next verse?

- The gentiles who would believe in Christ...  
 Matthew 12:41 - "The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here."

**In the course of our study we've already looked at some signs of the times, in this lesson we'll expand on this by looking at some other verses that give us signs of the times...**

## Signs of Nature - Acts of God

God has always used nature to send people wake-up calls. The Old Testament is full of stories where the prophets called the Israelites to repentance foretelling of crop failures and other calamities if they did not. A special star directed wise men to the Child Jesus (Matthew 2:1-12) and an earthquake heralded His death on the cross (Matthew 27:50-51).

### 3. Luke 21:25-26 - Will weather itself be a sign of the times?

Luke 21:25-26 - "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken."

Yes - This verse pertains specifically about the time of the tribulation but recall what Jesus said about signs of His return in Matthew 24:7, we should watch for *famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places*. In verse 8, He said, *All these are the beginning of sorrows*. The original Greek word translated as *sorrows* refers to the travail or pain of childbirth. So we know that these events will increase in frequency and intensity leading up to the Lord's return.

- We've been having some pretty unusual weather the last few years...

- El Nino used to be a rare phenomenon but we've been having it more years than not. And when it ended, we have a record hurricane season.
- It seems like gentle rains are more rare and most of our rainfall is in the form of flood-causing deluges.
- It seems like there is a flood happening somewhere in the world all the time.
- In the Brazos Bend area we've had two 100-year floods within 3 years.
- These floods have given new meaning to Matthew 24:37, *as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be*

#### **What does it mean the powers of heaven will be shaken?**

Certainly this could refer to stormy weather. The Bible refers to the atmosphere as part of heaven:

Job 35:11 - Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth, and makes us wiser than the birds of heaven?

Paul used the term "*third heaven*" in 2 Corinthians 12:2 for the spiritual where God is so by implication, the first heaven would be the atmosphere and the second heaven would be the expanse of celestial bodies such as stars and planets.

Speaking of the beasts of the earth... see Revelation 6:8 – this is one of the many ways people die during the tribulation. I think of this every time I hear a report about someone being attacked by a lion, bear, shark, etc. Also, note that beasts of the earth could also apply to diseases, viruses and bacteria are certainly very small beasts of the earth.

#### **Could the powers of heaven being shaken refer to something mankind does?**

Another thought that the powers of heaven being shaken could refer to nuclear weapons. Nuclear fusion is the same power that gives the stars their light. Most nuclear weapons will be delivered as ICBMs which look like falling stars re-entering the atmosphere. And certainly the use of nuclear weapons dramatically effects the weather. A mushroom cloud forms and great amounts of radioactive dust is pumped into the upper atmosphere. Dust in the atmosphere obscures the sun causing the temperature to drop and if enough weapons are used, the scenario called nuclear winter can happen.

#### **4. Luke 21:11 - What can we expect concerning diseases as a sign of the times?**

Luke 21:11 - "And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven."

Diseases are more sorrows that will increase in frequency and intensity...

- There has been resurgence of diseases such as staph and TB we thought antibiotics had wiped out.

- We are also learning that it is becoming increasingly difficult to find antibiotics that are effective against certain strains of bacterial infection.
- The spread of AIDS has been alarming and the selectivity of this plague suggests that it is a warning from God...  
Romans 1:27 - Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and **receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.**

#### **What are the great signs from heaven in Luke 21:11?**

- Certainly this could be unusual weather, people are blaming our strange weather on global warming. But this too has end-time connotations since it is clear that not all things continue as they have from the beginning. 2 Peter 3:4 says this is the prevailing end-time attitude where people scoff at the idea of Jesus returning (see my article on Ozone holes & scoffers later in this study).
- Seeing strange things in the sky could also be a reference to UFOs which people have been since they have considered space travel. The idea of extraterrestrial space travelers appeals to those who seek an explanation for the supernatural while rejecting God and reinforcing their theory of evolution.

## **Israel: God's Prophetic Clock**

#### **What miracle does Malachi 3:6 represent?**

Malachi 3:6 - For I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.

- Despite the dispersion of the Jews throughout the nations, they have preserved their uniqueness. The Jews have not been assimilated into the cultures of the nations where they have lived. This is unprecedented in history.
- Note that the Lord ordained that the Jews would be a special people, unique in all the world...  
Deut 26:18 - the LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He has promised you, that you should keep all His commandments

#### **Has the Church replaced Israel in God's promises?**

No, God has made separate promises to Israel and the church. If you get this basic concept wrong, you'll have a difficult time taking the Bible literally for what it says, you'll end up having to spiritualize everything it says about end-time events. God is not done working through Israel as a nation...

Romans 11:25-26 - For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should

be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;

God keeps his promises. He has made many to Israel that have great prophetic significance. We've already looked at the most vivid which is the promise fixing the generation who'll see Christ's return in His parable of the fig tree. And we've seen how the times of the Lord's first and second advents (at least the second phase) can be determined by watching Israel. This has caused many Bible students to refer to Israel as God's prophetic time clock.

**There are many Bible references to Israel being restored to the land. Indeed they had been taken off into captivity by Babylon, how do we know that these prophecies have not been fulfilled in History?**

We know that the prophecies in these verses have not been fulfilled from their context. Some are talking about restoration to the land from Babylon, others are clearly talking about a time that better fits today or has not yet been fulfilled...

**When you study the prophecies about Israel being regathered carefully, you'll find that they fall into three categories:**

A few relate to the return from Babylonian captivity, for example:

Jeremiah 25:12 - "Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity," says the LORD; "and I will make it a perpetual desolation.

Most prophecies however concern two great regatherings from all over the world, one in unbelief before the Lord returns and the other in belief after the Lord returns...

**There are several verses in Ezekiel which clearly refer to the regathering of Israel in unbelief. For each of the following verses, explain (1) what indicates this is a prophecy related to the return of Christ and (2) what indicates that Israel is returning to the land in unbelief...**

Ezekiel 22:17-22 – 17 The word of the LORD came to me, saying, 18 "Son of man, the house of Israel has become dross to Me; they are all bronze, tin, iron, and lead, in the midst of a furnace; they have become dross from silver. 19 "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Because you have all become dross, therefore behold, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. 20 'As men gather silver, bronze, iron, lead, and tin into the midst of a furnace, to blow fire on it, to melt it; so I will gather you in My anger and in My fury, and I will leave you there and melt you. 21 'Yes, I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of My wrath,

and you shall be melted in its midst. 22 'As silver is melted in the midst of a furnace, so shall you be melted in its midst; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have poured out My fury on you."

- (1) God talks of pouring out His fury on Israel (verses 20 & 22), God's wrath (verse 21), this is a reference to the tribulation.
- (2) Israel is described as worthless dross that is gathered to Jerusalem (verse 19).

Ezekiel 36:22-24 - 22 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. 23 And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD," says the Lord GOD, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. 24 For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land.

- (1) This is talking about a regathering from multiple nations in all three verses.
- (2) This is clearly talking about regathering them in unbelief since it refers to Israel as having profaned the name of the Lord (verses 22 & 23).

**How has Israel profaned the name of the Lord?**

As a nation, Israel has not acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah. Indeed, Israel is a very secular nation today.

Ezekiel 37:11-14 - 11 Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!' 12 "Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. 13 "Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. 14 "I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it," says the LORD."

- (1) Israel is described as dead dry bones that the Lord brings back together and gives life to.
- (2) Israel is described as cut off (verse 11), brought out of their graves and brought into the land of Israel (verse 12) after which they will know the Lord (verse 13 – note use of the word "then").

There are a lot of verses that refer to Israel returning to the land in belief (Deuteronomy 4:29-31, 30:1-10, Isaiah 11:11-12, 27:12-13, 43:5-7, Jeremiah 16:14-15, 31:7-10, Ezekiel 11:14-18, 20:33-38, Amos 9:14-15, Zephaniah 2:1-2,

Zechariah 10:8-12, and many more. **Let's take a look at a key one and explain when it will occur from the text...**

Matthew 24:29-31 - 29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Note that this regathering is in belief because it is the elect that is regathered (verse 31). This regathering occurs after Jesus returns to the earth, note the use of the word "and" in verse 31.

**How do we know that Ezekiel 37:21-25 is a reference to a restoration of Israel to their land that has not been fulfilled in history?**

Ezekiel 37:21-25

21 "Then say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land;

22 "and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again.

23 "They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God.

24 "David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them.

25 "Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever.

The most significant thing that indicates that this verse has not been fulfilled is in verse 25 that they shall dwell in the land forever. See also...

Amos 9:14-15 - I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. **I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them,**" says the LORD your God.

**How do we know that this passage is not talking about Israel's restoration from Babylon?**

- This is talking about restoration from multiple nations (verse 21). When Israel was restored from Babylon, they were only taken from one nation.
- Verse 24 also says David shall be king over them. The literal fulfillment of this would have to be future when David is resurrected.

**What is verse 22 talking about that they will no longer be two nations?**

Israel was divided into Judah and Israel during the time of the kings. There will be no such division when God restores them from the nations in the end-times. This is the case in Israel today.

**What does verse 23 have to say about whether this passage has been fulfilled or not?**

This says the nation of Israel will return to being God's people. Israel as a nation is really very secular. Not even the ultra orthodox are God's people because they have rejected the Messiah. So this passage is talking about a future fulfillment.

**When will Israel as a nation be God's people again?**

During the tribulation when the 144,000 preach that Jesus is the Messiah. The 144,000 are 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel representing the whole nation.

**Is there a possibility that the current re-gathering of Israel may not be the fulfillment of Ezekiel 37:21-25? Could God remove Israel from the land and re-gather them again?**

God is sovereign and could remove Israel from the land and re-gather them again. I believe this passage allows for that but I don't believe that is what will happen because it is not God's pattern of leading people to repentance. God has dispersed Israel as punishment for turning away from Him. Since the current re-gathered Israel has not yet turned to Him, it would not be appropriate for God to begin their restoration to the land then prematurely end it before they turn back to Him. A careful reading of this passage reveals that Israel is returned to the land and then God cleanses them and makes them His people. So the people of Israel are returned to the land in unbelief, exactly the situation today.

**What does it mean that David will rule over Israel (verse 24)?**

I believe this is a reference to the millennial reign of Christ on earth. Saints will have positions of authority in the Lord's government (see my study on heaven). During the millennial reign of Christ, David will literally be king over Israel again.

There are many prophecies about Israel that are very subtle and would require a more intimate knowledge of Israel than we have. We're just going to look at some of the more obvious...

### **What is significant about what the land where Israel will be restored to will be called?**

Ezekiel 37:12 – Therefore prophesy and say to them, `Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

The land the Jews will be restored to will literally be called Israel (as it is today). Before the Jews returned to the land, the area was called Palestine. When Israel came back as a nation it will not be called Palestine, or Samaria, or Judah but it will be known by its biblical name, Israel. Rarely are countries called by the same names as they were during ancient times. For example, Persian is now Iran and Babylon is now Iraq. Not only is the land of Israel to be called Israel in the end-times, the names of the cities will also be restored to their ancient names. Even the little town of Cana is still called Cana...

Ezekiel 36:10-11 - I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, all of it; and **the cities shall be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt**. I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bear young; I will make you inhabited as in former times, and do better for you than at your beginnings. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.

There are three notable exceptions to the restoration of the cities of Israel. Jesus judged three of the towns He visited and demonstrated mighty miracles in that rejected Him...

Matthew 11:20-23 - Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day."

These three cities are nothing more than archeological digs to this day.

### **What does Isaiah 35:1-2 have to say about how else God will restore the land to Israel?**

Isaiah 35:1-2 - The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They

shall see the glory of the LORD, the excellency of our God.

God will make the desert bloom and blossom as a rose when He brings back Israel to the land.

### **What is the glory of Lebanon that God will give to Israel?**

Lebanon was known for its huge trees, particularly cedars...

**Psalm 104:16** - The trees of the LORD are full of sap, the cedars of Lebanon which He planted,

**Isaiah 2:13** - Upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan; These verses are just examples, there are many others as well, just do a computer search for Lebanon + cedars.

### **Has the land of Israel bloomed and blossomed as a rose?**

Mark Twain visited Israel in the 1860s and wrote about it in his book "Innocents Abroad." He reported that Israel was a barren wasteland with no trees. Almost 2000 years of foreign conquerors had abused the land having no respect for it. Today there are over 400 million trees in Israel and rainfall has increased over 450% since the beginning of this century. A parallel passage expounds on this...

Isaiah 27:6 - Those who come He shall cause to take root in Jacob; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.

This passage is being literally fulfilled before our eyes. Israel is now the breadbasket of the Mid-East exporting food all over the world. They are one of the few nations that export more food than they import. Teresa and I experienced this when we ate oranges from Israel when we were in Scotland.

### **Why has Israel has been able to produce so much food?**

Israel has been able to produce so much because of their advanced irrigation. They are able to grow several crops a year in fulfillment of Amos 9:13...

Amos 9:13 - Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "When the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it.

### **5. Isaiah 43:5-6 - What do we know about the order of Israel's return to the land?**

Isaiah 43:5-6 - Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your descendants from the east, and gather you from the west; I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' And to the south, 'Do not keep them back!' Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth-- The order is given as East, West, North, then South. In 1900 there was only 40,000 Jews in what was called the land of Palestine. The Jews first returned from the Middle East (Syria, Iraq, Jordan 1930-1940) so that by 1946 the population had grown to 500,000. The Jews then returned

from Western Europe after WWII, then Russia starting in 1988, and finally Ethiopia (Operation Solomon, Summer, 1991). By the year 2000 there were more than 4 million Jews in Israel.

**6. Zephaniah 3:8-9 - What do we know about the Hebrew language that goes contrary to trends in the world?**

Zephaniah 3:8-9 - Therefore wait for Me," says the LORD, "Until the day I rise up for plunder; my determination is to gather the nations to My assembly of kingdoms, to pour on them My indignation, all my fierce anger; all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy. For then I will **restore** to the peoples a **pure** language, that they all may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one accord.

Note that in the end times it says the Lord will **RESTORE** a **PURE** language... This means they had a pure language that was lost but in the end-times, it will be restored.

**Are there more or less languages in the world today than in times past?**

- There are fewer languages in the world than there once were because many have been consolidated and some have been effectively lost (Latin).
- Languages and dialects are consolidating as the world seeks to work together more thus reversing what happened at the Tower of Babel.

**How does a pure language describe Hebrew as we know it today?**

During the dispersion of Israel, Hebrew as a spoken language was all but lost except for Biblical scholars. The Hebrew language had been corrupted with other languages such as Ladino which is a combination of Hebrew and Spanish or Yiddish which is a combination of German and Hebrew. Zephania Elineazer Ben Yahoda dedicated his life to the pure Hebrew language inventing thousands of new words based on Hebrew root words. Now a pure form of Hebrew is the language that binds Israelis together despite their coming from different nations. Israelis can now read original biblical scrolls without translation. You can not even say the same thing about English, Old English is almost unintelligible to us today. In 1982 Hebrew became the official language of Israel.

**7. Luke 21:24 - What occurred in 1967 that is a partial fulfillment of this verse?**

Luke 21:24 - "And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

Israel re-took possession of Jerusalem for the first time since they were dispersed by the Romans in 70 A.D. Since then,

Jerusalem has been under the governments of the Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Crusaders, Mamlukes, Turks, British, and Jordanians.

**Why can't we say that Israel taking control of Jerusalem is a complete fulfillment of Luke 21:24?**

Because we know that the abomination of desolation at the mid-point of the tribulation causes Israel to flee Jerusalem... Matt 24:15-16 - Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

**How far do you think we are from the times of the Gentiles being fulfilled?**

Let's see, Israel is in the land, they are a nation again after almost 2000 years but they don't yet have a temple but their are preparing the temple vestments. Stay tuned...

**8. Zechariah 12:3 - Why is there always something about Jerusalem in the news?**

Zechariah 12:3 - And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.

Jerusalem is a "burdensome stone" (KJV) that stands in the way of world peace (cessation of hostilities). Besides the fact that God said that Jerusalem would be an important new item in the end times, Israel is in a strategic location in the heart of the world's greatest oil reserves. It is also the epicenter of the world war on terrorism and the most difficult nut to crack in terms of world peace. If mankind can bring peace to the Mid-East, there is nothing preventing peace worldwide. Of course this peace that the nations seek after is just a cessation of hostilities that has nothing to do with God.

**9. Zechariah 12:5 - How will the last days government of Israel differ from times before they were dispersed?**

Zechariah 12:5 - And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, 'The inhabitants of Jerusalem are my strength in the LORD of hosts, their God.'

Israel will be ruled by a democracy rather than a monarchy as they were in times before the dispersion. Also note that Israel is currently the only democracy in the Middle East. Note that the leaders of Israel during this time will be secular leaders because they refer to the Lord as "their God."

**Given that Israel became a nation on May 14, 1948, how is Isaiah 66:7-8 fulfilled by this event?**

Isaiah 66:7-8 - Before she was in labor, she gave birth; before her pain came, she delivered a male child. Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor, she gave birth to her children.

Israel was born as a nation in a single day, May 14, 1948. They immediately had travail in the form of war with their Arab neighbors. Most nations are formed as a result of war, with Israel it was the other way around and significantly unique, they became a nation then went to war.

#### **10. Zechariah 12:6 - What do we know about Israel's military power in the end times?**

Zechariah 12:6 - In that day I will make the governors of Judah like a firepan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the sheaves; they shall devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left, but Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place-- Jerusalem.

Israeli forces have astounded the world by their victories during four wars with vastly superior forces that have opposed them since 1948 ('56, '67, '73, '81). Today they are the most powerful force in the region and currently the only nation with nuclear weapons. Israel's military forces have been rated at 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> in the world but in terms of their effectiveness probably number one.

### **Signs in Society (Spiritual Decay)**

Jesus said in Matthew 24:37, *as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*

#### **How will the return of Jesus be like the days of Noah?**

Noah's society is the classic example of the pouring out of God's wrath: *the wickedness of man was great in the earth... the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually... and the earth was filled with violence,* Genesis 6:5,11.

#### **11. 2 Timothy 3:1-5 - What can we expect to see in the society of mankind before Christ returns?**

2 Timothy 3:1-5 - But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

Notice in the last days that perilous times will come.

#### **What will make the last days perilous?**

People will be self-focused and blatantly sinful. There will be lawlessness, violence, immorality, greed, selfishness, hedonism, rebellion, and despair. Jesus explained why the end times would be perilous:

Matthew 24:12 - And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

#### **How is undisciplined children a sign of the end-times?**

The presence of undisciplined children is a symptom of the breakdown of the moral moorings of the family. It is also a sign of judgment from God...

Isaiah 3:4 - I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them.

If people are just animals driven by their feelings, you don't have a right to punish children so that they will behave...

Proverbs 13:24 - He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly. (NKJ)

The prophet Malachi said that children would rebel against their parents in the end-times...

Malachi 4:5-6 - Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

#### **What is a form of godliness but denying its power?**

This is a reference to apostasy, a falling away from the Christian faith. It is people professing to be Christians by denying basic truths such as the deity of Christ and His atonement for sin being the only way to be saved. Paul said that the day of our resurrection and gathering to the Lord will not happen until there is a mass falling-away of the faith...

2 Thessalonians 2:3 - Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition

Since the church is in the world, it will naturally reflect the societal trends present in the world at large. The same problems that are present in society can be found in the professing church.

#### **What trend should we expect to see in society as we get closer to the return of the Lord?**

As we get closer to the Lord's return we should expect to see a degradation of society with more blatant sin and more consequences of that sin.

#### **Have we been seeing signs of degradation in our society?**

Yes, we live in an increasingly violent times and we have seen more bizarre crimes in recent times than in years past...

- There have been news stories about criminals who eat their victims (Jeffrey Dalmer), a woman who killed a

pregnant mother to steal the unborn baby for herself, abductions to steal kidneys, a pregnant teenager who gave birth at her prom, disposed of the baby and went back to dancing, and we have school children who are mass murderers.

The National Center for Health Statistics reported the following between 1960 & 1990:

- Between 1960 and 1990, illegitimate births increased in the U.S. from 5.3% to 28%
- The divorce rate went from 12.5% to 38.6%
- The teen suicide rate grew from 3.6 to 11.3 per 100,000
- The crime rate in the U. S. is higher than any other industrialized nation...
  - In 1960, ~288K violent crimes were reported with ~2M in 1991.
  - In the same time period, total crimes per year increased from >3M to ~15M.
- Violence has become so common in our society, we don't even consider the lives lost in the course of every day events. 50,000 people are killed each year in U.S. automobile accidents. Since the turn of the century, more Americans have died from car crashes than were killed in WWI, WWII, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War combined.
- And we don't even count the millions of babies that have been aborted since this practice became legal in the 1960's. We live in violent time that are perilous to those who are most vulnerable.
- The moral health indicators of our society are bad now and expected to get worse. The dean of Northeastern University's college of criminal justice has predicted a blood bath in 10 years when the 4 million American children now under age 10 become young adults. He said the homicide rate among young adults 18 to 24 has increased by 68% since 1976. Among 14 to 17-year-olds, the increase was 235%.

**We've always had crime if not the sort that we have today and not perpetrated by youth as we have today.**

**What is causing this escalation of crime?**

The trend away from Christian principals and toward relaxed morality has had disastrous effects in our society.

- God is being removed from all our institutions and there is more stress on the family than there ever has been.

God has revealed a pattern of giving society over to ourselves as part of pouring out His wrath on us. As we observe this pattern, we can know that God is tempering His wrath giving us an opportunity to repent but that it will get steadily worse if we don't. As I read the following passage, see if you can identify the three stages of His wrath where He gives us up to a greater level of sin and its consequences:

### **Romans 1:18-32**

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,

23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man-- and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

24 Therefore God also **gave them up** to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,

25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

26 For this reason God **gave them up** to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.

27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God **gave them over** to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;

29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers,

30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;

32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

**What are the three stages of God giving us over to ourselves?**

1. Ignoring God's witness in His creation and not acknowledging Him as Creator results in general sexual immorality.
2. Idolatry results in vile passions which are described as homosexuality.
3. Not giving any thought to God results in a debased mind.



### **What stage is our society in today?**

We instituted evolution as the explanation for why we're here in our schools in the '50s and we had the sexual revolution in the '60s where "free love" was the mantra of the hippy generation. Since then, we have seen a small group of homosexual activists convince us that their deviant life style should not only be accepted but celebrated. Now we see people advocating things that are down-right incredulous but people accept them hook line and sinker. We have been given over to a debased mind...

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!

### **What examples of being given over to a debased mind can you identify?**

Frivolous law suits and outrageous settlements come to mind. While we are on the subject of courts, the OJ Simpson trial was another sign of being given over to a debased mind. One of the incredulous movements in our society is the impact the radical feminists have had. Even secular authorities like Rush Limbaugh have pointed out how the mentality of feminism has permeated our media.

### **What is radical feminism?**

There are feminist activists who have no use for men in even having children. They have conditioned us to think that a woman can not be fulfilled if she does not have a career outside the home. They have invented statistics to justify the "take your daughters to work day."

### **Why did God allow radical feminism to take root?**

God allowing this to happen is evidence He is giving our society over to a debased mind. He has done this very thing in the past as a judgment on Israel for turning from Him:

Isaiah 3:12 - As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths."

### **How has feminism impacted our society?**

A relatively small group of people with an agenda has been engaging in social engineering to change age-old understandings of the role of men and women. We never used to have competition between men and women but we do today. The traditional role of men and their masculinity is continuously challenged and marginalized in the media. It is not politically correct to put down women but put-downs of men is not only permissible it is encouraged.

### **What is the agenda of radical feminism?**

Radical feminists seek to destroy the role of men as spiritual leaders so that our image of God may be distorted. This tactic is the spirit of antichrist, seeking to change the order

God has established. Indeed the world ruler that will come to power during the tribulation will do just that:

Daniel 7:25 - He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law.

### **How did the roots of feminism begin at the fall of Adam and Eve?**

Feminism exploits a weakness that came as a result of the fall. As spiritual leader, Adam should not have partaken of the forbidden fruit. His yielding probably had many motivations. Certainly he was aligned with Eve's rationale that knowing good and evil would make them like God. But I believe there had to be an additional motivation on Adam's part that it was easier to go along with Eve's desire than take God's position and argue against taking the fruit. The reason I believe this is that one of the consequences of mankind's fall into sin is the tension between men and women over the leadership role God has ordained that men have...

Gen 3:16 - To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

### **What does it mean, "your desire shall be for your husband"?**

The words, "your desire shall be for your husband" means that women will resent the family leadership role their husbands have. This causes a tension between husbands and wives that Satan has been able to exploit. Men are more to blame than women since relinquishing authority is the path of least resistance. Men today make the same error Adam did because just going along is easier than taking the position that God would have us take. Men and women today have ourselves to blame for society being the way it is.

### **What can we do about the problems in society?**

We can't change others. We can't change ourselves without God's help. Only God can change people. So we should focus on our own relationship with God and see these problems in society as reason to draw closer to Him. God will not hold us accountable for the sins of society but we are accountable to Him for our own sins.

**Spiritual Decay** - We've already talked a little about how there will be an increase in spiritual apostasy in the time leading up to Christ's return. Let's take a look at some other verses which give us more insight to this...

### **12. 2 Timothy 3:13 - What trend can we expect for religious deception as we near Christ's return?**

2 Timothy 3:13 - evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived

- It will increase

### **Who believes society will get better?**

Secular humanists believe society will get better because they believe that people are basically good.

### **Why shouldn't it be a surprise that society will get worse prior to the Lord's return?**

- Besides 2 Timothy 3:13, Jesus told us that society will be like the days of Noah.
- Human nature is sinful (Romans 3:23), all you need to do is look at history and extrapolate out the trend.
- God out of His graces gives us over to ourselves to face the consequences so that we'll learn to depend on Him and not ourselves.

### **13. 2 Timothy 4:3-4 - What happens when people get away from the God of the Bible?**

2 Timothy 4:3-4 - 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; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

- They will develop philosophies and form cults to justify their own desires.
- The politically correct religion of **secular humanism** promotes all kinds of spiritual deception including public tolerance of abominations such as Satanism and witchcraft.

### **What is more popular today, Christianity or new age philosophies?**

Next time you're in a book store, compare the sizes of the Christian & **New Age** sections

- New Age is not new, it is re-packaged Hinduism based on Satan's lie that caused mankind's original fall into sin, *ye shall be as gods*, Genesis 3:5.

There is a reformation of the wrong sort going on in many churches today. People are rebelling against traditional doctrine not using the Bible as the source of authority but to "bring things up to date" for the '90s...

- Beliefs are being compromised to make people feel better about themselves.
- Conviction of sin is no longer politically correct in many of our churches.

### **Why are people so quick to embrace astrology, psychics, ESP, channeling, spirit guides, crystal gazing, etc. instead of the God of the Bible?**

People do not want to believe the supernatural nature of the Word of God yet they'll espouse supernatural intervention in

a cosmic context as if the universe as a whole were expressing itself.

Let consider an illustration... On Christmas day, 2002, we were visiting with my wife's Grandmother and Uncle John. We looked at slides from our last trip to Big Bend where Teresa and I own 40 acres that was previously jointly-owned by her Uncle John and Dad. The 40 acres is basically a primitive camping spot in the desert wilderness that has been in the family a long time. John told us about an experience he had while camping on the 40 acres alone where he had an encounter with a ghost of a Mescalero Apache one evening by the campfire.

### **Do you think Uncle John really had a conversation with the ghost of a Mescalero Apache?**

No, more likely John had a conversation with an apparition of a demon.

### **How can I be certain that John talked to a demon and not the ghost of a Mescalero Apache?**

- Angels serve to bring us closer to God, demons seek to draw us away from God.
- The demon John talked to reinforced an anti-biblical view that people do not go to heaven or hell immediately upon dying but are instead in some sort of intermediate state implying that they may still earn their way to heaven.

### **Why does God in His Word forbid us for attempting to make contact with the dead?**

Because attempting to contact the dead opens us up to demons who pretend to be the dead...

2 Corinthians 11:14 - And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.

Uncle John opened himself up to demons by studying Edgar Cayance, a new ager who popularized this country's belief in reincarnation. Edgar Cayance healed people and made predictions about the future with the aid of spirit guides (actually demons).

Note: This discussion did give me an opportunity to present the gospel to Uncle John and his second wife. Pray that the planted seeds of God's Word will bear fruit.

### **14. 1 Timothy 4:1-3 - What religious practices should we expect "in the latter times"?**

1 Timothy 4:1-3 - Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

Certainly this is another reference to the apostasy of the professing Christian church. Any teaching that leads people away from a relationship with Jesus Christ is a doctrine of demons. Paul cautioned against giving heed to authorities outside God's Word...

Galatians 1:8 - But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

### **What signs of apostasy have you seen in our world today?**

- Christian TV is rampant in apostasy. It is common to see a gospel of prosperity on Christian TV... just name it and claim it. The theme is one of pulling yourself up by your bootstraps... it is all about the power of the human spirit, not the Holy Spirit.
- We have seminaries teaching pastors today teaching that the Bible is man's search for God rather than God's revelation to man. Indeed we even had a flap about this issue within the Texas Southern Baptist Convention. The heretical Jesus Seminar that votes on what parts of the Bible are really the words of Jesus are a body of "learned Christian" seminary professors.
- We have liberal churches that spiritualize the Bible to mean whatever they want it to mean.
- We have churches that think the Old Testament prophecies have already been fulfilled and the Jesus will not literally come back.
- We have great controversies in the church about whether it is right to ordain gay clergy. This is really a controversy whether we should take the Bible literally for what it says or not.
- We have charismatics that emphasize the Holy Spirit to the detriment of Jesus and we have ultra conservatives that say the Holy Spirit retired in the First Century.

Besides apostate Christianity, the world has rapidly growing religions such as **Islam** and **Mormonism**. It amazes me that Islam continues to grow like it has after the September 11, 2001 attack on the U.S. It is as if the terrorists proved that America was vulnerable and it became more popular to get on-board with those who were successful. Mormons claim to be Christians but they believe that Jesus and Satan are spirit-brothers.

### **What world religion do we see "forbidding to marry" today?**

I believe this is a prophecy of the Roman Catholic religion where priests and nuns are forbidden to marry.

### **Where do Catholics get the idea that their spiritual leaders are not to marry?**

Probably 1 Corinthians 7 where we are cautioned about seeking to be married because of the encumbrance it can be in service to the Lord. Those who are seen as being more

spiritual would be expected to not be encumbered with marriage...

**1 Corinthians 7:7-9** - For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that. But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am; but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

**1 Corinthians 7:26-27** - I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress-- that it is good for a man to remain as he is: Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

What is the flaw in the logic that all spiritual leaders should not be married?

It is a legalist approach that puts constraints on God. It is not God's will that all spiritual leaders be unmarried, God established marriage for a purpose. Many spiritual leaders would be more effective if they were married. What is more important is seeking God's will about the matter of marriage.

### **What is the problem with the Catholic Church's policy on the marriage of priests?**

The recent sex scandals in the Catholic church in America has revealed the flaws in this policy so I see this changing over time. Many people believe that Catholics have always had priests and nuns that were forbidden to marry but this came into practice during the 11<sup>th</sup> century. "Inspired" Catholic tradition has changed before and it will likely change again.

### **What in 1 Timothy 4:1-3 reinforces that this is a prophecy of the Roman Catholic Church?**

It also says this religion commands to abstain from foods. I know Catholics who still will not eat meat on Friday which has been another Catholic tradition.

### **How does the Catholic Church embrace doctrines of demons?**

The main error of the Catholic church is their doctrine of salvation. They do not adhere to faith in Jesus Christ's finished work on the cross alone as the way of salvation. They also advocate works in the form of observing their traditional sacraments. They have other doctrinal problems such as worshiping saints (especially Mary the mother of Jesus), believing you can pray someone who has died into heaven (purgatory – more works salvation), you can pay indulgences which allows you to sin, etc. With all this said, I believe there are some people who are truly saved in the Catholic church but the leadership of this church is apostate and lead more people away from Christ than they lead to Him.

### **What trend are we seeing in society at large that is forbidding to marry?**

We have seen a trend where people are now getting married later or not getting married at all. The percentage of Americans who have never been married nearly tripled between 1970 and 1995 (U.S. Census Bureau: 1970: 9% - 1995: 26%). It is accepted by society today to just live together. People think, "with divorce rates what they are, why bother to marry?"

### **What kind of foods do people abstain from today for religious reasons?**

- pork - Jews and Moslems
- all meat but fish on Fridays – Catholics as we mentioned
- coffee & tea – Mormons (but caffeine in Cokes are OK)
- all meat - vegetarians who will not eat anything that had a mother (a Mother Earth - New Age kind of religion)

The world just doesn't understand the freedom we have in Christ...

Matthew 15:11 - "Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man."

### **15. Matthew 7:21-23 - What did Jesus have to say about false Christians at their judgment?**

Matthew 7:21-23 - "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

Jesus warned us about religious leaders who use miracles such as healings and manifestations of the Holy Spirit to establish their spiritual credentials.

### **What did Jesus have to say about false Christians in relation to His return?**

Jesus said that the occurrences of deceptive religious leaders would increase as we get close to His return...

Matthew 24:24 - For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect,

Jesus revealed the motivation of these apostate religious leaders within the church who seek to destroy the church...

Matthew 7:15 - Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

### **How can we know who these wolves in sheep's clothing are?**

- Jesus went on to say, "by their fruits you will know them" (Matthew 7:20). Does the results of their work glorify the God of the Bible or someone else?
- There is a quick and easy test to know the authenticity of these miracles:
  - Who does the miracle glorify - Christ or the one bringing or the miracle?
  - Is the ability to exhibit a gift of bringing miracles promoted as being more spiritual?

### **Are there any legitimate miracles performed by religious leaders today?**

- People being converted to Christ are legitimate miracles.
- Don't get me wrong, I do believe God works miracles today but they are not done in the same manner as they were during the times of Jesus and the Apostles. Jesus is the Chief Cornerstone and the Apostles were the foundation of the Church. We only need one foundation.
- God has revealed all we need to know to be saved in the Bible, Scripture is not being written today so we have no need to authenticate prophets with miracles. Since we have the completed canon of Scripture, we use it to authenticate God's spokesmen. If what a preacher says is consistent with the Bible, that preacher is speaking for God.

### **People argue that we should have miracles of the type the Apostles performed because "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). What is wrong with this argument?**

Jesus is the same but this does not mean He has dealt with mankind in the same way throughout history. We have addresses dispensations in a previous study. In specific regard to miracles, the Bible makes it clear that there are periods of time where miracles to authenticate God's spokesmen are not normative. The Bible describes distinct periods of times where God used miracles to prove the credentials of His messengers. **What are they?**

- Moses & Joshua: exodus, wilderness journey, conquest of Canaan - 1441-1390 BC
- Elijah & Elisha: ministry to the northern kingdom of Israel - 875-800 BC
- Jesus & apostles: in the Gospels and Acts - 0 - 75 AD
- "the two witnesses" & 144,000: during the tribulation - TBD

### **There were many other prophets, how did they authenticate that they spoke for God?**

They always gave both near-term and long-term prophecies. Their near-term prophecies came to pass 100% of the time and they served to draw people closer to God.

Deuteronomy 13:1-3 - "If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a

sign or a wonder, "and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'-- which you have not known--' and let us serve them,' "you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

**16. Colossians 2:8 – Why must we recognize false teachers? What is the danger of even subtle deviations from true doctrine?**

Colossians 2:8 - Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

As a minimum the danger is in living a full abundant life in Christ, the great danger however is that people may miss coming to a saving knowledge of Him. Certainly falling victim to the philosophies of the world will render a Christian ineffective in what God has called him to do.

**What other end-time trend should we expect to see in society per Daniel 7:25? Who is the “he” in this passage?**

Daniel 7:25 - He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.

A detailed study of the context of this passage would reveal that it is the Antichrist who speaks pompous words against the Most High who is God. This verse says that the Antichrist will persecute Christians during what Jesus calls the great tribulation.

**What is the “times” in this passage a reference to?**

The great tribulation is the last half of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel lasting three and a half years, this is what it means by a time, times and half a time. Jesus called this the great tribulation in Matthew 24: 21. Indeed, many Christians will die during the tribulation:

Revelation 20:4 – And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

**Do we see persecution of Christians today?**

Certainly we do see persecution of Christians in China and the Mid-East today but even in the United States we see a form of persecution today. It is certainly not politically

correct to be a born-again believer who takes the Bible literally. People of faith are depicted by the media as being of below average intelligence or crazy.

**Why should persecution of Christians during our day be of no surprise to us?**

You would expect there to be persecution of Christians in our day since Jesus said there would be...

John 15:20 - Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

Even though the Antichrist is not in power yet, the spirit of antichrist is active in the world...

1 John 4:3 - every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

**What does it mean in Daniel 7:25 that the Antichrist will change times and law?**

- The Antichrist and his minions will be historical revisionists... we see this in the U.S. today with leaving out of text books the role of Christians in the founding of our country.
- Teaching evolution instead of intelligent design is also historical revisionism.
- We see this in the Middle East with the Palestinians justifying their terror campaign against Israel. If you don't know what I'm talking about here, you have fallen victim to the historical revisionists. The Summer, 2002 newsletter of the Christian Jew Foundation is a good resource to learn what the liberal media forgets to remind people about.
- When God fully gives mankind over to a debased mind (Romans 1:28), the Antichrist will change laws so that right becomes wrong and visa versa. It is political correctness run amuck. This practice is abhorrent sin that has severe consequences...

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!

**How have we seen the abandoning of God's laws in our day?**

- Laws that accommodate and even encourage a homosexual lifestyle.
- The elimination of capital punishment that God ordained governments to do on His behalf...

Genesis 9:5-6 - Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of

man. Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God he made man.

### **What will the rejection of God's laws result in?**

Judgment... These are just a couple of many of God's laws that man will reject causing God to pour out His wrath on the earth during the tribulation...

Isaiah 24:5-6 - The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left.

### **What trend do we expect to see in end-times society per 2 Peter 3:3-7?**

2 Peter 3:3-7

3 knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,  
4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."  
5 For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water,  
6 by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.  
7 But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

In the end-times, people will scoff at the idea the Lord will return.

### **V3 - What does the term "last days" refer to?**

The last days is a term which is associated with the time period when Christ returns.

### **What does it mean that people will scoff at the return of Christ?**

They will deny that Christ is returning and ridicule those who say He is returning.

### **What does it mean that they will be walking according to their own lusts?**

- In the end-times, people will be "looking out for number one" (themselves) to the exclusion of anyone else, especially God.
- In the end-times, people will make it a common practice to yield to their natural impulses.

### **V4 – Who will the end-time scoffers be?**

- The end-time scoffers will certainly be unbelievers, this category includes scoffers by definition.

- But there will also be believers who should know better but have not grown in their relationship with the Lord. These are new or baby Christians who still need "milk" and can not handle "solid food:"

1 Corinthians 3:2-3 - I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

Further elaboration on this analogy of baby Christians not being able to internalize the deeper topics of Scripture is found here:

Hebrews 5:12-14 - For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

- However, I think the primary group Peter had in mind were professing believers, those who claimed to be Christians but proceed to deny the fundamentals of the faith. This is another reference to the apostasy that is prophesied to happen in the days before the return of the Lord...  
1 Timothy 4:1 - Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons

### **How do scoffers justify their claim that the return of Christ is no imminent?**

- As it says in verse 4, they say "all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."
- Effectively they say, "every generation of Christians has expected Christ to return in their lifetime and He has not so why should our generation be any different?"

### **What kind of scoffing have you observed?**

- Christians my pay lip service to the idea that the return of the Lord is imminent but they live like His return is so far in the future that it is not relevant for today. Note that I am not saying we should live like date setters but like people expecting their eternal performance review at any moment.
- My Mom says my talk of the return of Jesus sounds like her Uncle Jasper back when she was a little girl implying nothing has changed... Jesus didn't return then, why should He return now?

- People associate any discussion of Christ's return with cults... I once commented to some business associates that a certain bit of news "sounds prophetic" one of them tied that comment to the Branch Davidians who had died in Waco. Cults and date setters have served Satan by doing great damage to the perception of God's prophetic Word.
- People don't even want to hear about Christ's return because it is "too controversial" or "too much fire and brimstone." However the real reason is that they might have to change their life and they are happily living in sin.
- Most seminaries don't even teach about Christ's return so pastors don't know how to preach about it and so generally avoid the topic.
- Most of Christendom is amillennial, spiritualizing the Bible and denying that Jesus will literally return. There is a lot of professing Christians who are preterists who believe that the Old Testament prophecies have all been fulfilled and they spiritualize the coming of Jesus to mean that He comes into our hearts.

#### **Verses 5-6 – What are the end-time scoffers forgetting?**

End-time scoffers forget that God brought judgment on the whole earth once before and He will do so again. Specifically, they forget about Noah's flood.

#### **What does it mean they are "willfully forgetting" the flood?**

End-time scoffers are those who know about the flood but intentionally dismiss it as irrelevant to our day.

#### **What do people believe about the flood of Noah's day?**

People have bought into the rationalization that Noah's flood is a myth picked up by many ancient cultures. They believe that there probably was a great flood in ancient history but that it was local and not worldwide as the Bible proclaims.

#### **Verse 6 says that the world which existed before the flood perished. What do we know about the world that existed before the flood?**

A vapor canopy covered all the earth making it temperate everywhere with diffused sunlight. This canopy constituted a dense stratospheric layer that probably served to compress the air for a higher atmospheric pressure.

Genesis 1:6-8 - Then God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters." Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day.

There was no rain on earth prior to the flood...

Genesis 2:4-6 - This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.

There were no rainbows prior to the flood because there was only diffused light due to the firmament vapor layer and there was no rain...

Genesis 9:11-15 - "Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." And God said: "This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: "I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. "It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.

People lived hundreds of years prior to the flood per the genealogies in Genesis 5. Conditions conducive for long life existed prior to the flood and probably had to do with the higher atmospheric pressure and higher oxygen content made possible by the temperate climate with the earth covered in vegetation. This made the atmosphere like a hyperbolic chamber that has well-known curative effects. Also, the vapor barrier would have filtered out more harmful radiation which ages people.

#### **What have we learned about what happens to a layer of heaver atmosphere above a lighter atmosphere when the heaver atmosphere layer begins to break down?**

The depletion of the Ozone layer illustrates what happens. Because of centrifugal force the heaver atmospheric layer gets thinner and breaks down at the pole first.

#### **How might the lessons learned from the Ozone layer help us understand the formation of the polar icecaps?**

The vapor layer covering the earth at the time of the flood broke down at the poles first when the rain started. Rapid decompression of a gas cause super-cooling to take place at the point of release. This is the mechanical principle behind our refrigeration systems today. Evidence has reinforced that the poles were frozen in a catastrophic event with Antarctic explorers finding tropical plants quick-frozen in the ice. In the North, woolly mammoths had been frozen so fast that they still had vegetation in their mouths. Also, their meat was so well preserved that it was edible and Eskimos often did eat it.

**How could the quick-formation of the polar ice caps help us to understand the global warming that seems to be occurring today?**

If the ice caps were cause suddenly by a catastrophic event rather than always being there from the beginning, then they are not the natural state and so we should expect to see temperatures on the earth become less polarized and more uniform. Indeed, global warming is a controversial issue because the average temperature of the planet is not changing as much as it would appear to given the melting that is obviously occurring at the poles. Ice fields are melting that have never melted before in human history. What we are seeing is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Law of Thermodynamics being demonstrated on a global scale. This is evidence in our day that the poles have not been frozen since the beginning of creation. We should not dismiss the timing of this revelation as not being significant.

**Verse 5 – What else will people willfully forget prior to the Lord’s return? How did creation come about?**

Creation came about by the Word of God who spoke it into existence:

Genesis 1:3 - God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

**How does this willful forgetfulness of how God brought about the creation cause people to scoff at the return of Christ?**

Forgetting the supernatural way God brought the creation into being goes along with ignoring His Word. People ignore God's Word because they really don't know who God and do not have a relationship with Him. If you know God, you know that He is Almighty and does act supernaturally and is in active control of the universe...

Colossians 1:16-17 - For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

Without the power of God to holding matter together, it would fly apart and disintegrate...

Revelation 4:11 - You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.

**Verse 7 - How long will God hold the heavens and earth together?**

Heaven and earth as we now know it will be held together until the judgment of ungodly men. Note that this judgment is the last of the judgments of God. All people will be judged by God, you don't want to be among those who face the Great White Throne which precedes the Lord renovating the universe by fire...

Revelation 20:15-21:1 - And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.

**Are there only bad spiritual signs in the end-times?**

No, the parable of the wheat and tares makes it clear there will be a great harvest of souls...

Matthew 13:24-30 - Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. 'Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."

**What good spiritual signs are represented by Joel 2:28-29?**

Joel 2:28-29 - And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

- God will pour out His Spirit on us resulting in a great many people being saved.
- This passage will be fulfilled during the tribulation when I believe God will again speak through prophets like He did when Scripture was being recorded (see my study on miracles during VBS 2002).
- Even though this passage is specifically addressing the tribulation period, we can see foreshadowings of it in the great revivals where many people were save during the church age.

**What does Daniel 12:4 have to say about good spiritual signs in the end-times?**

Daniel 12:4 - But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."

Knowledge about end-times events will become more clear as we near the end of the age. Daniel did not understand what he was prophesying about but God said that those living at the time of their fulfillment would understand...



## Signs in Technology

The prophets were led by God to write about many things they could not comprehend. When Daniel asked God to explain some of these things to him, God said it is not intended that people understand them until the end times...

Daniel 12:8-10 - Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, "My lord, what shall be the end of these things?" And he said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.

### Who did God say would understand the prophecies in Daniel?

Note that those who are purified, made white, and refined will understand. So the prerequisite to understand the end-time prophecies is to trust in Christ for salvation. But notice that it says they are refined. I believe that this means that you must be a mature Christian to really understand the prophetic Scriptures. This is the distinction the writer of Hebrews made:

Hebrews 5:12-14 - For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Bible Prophecy is solid food for mature Christians. New Christians can accept basic concepts like the fact that Jesus is coming back and the rapture but the finer details like the order of events require practice dividing the Word of God...

2 Timothy 2:15 - Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Bible prophecy does not lend itself well to a superficial treatment. If you really want to know what God says about the future, you need to dig into God's Word for yourself.

### Why is it necessary to be saved as a prerequisite to understand prophecy? Why couldn't a secular Bible scholar know what God says about the future?

The natural man who does not have the benefit of the Holy Spirit can not discern the truth...

1 Corinthians 2:14 - But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

The pieces of the prophetic puzzle are beginning to fall in place for the spiritually discerned the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

### How rapidly will the key end-time events transpire when they begin at the rapture?

Recall that Daniel also described the rate to which end time events would begin to unfold in Daniel 9:26, "*the end of it shall be with a flood*". This is consistent with Jesus' description of end time signs increasing in frequency and intensity (sorrows - Matthew 24). God has illustrated this process to us in nature and scientists call it the **exponential growth curve**:

- Given a petri dish with a growth medium that makes it possible for a particular bacteria to double its population every minute
- If it takes 2 hours (120 minutes) for the dish to go from one bacteria to being half full,

#### How long will it take to be completely full of bacteria?

- one more minute (121 minutes total)

The rate of change we are experiencing is not just a by-product of our getting older. Developments are accelerating as God said they would. We'll see this process of acceleration in the following prophecies...

### 17. Daniel 12:4 - What are we seeing today that is a fulfillment of this prophecy?

Daniel 12:4 - "But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."

This passage says that in the end-times, there will be a lot of people traveling and there will be an expansion of knowledge.

### For there to be a lot of people traveling, what had to happen?

For transportation to handle a lot of people, it had to improve. Indeed, transportation has gotten more convenient, faster, and able to accommodate more people.

- Prior to the advent of the automobile, the fastest mankind could travel using personal transportation was about 30 miles per hour. Adam could mount a horse and travel that fast through the Garden of Eden. Now, even air travel is routine. Running *to and fro* at 350 MPH between Houston and Dallas is like catching a bus. This century is the first ever to have such a dramatic jump in mobility.

### What does the expansion of knowledge mean?

Certainly there is an increased understanding of the prophetic Scriptures in our day. Prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Christians had to expect that the end-time prophecies would happen strictly by supernatural means. Today, there are many natural means by which most of the prophecies may come to pass.

### **Why does God generally work through natural means rather than the supernatural?**

God prefers to be very subtle so that those who have responded to Him and a relationship with Him will recognize His work.

2 Corinthians 5:7 - For we walk by faith, not by sight. God giving people a worldly explanation respects the decision of those who have chosen to reject God in their lives. God is the ultimate gentleman, He is not going to force anyone into a relationship with Him even though He desires all of His creation to know Him...

2 Peter 3:9 - The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

As we discussed before, even the rapture of the Church will have a natural explanation for it...

2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 - And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

### **Does the prophesied expansion of knowledge have an application to society at large? How does it apply?**

Certainly, it is in the context of there being a lot of traveling to and fro by the masses. We're no longer in the industrial age, we're in the information age...

- 75% of all medicines and drugs in use today have been discovered in our lifetime.
- 90% of all the scientists who ever lived are alive today.

### **How can we better understand how the whole world will be able to see the death and resurrection of the two witnesses God sends during the tribulation?**

Revelation 11:8-11 - And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them.

Prior to the advent of television and satellite communications, people just had to take it on faith that God would supernaturally enable all the people of the world to witness key end-time events. But today it is easy to see how all the world will be able to see prophecy being fulfilled in the Middle east just by tuning into CNN. All the world seeing these events unfold does not require supernatural intervention by God, the technology we have today can

literally fulfill the prophecy of all the world seeing the events unfold. Indeed, I think that God will use satellite communications to fulfill the prophecy about all the world hearing the gospel before Jesus returns...

Matthew 24:14 - And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

The fulfillment of this will be during the tribulation...

Revelation 14:6 - Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth-- to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people

The term angel simply means messenger thus an angel flying in the midst of heaven could well be a communications satellite. God certainly can use an angel to supernaturally fulfill this prophecy but His usual pattern has been to fulfill prophecies by natural means so that only the spiritually discerning will know that a miracle has taken place...

2 Corinthians 5:7 - For we walk by faith, not by sight.

### **What modern tools make it easy to see how Revelation 13:15-17 can be literally fulfilled?**

Revelation 13:15-17 - He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Computer automation can certainly create an image of the beast (a.k.a. Antichrist). Computer technology and the Internet certainly make it possible to control financial transactions. Try to rent a car or purchase an airline ticket without a credit card. As the Y2K scare drove home, we are absolutely dependant on computers to buy and sell today.

- Computers have made it possible to manage unimaginable resources of information.
  - Computer technology has fueled the increase of man's knowledge.
  - Inexpensive personal computers the size of a notepad can contain the entire Bible and search it for a single word in the blink of an eye.
  - The information superhighway (a.k.a. Internet & World Wide Web) makes it possible for people to use other computers anywhere in the world.
  - Computer automation is moving us closer to a cashless society with every day that passes. The Antichrist will use a cashless society to subjugate all the people of the world (Rev 13).
  - Computer biometrics can tell who you are and what you are doing such as worshiping an image on the computer screen.

All that remains is a personal ID and the technology for this already exists... there are transducers the size of a rice grain that may be inserted under the skin for identification. They are using this today to keep track of farm animals and pets as well as donated organs.

**18. Nahum 2:3-4 - What does this verse describe using 7th century B.C. terminology?**

Nahum 2:3-4 - The shields of his mighty men are made red, the valiant men are in scarlet. **The chariots come with flaming torches in the day of his preparation**, and the spears are brandished. **The chariots rage in the streets, they jostle one another in the broad roads; they seem like torches, they run like lightning.**

It is pretty clear this passage is describing the automobile. Note the time frame: "*in the day of his preparation.*"

**What are the flaming torches a reference to?**

Head lights and tail lights.

**What does it mean the spears are brandished and the chariots rage in the streets jostling one in the broad roads?**

Cars are weapons that kill many people. We've already talked about how 50,000 people die each year in the U.S. from automobile accidents. We've accepted this as normal life but to the 7<sup>th</sup> Century observer, this is incredible carnage. This passage even appears to make reference to road rage on the freeways.

**What does it mean they run like lightning?**

This is a reference to speed. Certainly car lights at night when they are turning and illuminating a stationary observer could resemble lightning.

**19. Obadiah 4 - How could this verse be understood before the 1960s?**

Obadiah 4 - "though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down," says the LORD.

Only since the space program have we been able to comprehend the Biblical prophecies relating to man's efforts in the heavens in the last days. The time of fulfillment for this prophecy is in verse 15: *For the day of the Lord is near...*

## World Politics

**20. Revelation 13:7 - What sort of government will there be when Christ returns?**

Revelation 13:7 - It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.

The Antichrist will be head of a one-world government. We also see this from the prophet Daniel's interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream that it will be an extension of the Roman Empire hence we call it the Revived Roman Empire.

**Where is America in prophecy?**

If we are truly in the end-times and since the United States is the only superpower, surely the U.S. would be mentioned in the Bible. I think the U.S. is included as the leader of Western Civilization which is part of the Revived Roman Empire. The United States is basically an extension of Europe since it was founded by Europeans. Look at our form of government, our democratic-republic is modeled after the Roman government. Even the architecture of our official buildings in Washington D.C. have a Roman style to them.

**21. Does it look like we are moving toward or away from a one-world government?**

- The nations of the world are rapidly moving in this direction reversing what God did at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9)...
  - Acts 17:26 - And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and **the boundaries of their dwellings**
- It is a common thing to hear about U. N. "peace keeping" forces being deployed.
- Europe is the benchmark for giving up national sovereignty to a regional government. This was prophesied to happen in the end-times (see Daniel 2:41-44, 7:8, 24-25 & 9:26).
- There is a growing belief that the only way to deal with global problems is for world organizations to resolve them. We've had global conferences on trade, the environment, population growth, AIDS, woman's issues.
  - We've seen NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), barely achieve a majority in Congress and a lame-duck Congress approve an even more comprehensive GATT (Global Agreement on Trade and Tariffs)...
  - The GATT documentation is so lengthy, our legislators couldn't even know about everything for which they voted.
  - The WTO (World Trade Organization) will have broad powers over national sovereignty
  - The world already has a global economy where the economic troubles in one nation can effect many others. Corporations are forced into the

international marketplace in order to grow or even survive.

### **What does Revelation 16:12 have to say about another political trend we can expect in the end-times?**

Revelation 16:12 - Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared.

The East will rise up in power. We have already seen Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan become powerful economically. But today we are also seeing China begin to flex its economic muscles. The army described in Revelation 9 may well be from China because of its size...

Revelation 9:15-16 - So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them.

China's army today including their reserves is 200 million strong. And China will need to do something with all their unmarried men that has resulted from their one-child-per-family policy. Abortion and infanticide combined with a cultural preference for male offspring has caused there to be a great shortage of young women in China.

## **World Religion**

### **22. Revelation 13:8 - What sort of religion will there be when Christ returns?**

Revelation 13:8 - All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

When the Lord returns, there will be a world-wide religion where people trust in a charismatic world leader for their salvation rather than God. We know that this world leader will be charismatic because of Revelation 13:5, "*and he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies.*"

### **23. How have we seen the groundwork for a one-world religion today?**

- The groundwork for the coming one-world church is being laid in the trend toward ecumenicalism. Certainly the Bible says that the church is one in Christ...  
Galatians 3:28 - There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

### **What is ecumenicalism?**

Ecumenicalism is all about achieving unity of the church through human means and compromising the truth of God's Word in the process.

### **Where have we seen ecumenicalism?**

- The World Council of Churches is one of the ecumenical efforts going on today boldly proclaiming the gospel of many paths to God.
- The Pope has hosted worship sessions for a diverse group of world religious leaders including the Dalai Lama and Indian shaman.
- There has been a joint declaration of purpose between Catholics and Evangelical Protestants.
- There is a sense today that different religions just reflect a diversity of cultures, that all roads lead to God.
  - When we hold to the truth that Jesus Christ is the only path to God, we are labeled as insensitive and intolerant. But Jesus said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me,* John 14:6.

### **If God intends the church to be one, why are there so many denominations?**

There are so many denominations because of sin. Even though the body of born-again believers are truly one in Christ because we will be together in eternity, we are still in the world and our old sin natures are a factor. Churches have split with one another due to disagreements over how the Bible should be interpreted. Most of these disagreements have been over what Paul would call "doubtful things" (Romans 14:1) which the Bible does not specifically address and does not impact a person's salvation.

## **War and Peace**

### **24. 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 - What kind of peace will there be in the time-frame when Christ returns?**

1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 - the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape,

The day of the Lord is a general period of time that includes all the second coming prophecies. This not only refers to the rapture but also the time of the tribulation which follows the rapture. This passage makes it clear that there will be a false peace prior to the Lord's coming. Certainly we know that the event which starts the 7-year clock of the tribulation is the Antichrist confirming a peace treaty with Israel (Daniel 9:27). I believe that there will be periods of false peace foreshadowing the great false peace of the tribulation.

**25. 1 Thessalonians 5:3 - What does it mean "as labor pains upon a pregnant woman"?**

- Wars will be increasing in frequency and intensity up until the Lord's return which will experience a great false peace before it's too late.
- The Cold War has ended so the world believes it's time to cash in our peace dividends.
- The Antichrist will "confirm" a 7-year peace treaty that Israel has with its neighbors (Daniel 9:27).
- More indications of a false peace are seen in Daniel 8:25: the Antichrist "*by peace shall destroy many.*"
  - Israel will be living well and will be caught by surprise in their destruction.
  - It is interesting to note we no longer have wars but only peace-keeping operations, no more armies but only peace-keeping forces, no more soldiers but only peace keepers.

**What is the Lord talking about in Luke 21:25-26 when He says there will be "distress of nations" associated with His return?**

Luke 21:25-26 - "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken."

Nations are in distress over peace, which in the world's view is a cessation of hostilities. In the time leading up to the Lord's return, peace between nations will be elusive due to the many wars.

**What is the "distress of nations with perplexity"?**

This is a reference to the sense that there really is no solution. We see that in the Mid-East today. The conflict there makes no rational sense yet the world still attempts to solve this spiritual conflict using human means. I recall President George W. Bush taking a lot of heat for not getting involved to try to bring peace between the Palestinians and Israelis. Political pressures caused him to get caught up in the world's efforts to broker peace there but all efforts seem futile. This will continue to be the case until after the rapture and serves to prepare the world for a future leader who will appear to offer a solution. The apparent resolution (as temporary as it will be) is what catapults the Antichrist into power and leads to His being a world leader.

**26. We've always had wars in history. Is there is anything special about the wars in the 20th Century that would indicate we are nearing the time of Christ's return?**

We have seen a dramatic escalation of violence in the wars of the 20th Century...

- In 4700 years of recorded history, there have been 4535 wars for 600M casualties. Wars in the 20th Century have taken 300M lives.
- The 20th Century was the first time advanced communications and treaties would cause many nations to form into large blocks to oppose each other.
- For the first time in history, the 20th Century has seen mankind obtain the capacity to destroy all life on earth through weapons of war.

**How would it have been possible to comprehend a war that could annihilate all life on earth prior to nuclear weapons?**

Matthew 24:22 - And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

A single nuclear warhead can exceed the power in all the bombs and artillery shells exploded in WWI and WWII combined.

**Why is it likely that Jesus is talking about our generation that will see His return when He said, "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved" (Matthew 24:22)?**

- We don't like to think about this but the nuclear threat is far more unstable now than it ever was during the cold war.
- The nuclear weapons of the former Soviet Union still exist and they're in the hands of economically desperate people.
- Regional nuclear powers like India and Pakistan make the potential for nuclear war more likely. The danger here is that such regional nuclear wars could escalate to involve other nations. When I was in the Army during the Cold War, we did a command post exercise every year where we simulated war in Europe using maps turned into elaborate game boards. The simulations always ended the same with the U.S. using tactical nukes to counter advances made by the Soviets, the Soviets responding with longer range theater weapons and the U.S. countering with our theater weapons. And this is where the simulation always ended but it was obvious to all that the next step was to use ICBMs.
- There are increasing fears that countries like Iraq, Iran, and North Korea will get nukes.
  - The prophet Joel prophesied that in the times leading up to Armageddon, the cry of the nations would be, *Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, 'I am strong,'* Joel 3:10.
    - Before the advent of the nuke, how could the weak say, *'I am strong'* and mean it?
    - The Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attack on America brought new meaning to Joel 3:10, see my essay on this.

**Jesus said in Matthew 24:6 that in the time leading up to his return, you will hear of wars and rumors of wars.**

**What is a rumor of war?**

- Could this be Jesus' way of describing the cold war to a First Century audience?
- Or perhaps this is a reference to a time when there are so many little wars going on they are not even reported on any more.
- Either way, this verse describes the times we're in today.

Let's take a look at a prophecy in Ezekiel 38 and 39 of a specific war that I believe may occur prior to the tribulation. Even though this war may occur prior to the tribulation, this does not mean it will be prior to the rapture of the church. Many people think that the rapture is the start of the tribulation because a potential scenario is that the Antichrist comes to power after this and he would offer an explanation for it. But Scripture makes it clear that the beginning of the tribulation occurs when the Antichrist confirms a covenant (peace treaty) with Israel (Daniel 9:27). There will be a period of time between the rapture and the beginning of the tribulation. We do not know how long this period is, it could be either days or years. I think it even more likely that the rapture could occur in conjunction with a nuclear war... who would miss a few million Christians when millions more are dieing from man's own weapons. I think the Magog War could be that war...

#### **27. Ezekiel 39:11-15 - What activity is described in these verses?**

"It will come to pass in that day that I will give Gog a burial place there in Israel, the valley of those who pass by east of the sea; and it will obstruct travelers, because there they will bury Gog and all his multitude. Therefore they will call it the Valley of Hamon Gog. For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them, in order to cleanse the land. Indeed all the people of the land will be burying them, and they will gain renown for it on the day that I am glorified," says the Lord GOD. "They will set apart men regularly employed, with the help of a search party, to pass through the land and bury those bodies remaining on the ground, in order to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will make a search. The search party will pass through the land; and whenever anyone sees a man's bone, he shall set up a marker by it, till the buriers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon Gog."

This passage describes the clean up after Israel is attacked by a coalition of forces led by Gog of Magog who is the "prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal". Most Bible scholars agree this is Russia. This is reinforced by Scripture which

describes the leadership of the forces as being from the "far north". Notice that Moscow is directly north of Israel...

Ezekiel 38:5-6 - "Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah from the far north and all its troops-- many people are with you."

**What is special about this clean-up?**

**Why would only specialized burial teams will be permitted to handle the burials?**

People killed by a nuclear blast may still be radioactive so special handling would be necessary.

**What clues are there as to the timing of this future historical event from Ezekiel 38:8?**

Ezekiel 38:8 - "After many days you will be visited. In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely."

We know the approximate timing of this war since it is after Israel has been re-gathered from their dispersion and live in a false safety. Now this false safety could be due to the peace accord they have that was confirmed by the Antichrist or it could be a foreshadowing of this. The former case would mean the war occurs during the tribulation, the latter means it occurs prior to the tribulation.

**What does Ezekiel 38:12 say as the reason Gog, the leader of Magog, goes into Israel?**

Ezekiel 38:12 - "to take plunder and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against the waste places that are again inhabited, and against a people gathered from the nations"

God said Gog will go to Israel to take plunder and booty, for financial gain.

**What will happen to the army of Gog?**

Ezekiel 38:22 - "And I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone."

God will destroy the army of Gog. This destruction may certainly be supernatural or God may use weapons that exist today. The mere fact that this 6th century BC prophecy will be fulfilled makes it a supernatural event. Certainly the use of nuclear weapons is consistent with great hailstones, fire and brimstone. It also appears that the war escalates to the use of ICBMs...

Ezekiel 39:6 - "And I will send fire on Magog and on those who live in security in the coastlands. Then they shall know that I am the LORD."

### **What is being burned for fuel in Ezekiel 39:9-10?**

Ezekiel 39:9-10 - "Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and bucklers, the bows and arrows, the javelins and spears; and they will make fires with them for seven years. They will not take wood from the field nor cut down any from the forests, because they will make fires with the weapons; and they will plunder those who plundered them, and pillage those who pillaged them," says the Lord GOD."

The Israelis will burn the weapons that Gog and his army brought South with them. Indeed, I get the sense that these weapons were serve as fuel for heat and cooking since it says they will use this instead of wood. Bible scholars have speculated on what these passages could be referring to. As an ex-field artilleryman, I'm convinced that all this fuel is from tank and artillery ammunition propellant. I've burned excess FA propellant myself and know that it can be used for things other than lobbing steel down range.

### **What clue is there in Ezekiel 39:9 as to why this war may be prior to the tribulation?**

It speaks of the Israelis using the weapons from Gog's army as fuel for seven years. I think the seven years has significance. Scripture is inspired by God and even the smallest details are the way they are for a purpose.

### **What could the seven years be a reference to?**

I believe the seven years correspond to the seven years of the tribulation. What else could the seven years represent?

### **What kind of scenario can you see where this war could help the Antichrist coming into power?**

The Antichrist and the spirit who inspired him is all about usurping God's power. God destroys the army of Magog but the Antichrist will take credit for it. This will give him political power...

Dave Regan of Lamb & Lion Ministries describes a scenario for end times events which I think is very feasible. The following is his scenario beefed up with a likely trigger scenario from Charles Krauthammer, a columnist for the Washington Post.

In an article published in the Summer, 2002 edition of the Christian Jew Foundation newsletter, Charles Krauthammer points out that if you want to see what will happen if Israel appeases the Palestinians, look at their withdrawal from Lebanon. Israel had been in Lebanon for about 20 years in a classic defensive occupation. Israel made no claims to the territory, they were simply there to keep the Syrians under the guise of Hezbollah from firing Katyusha rockets into Northern Israel. After two decades of badgering by the UN, Israel withdrew from Lebanon in May, 2000. They pulled back all the way to the UN mandated "Blue Line" to avoid any territorial dispute.

But this did not satisfy Hezbollah who proceeded to concoct a territorial claim on a few acres called Shebaa Farms and proceeded to threaten Israel with Katyusha rocket attacks if they dared respond to Hezbollah attacks. You see, Hezbollah does not want peace, like the Palestinians, they want the end of Israel. Now Israel is worse off than when they were in Lebanon, Hezbollah's rockets can hit most of Northern Israel and history has shown that Hezbollah will use them.

And now for the hair-trigger: if Hezbollah does hit Tel Aviv and/or Haifa with a rocket attack as they threatened, the northern front would explode. Israel would be forced to counterattack in Lebanon and Syria will be drawn into the conflict. Syria could not withstand an Israeli attack with conventional weapons, they would have to respond with missiles armed with chemical weapons targeting cities in Israel.

Dave Regan points out that it is prophesied that Damascus will cease to exist in the end times:

Jeremiah 49:24-27 - Damascus has grown feeble; she turns to flee, and fear has seized her. Anguish and sorrows have taken her like a woman in labor. Why is the city of praise not deserted, the city of My joy? Therefore her young men shall fall in her streets, and all the men of war shall be cut off in that day," says the LORD of hosts. "I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus, and it shall consume the palaces of Ben-Hadad."

The prophet Isaiah is even more direct:

Isaiah 17:1 - The burden against Damascus. "Behold, Damascus will cease from being a city, and it will be a ruinous heap.

With the destruction of Damascus, the Arab world will be thrown into a panic. That's when they will call for help from their natural ally, the Russians. The Russians will respond by sending a great army to destroy Israel. They will be motivated not only by their ingrained anti-Semitism, but also by their desire to seize all the Arab oil fields in the Middle East. Ezekiel 38 & 39 says the Russian army will be destroyed supernaturally on the hills of Israel in such a way that even the Israelis will know that they are not responsible for it (Ezekiel 38:17-39:6). At that point, the world will be thrown into a panic and that atmosphere of hysteria will provide the perfect opportunity for the Antichrist to step forward with the "perfect" peace plan.

My embellishment of Dave's scenario is that the rapture will have to occur prior to the Antichrist stepping forward with his Mid-East peace plan. Speaking about the rapture, Paul said...

2 Thessalonians 2:3,7-8 - Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition... ..For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

Unlike Dave, I'm not convinced that the destruction of the Russian army will be supernatural. I think this could well be a nuclear exchange that is described here possibly involving the U.S. because more than the Russian army in Israel is effected...

Ezekiel 39:6 - And I will send fire on Magog and on those who live in security in the coastlands. Then they shall know that I am the LORD.

We already established that Magog is Russia, could "the coastlands" be the U.S.? Anyway, my scenario contribution is this: since the rapture must occur before the Antichrist is revealed, what better time for it to occur than during some world-wide crisis like a nuclear war? Who would miss a few million Christians that disappeared when there is so much turmoil going on? The missing Christians could even be explained by some sort of secret weapon that is brought to bear by the other side. Indeed, there will be a strong delusion that will provide unbelievers with an explanation that will permit them to dismiss it for something other than what it really is...

2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 - And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

## 28. Isaiah 41:14-16 & Zechariah 14:12 What weapons are represented by these verses?

Isaiah 41:14-16 - Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I will help you," says the LORD and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make you into a new threshing sledge with sharp teeth; you shall thresh the mountains and beat them small, and make the hills like chaff. You shall winnow them, the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them; you shall rejoice in the LORD, and glory in the Holy One of Israel.

Zechariah 14:12 - And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths.

- These verses could be references to nuclear weapons.

## 29. Jeremiah 50:9, 51:1, 51:30, 51:43 - What war do these passages describe?

Jeremiah 50:9 - For behold, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country, and they shall array

themselves against her; from there she shall be captured. Their arrows shall be like those of an expert warrior; none shall return in vain.

Could this be describing the Gulf War where a coalition of Northern Hemisphere nations moved to punish Iraq for invading Kuwait? Could the arrows like those of an expert warrior be the smart weapons that were used?

Jeremiah 51:1 - Thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, against those who dwell in Leb Kamai, a destroying wind.

A "destroying wind" sounds a lot like "Desert Storm"...

Jeremiah 51:30 - The mighty men of Babylon have ceased fighting, they have remained in their strongholds; their might has failed, they became like women; they have burned her dwelling places, the bars of her gate are broken.

Do you recall the massive numbers of Iraqi soldiers who went to great efforts to surrender? How about the elite Iraqi Guard who never got into the fight?

Jeremiah 51:43 - Her cities are a desolation, a dry land and a wilderness, a land where no one dwells, through which no son of man passes.

In context you can see that this is talking about Babylon (modern day Iraq). This has not happened yet. Could it be that our cutting short the complete destruction of Saddam Hussein's army will mean that there will be a phase 2 to the Gulf war? Jeremiah 51:3 says, "*Do not spare her young men; Utterly destroy all her army*". This was not done so we know the book is not closed on war with Iraq.

Please note that I originally wrote the preceding words prior to George Bush Jr. becoming president. As I look over this study refreshing it during the Summer of 2002, it is clear to me that the Bible is telling us what tomorrow's headlines will be. All the pundits are now saying it is looking like there will be another war with Iraq. So stay tuned...

## What do all these signs we've been discussing tell us?

All these signs point to the soon coming of the Lord. As was the case with the Lord's first advent, so it will be with His second. Just as predicted... "*when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son*" (Galatians 4:4). The Lord Himself admonishes us to "*discern the signs of the times*" (Matthew 16:3).

## 30. Hebrews 10:24-25 - What should we be doing as we see the Day of the Lord approaching?

Hebrews 10:24-25 - And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

We should not forsake meeting together to encourage one another to do good works.



**What message should these signs of the soon coming of the Lord send to unbelievers?**

This should tell unbelievers to flee the wrath to come by turning to Jesus for salvation.

**What message should these signs of the soon coming of the Lord send to believers?**

This should tell believers to flee unholiness and embrace Jesus as Lord.