



## The signs of the end of the age

(Matthew chapter 24:1-14)

The Lord was sitting on the Mount of Olives with His disciples overlooking the great temple and then He made some startling predictions that shocked the disciples. He began to tell them what would happen in the future and in the last days at the end of this present age. As He was going to the Mount of Olives with them He was walking away from the temple.

*(Vs 1) "Jesus left the temple and was walking away when His disciples came up to Him to call His attention to its buildings."*

The temple in Jerusalem was the centre of the Jews religion and life. They could not imagine an existence without the temple. Religious people always find their security in religious buildings and structured systems and the disciples were no exception. They were impressed with the size and structure of the temple and drew Jesus attention to its splendour. Then the Lord Jesus said something that totally devastated their preconceived notions about the temple. It was like a punch in the stomach.

*(Vs 2) "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; everyone will be thrown down."*

Like all of the Jewish people the disciples could hardly believe what Jesus had

said. To them the destruction of the temple would be like the end of the world. They could not imagine life without the temple. The Lord Jesus was saying that religious buildings and institutions do not impress God and that they were not to put their hope in the future of the organized religious system.

He told them plainly that their religious system would be totally destroyed. It had happened once before in 586 BC when the Babylonians sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple and Jesus was saying that it would happen again and it did. Around 40 years after Jesus spoke these words in 70AD the Roman armies under Titus sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple effectively putting an end to the Mosaic sacrificial system.

The startling thing is that He was alluding to the fact that all organized religious systems would be destroyed at the end of the age. Notice also He said that, "not one stone would be left on another but that everyone will be thrown down." Christians are called 'living stones' in the Bible and the Lord Jesus was alluding to the fact that the empire of the Antichrist would also decimate the faithful Church at the end of this age.

*(Rev 13:7) "He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation."*

The word used for 'saints' is the standard New Testament word used for Christians. In the New Testament the Body of Christ is also called His temple.

Historically the faithful Church has always suffered persecution and it has been said that there were more martyrs last century than in all the centuries that preceded it. Today two thirds of the world is under the domination of Islam and millions are dying everyday under that beast system!

Israel like the Church has suffered down through history and at the end of this age they along with the faithful Church will also suffer at the hands of the Antichrist's empire.

*(Dan 7:21) "As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them," (Dan 12:7) "It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed."*

Today the Church and Israel have a common enemy. Satan is stirring up the whole world against Israel and Bible believing Christians.

After Jesus had said these things about the temple the disciples went quite and it was not until they were sitting on the Mount of Olives that they plucked up the courage to ask Him some more questions.

*(Vs 3) "As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately. 'Tell us,' they said, 'when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?'"*

The disciples asked Him three questions. When will the temple be destroyed? What will be the sign of your coming? And what will be the signs of the end of the age? The Lord Jesus

answered them in reverse order because He wanted them to see the reality of what the destruction of the temple meant for Israel, for the Church and for the world at large.

## **Question 1. What will be the Signs of Jesus' Second Coming?**

### **Sign 1. Spiritual Deception**

*(Vs 4-5) "Jesus answered: 'Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.'"*

The first thing the Lord Jesus warns us about as believers is spiritual deception. In fact He speaks about wars, famines, earthquakes and diseases once but warns about spiritual deception four times. The Jewish encyclopaedia lists over forty false messiahs that have come to the Jewish nation before and after 70AD. On of the most famous ones was Simon Barkockba in the Second Century who led a revolt against Rome. A famous leader called Rabbi Akiva stirred up the Jewish people to follow Barkockba as the promised Messiah. Of course it ended in a blood-bath and the Romans sacked Jerusalem and built a temple to Jupiter on the Temple Mount. This was another 'abomination of desolation.'

Today the nation of Israel is being deceived again by the supposed 'Road Map' for peace in the Middle East being enforced on them by the Quartet consisting of the US, UN, the EU and Russia. These nations are pushing for a 'two state' solution. They want to divide the Land of Israel up between the so-called 'Palestinians' and the Jewish people. Israel wants peace at any price. Already the quartet is pushing Israel to return the land and withdraw from the boundaries that they won in the 1967 six-day war.

Ultimately the leaders of Israel will

make a peace treaty with the other nations yet God calls this agreement they will make a 'covenant of death' because Israel has not trusted in the Lord but trusted in these superpowers for protection from their enemies and allowed these super powers to divide up the Land of Israel. This will mean disaster for Israel and ultimately for the superpowers themselves. In the end they will betray Israel and open the way for the invasion by the Antichrist and his armies. Isaiah the prophet foretold these events.

*(Isaiah 28:14-15) "Therefore hear the word of the LORD, you scoffers who rule this people in Jerusalem. You boast, "We have entered into a covenant with death, with the grave we have made an agreement. When an overwhelming scourge sweeps by, it cannot touch us, for we have made a lie our refuge and falsehood our hiding place."*

Now lets continue. When the Lord Jesus spoke about deception he was not only speaking about the deception to be perpetuated on Israel but also referred to the spiritual deception infiltrating the Christian Church. Primarily Jesus was warning the faithful believers. The whole world is already deceived and lies in the power of the wicked one and the Devil already has them but the ones he wants are Jesus faithful followers.

Not only will there be false Messiahs claiming to be Jesus Himself but also prophets and teachers who have a false anointing. They will have an anointing to do all kinds of counterfeit signs, miracles and wonders and perform healings but their anointing will not be from God. We see this demonstrated in Moses encounter with the magicians of Egypt. Through the power of Satan these magicians were able to counterfeit the miracles Moses and Aaron. Jesus mentions these in verses eleven and twenty-four.

*(Vs11) "And many false prophets will appear and deceive many people."(Vs24) "For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect-if that were possible."*

A "false Christ" is "one with a false anointing." Not all supernatural manifestations are from God. As this age comes to a close we are going to see counterfeit signs, miracles and wonders rapidly increasing in the professing Christian church. Even true believers will be in danger of deception. All kinds of counterfeit signs, miracles and wonders will precede and open the way for the worship of the Antichrist in Israel and in the professing Christian Church.

*(2 Thessalonians 2:9) "The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders."*

So then the first thing the Lord Jesus mentioned was to watch out for spiritual deception. In fact in his discourse He mentions spiritual deception at least four times.

## **Sign 2. Wars, Famines, Earthquakes and Diseases.**

*(Vs 6-8) "You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains." (Luke 21 adds diseases.)*

There has always been warfare throughout the history of the world and it will become more frequent as this age comes to a close. Notice Jesus says, "Kingdom against kingdom." In the last century there have been two major world

wars. According to God's word just before Jesus returns there will be a Third World War leading up to Armageddon. It is recorded in the book of Revelation in chapters nine and sixteen.

*(Revelation 9:13,15-19) "The sixth angel blew his trumpet. And the four angels who had been kept for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number. The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came, fire, smoke and sulfur. A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury."*

There will be a war between the Kings of the North and the South that will be fought in the Middle East. In all probability it will be fought between the Islam and the nations of the West. Already Islam is waging war against the West. Out of this Middle East war will come the Antichrist himself who will eventually subjugate most of the third world including Europe. His empire will encompass the nations that were once conquered by ancient Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. (Revelation 13:2) Another mighty army will also come across the Euphrates River in the Last Days. It will primarily be an oriental army although other nations will ultimately join them on the plains of Megiddo. Their final objective will be the city of Jerusalem. (Revelation 9:13-19) (Revelation 16:12) (Ezekiel 38:6b)

The driving force of this army will be Satan himself working through the Antichrist and the False Prophet. This

third world war will escalate into the final battle of Armageddon.

*(Revelation 16:12-16)"The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings of the East. Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon (Satan), out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God almighty. 'Behold I come like a thief!' "Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed. Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon."*

Also notice in verse 16 that Jesus warns believers to stay spiritually alert and to be aware of spiritual deception and to keep their garments of Salvation on. The final culmination of these events will be the second coming of Christ. By the power of His word these armies will be destroyed on the mountains of Israel. (Zechariah 12:1-9 14:1-4) (Ezekiel 38 & 39)

Now notice what the Lord Jesus says in verse seven of Matthew twenty-four, "nation against nation." The word 'nation' in the Greek text of the Bible is the word from which we get the word 'ethnic'. Jesus was telling us that there would be war between different ethnic races within nations. This will be the face of war in the last days. This is happening everywhere today in the world. No nation is safe today from ethnic tension and violence or terrorism. Already Ethnic violence and tension are escalating out of control. Look at what's happening today between the Shiites and the Sunnis in Iraq and all over the Middle-East. Remember Bosnia and Kosovo.

There are nations in Africa and Europe that have ethnic conflict and riots. If you look at the overall scene the one dominant power that is infiltrating the western nations is Islam. Right now Islam has their 'Trojan Horses' in Europe, America, England and even here in Australia. The Lord Jesus was telling us that black would be fighting black and white fighting white and that this would be happening within nations themselves.

Earthquakes are becoming more frequent and famines and diseases are happening on a scale never seen before in history. Yet things are going to become even more intense and frequent as the end of this age rapidly approaches. Notice also in verse 8 Jesus also said, "*these are the beginning of birth pains.*" When a woman goes into labour the contractions become more frequent and more intense as the birth of the baby draws nearer. Just before the baby is born the contractions come almost one on top of another.

Jesus was telling us that in order for the 'physical birth' of the Kingdom of God on earth there is going to be the 'birth pangs' of wars, earthquakes, famines and diseases coming one upon another. These will be happening almost simultaneously on a worldwide scale just before Jesus returns.

Ultimately there will be one massive global earthquake causing multitudes of skyscrapers to collapse. This will be the final destruction of the Antichrist's global empire and his armies gathered against Jerusalem.

*(Revelation 16:18-19) "No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed."  
(Isaiah 30:25b) "In the day of great slaughter, when the towers fall."*

Similar types of plagues that fell upon Egypt recorded in the book of Exodus will fall again on this world according to the book of Revelation. At that time every level of society will be affected.

*(Isaiah 24:1-3) "See, the LORD is going to lay waste the earth and devastate it; he will ruin its face and scatter its inhabitants— it will be the same for priest as for people, for master as for servant, for mistress as for maid, for seller as for buyer, for borrower as for lender, for debtor as for creditor. The earth will be completely laid waste and totally plundered. The LORD has spoken this word."*

### **Sign 3. The Global Persecution of Faithful Christians.**

*(Vs 9) "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me."*

Persecution never begins with the secular authorities but always starts from false brethren within the professing Christian Church. Luke tells us in his account that those who remain faithful to Jesus will be handed over by false believers, friends, relatives and even by parents, brothers and sisters to the secular authorities for persecution and death.

*(Luke 21:12) "But before all this," (earthquakes, plagues, wars and famines) they (false brethren) will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name."*

This has always happened to faithful Christians since the first century but just before Jesus returns persecution will intensify globally. In every nation of the world faithful Christians will be treated like criminals because they will not compromise their loyalty to Jesus or go along

with the religious and political system. It was just the same in the global empire of Ancient Rome. What happened to Jesus in His last days will happen to his body the Faithful Church in its last days. Jesus also said that when persecution comes true believers will be empowered to stand firm and strong for Him.

(Luke 21:13-19) "This will result in your being witnesses to them. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words of wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. You will be betrayed by parents, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. All men (universally) will hate you because of me. But not a hair of your head will perish. By standing firm you will save yourselves."

Notice again the phrase "*all nations.*" This persecution will ultimately become global. It will not only come from the secular authorities but also through the Prostitute Church empowered by the spirit of the Antichrist. Also notice what Jesus says, "*because of Me.*" This persecution will come upon all that want to remain faithful to the Lord Jesus and to the word of God.

*(John 15:18-21) "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me."*

From the first century through to the time of Constantine there were ten major imperial persecutions under the Roman

Emperors or "Pontiffs" as they were called. They were Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, Severus, Maximinus, Decius, Valerian, Aurelian, Dioclesian and Maximian.

As the pagan side of the Roman Empire declined the religious side of Rome grew stronger in power. Eventually the time came when the Popes themselves began to order the persecution of those who would not go along with the doctrines of the Church of Rome.

From the time of the emperor Constantine onwards over a period of time the Popes began to exult themselves to the point where they reserved the right to interpret Scripture and to introduce unbiblical doctrines and practices. After the Roman Catholic Church grew in power and expanded its hold over many countries especially in Europe it began to persecute Bible believing Christians just like the Caesars of Rome had done before them.

The 'Pontiffs' of the Roman Catholic Church perpetuated the persecutions begun by the 'Pontiffs' of the Roman Empire. This is a historical fact. The Inquisition lasted around 600 years. During these centuries the two kinds of people that were systematically persecuted by Rome were Jews and Bible believing Christians.

Of course every Roman Emperor and every pope have all been antichrist's that have subjugated and persecuted everyone who has not submitted to their supreme authority and all of them teach us about the character of the final Antichrist to come.

When the Antichrist's empire spreads its tentacles across the globe multitudes in the Church will go along with his agenda. In the light of world events today and in the light of scripture it is highly likely that the Antichrist will be a

Muslim general. If this is so then he will ultimately demands worship as the Supreme Caliph of Islam and behead all that will not submit to his authority. According to God's multitudes of believers who have not worshipped the Antichrist, as God, will be beheaded in the last days just before Jesus returns. (Revelation 20:4)

If you read the history of Islam including the acts of Mohammad himself you will see that they have a long bloody history of beheadings. Is it any different today when you look at what the Jihad Muslims are doing in Saudi Arabia, Sudan and in other Muslim countries? Martyrdom will be the common feature during the Antichrist's reign.

#### Sign 4.

#### The Global Apostasy in the Church

*(Vs 10) "At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other*

Today an antichrist is being worshipped in the Church. The Pope is virtually worshipped by millions of Roman Catholics around the world as the supreme head of the Christian Church. The Church of Rome would never admit this publicly but the reality is clearly seen. According to the teaching of Rome when the Pope speaks he is speaking in the place of Jesus Christ even if what he says contradicts the Bible. The Pope of Rome is considered infallible in matters of doctrine and faith. He is the supreme 'Pontificus Maxumus' of Rome a title directly taken from the pagan Roman Emperors.

The Pope's title in Latin is 'Vicar of Christ' and in Greek 'antichrist.' In Greek, the word antichrist had two shades of meaning; firstly, 'Against Christ' and secondly, 'In place of Christ'. Satan's foremost desire is to be wor-

shipped as God in the professing Christian but first Satan must turn the Church against the true Christ so that he can replace Jesus Christ with the false Christ (the Antichrist). Every Pope sits in the seat of an antichrist and teaches us about the final Antichrist who will demand to be worshipped as God in Israel and by the professing Christian Church. The final Antichrist will be someone who can combine and control religion and politics.

A few years ago Pope John Paul 11 appeared in a photograph kissing the Koran, which says, 'God has no Son'. This is the spirit of antichrist already at work in the Church. The spirit of antichrist denies the Father and Son relationship in the Godhead.

*(1 John 4:1-3) "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world."*

The spirit of antichrist can only operate where Christ has already been preached. The devil has the world deceived already. His desire is to deceive the Church. This is why Jesus and also the apostles constantly warn us about spiritual deception.

*(1John 2:18-19) "Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed*

*that none of them belonged to us."*

Today there is even a greater threat to the faithful Church than there has been from Rome down through the centuries. Islam is now the power to be reckoned with. At its core Islam is an Antichrist Religion that clearly teaches that God has no Son and persecutes and murders those who believe and teach that.

The spirit of Antichrist drives the Islamic empire today. The West is trying to compromise with Islam but they will not compromise. The Koran itself teaches and promotes the global domination by Islam and this is their agenda. The Koran itself says that Muslims are not to take Jews or Christians as their friends and that Islam must be spread by the sword. In fact Islam is the religion of the sword and has its roots in the moon god of war. This is why you have the crescent moon on the Islamic flag. Allah is not the God of Abraham, Isaac or Jacob and he is certainly not the God of the Bible. Much more could be said about this.

In Revelation chapter seventeen we see a woman riding a scarlet beast.

*(Revelation 17:3-6,9,18) "Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. This title was written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus..." "This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits"..." "The woman you*

*saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth."*

This is a picture of a global religious system primarily associated with an apostate form of Biblical Christianity supported by a godless global empire. Rome is included but the woman essentially is a description of a Church that has been faithful to Jesus but has now become a prostitute and become unfaithful to him. The Church of Rome reflected this description for over 600 years during the inquisition and if Rome had its way in the world today it would do again what it did in the years of the inquisition.

The startling thing is that this world religion will include all those denominations associated with an apostate form of Biblical Christianity. The 'two horns' or 'nations' that look like a lamb but speaks like a dragon form the second beast. These nations associated with Biblical Christianity are called the false prophet. They will also be a part of this global religion. Ecumenism and interfaith will exist on a global scale unprecedented in history. 'Secular Babylon' will be walking hand in hand with 'Spiritual Babylon'.

However, it is highly probable that the form of Christianity with its headquarters in Rome will try to amalgamate with Islam. This could well be the meaning of the iron and the clay mentioned in the book of Daniel however, iron and clay do not mix. Islam as a religion cannot assimilate with any other religion. The Koran and the Islamic literature specifically teach that there can be no other God but Allah and that Muhammad is his prophet. Islam will never compromise on this position. Their agenda is global domination and subjugation by the sword.

Most of the European countries associated with the EU have one religion in

common and that is Roman Catholicism. The Islamic empire almost invaded Europe during the Middle Ages but they were stopped by Charles Martel. However today the Islamic empire is already invading Europe and the western nations and it is highly probable that there will be an Islamic Europe and a mixture of basically two main religions Islam and Roman Catholicism. Ultimately the Antichrist will destroy all other religions except his own.

When Antiochus invaded the Land of Israel around 160 BC most of the Jewish people compromised with him and there were even those who knew full well what was going on but said nothing to save their lives in this world. During his reign many apostatised and many were martyred for their faith.

Just before the Lord Jesus comes again many in the Church will fall away. Because the pressure to deny Jesus will be so great many who claim to be Christians will fall away from their faithfulness to Him. They will also betray their fellow Christians to the secular authorities. This has already happened down through the history of the Church but in the last days it will become a universal trend in every place where Christians are being persecuted for their loyalty to Jesus Christ.

This apostasy began with the coming of the Emperor Constantine who made Christianity the state religion consequently opening up the floodgates for the paganising of the Church. Imperial Rome became Papal Rome. However the Pontiff's of Religious Rome would continue the persecution begun by the Pontiff's of Imperial Rome.

*(Vs 11) And many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.*

Once more Jesus warns of deception. Many false prophets will appear and

deceive many. These are not primarily the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Mormons or other cults but false teachers in the professing Christian church.

*(1 Timothy 4:1-2) "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron".*

*(2 Peter 2:1-3) "But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves" Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping."*

The devil is too clever to tell outright lies so he mixes truth with error. In fact the phrase "secretly introduce" describes the act of laying truth and error side by side. It is like bating a mouse. You use cheese in the trap! It is like arsenic, the slow acting poison. You put it in food a little bit at a time but eventually the poison accumulates and does its work! This teaching combined with the evil in the world will lead to the great apostasy and the coming of the Antichrist. We need the attitude of the Bereans who, "Received the message with great eagerness and examined the scriptures everyday to see if what Paul said was true" (Acts 17:11).

Before Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians the people experienced a time of prosperity. There were a lot of religious activities and many false prophets and teachers were telling the people that judgment was not coming. Jeremiah the prophet saw things from the Lord's perspective and the prophecies

he made were of a totally different nature.

*(Jeremiah 5:30-31 6:13-15) "A horrible and shocking thing has happened in the land; The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and my people love it this way. But what will you do in the end? From the least to the greatest all are greedy for gain; Prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit. They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace. Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when I punish them," says the Lord."*

These trends will be a conspicuous feature of the Church in the last days.

*(2 Timothy 4:3-4) "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths."*

Even when His people in the Old Testament were backsliders God still wanted them to turn back to Him to avoid judgment even though He knew that they wouldn't.

*(Jeremiah 6:16) "This is what the Lord says: 'Stand at the crossroads and look: ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.' But you said, 'We will not walk in it.'"*

If the Church in the west throws out the faith prosperity preachers, its ecumenical and interfaith associations, its trendy fads, its false doctrine and turns away from its lukewarm, materialistic and backslidden state and returns to the authority of God's word the Bible then

God will withhold judgment.

In 70 AD virtually the same scenario existed in Jerusalem before it fell to the Romans. The Jewish people experienced a time of prosperity and ignored the warnings of the believers who were telling them what Jesus had said around forty years before. In virtually the same military circumstances Jerusalem fell to the Romans as it had fallen to the Babylonians centuries before and on the same day of the Jewish calendar.

This is why we must keep close to Jesus and love Him and cultivate faithfulness to Him through fellowship, prayer and by studying the Word of God. Only by living under the authority of God's Word and by the power of the Holy Spirit will we be ready for the Second Coming of Jesus. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ will be either our best dream come true or our worst nightmare. In the last days it is vitally important for true believers to remain faithful to Jesus Christ and to the integrity of his Word, the Bible. When we see the word 'faith' used in the Bible it not only means, 'to believe' but also implies 'to be faithful.' If we are faithful now then the Lord will enable us to be faithful when the Antichrist's global empire begins its persecution of the faithful Church. *(Revelation 13:7) "*

*(Vs 12-13) "Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold but he who stands firm to the end will be saved."*

Notice Jesus says, "*the love of most would grow cold.*" The word 'love' used here is 'Agape' and it is speaking of Christians. When we look at the history of Israel and the Church there has always been a faithful remnant but they have always been in the minority. So it will be in the last days just before Jesus returns. The majority of the professing Christian Church will in fact commit apostasy.

Paul speaks of this apostasy.

*(2 Thessalonians 2:3-4) "Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God."*

The word "apostasy" used in Second Thessalonians means "to deliberately deny and to teach against the revealed truths of God's word with the intention of turning others from the faith." This kind of total apostasy will bring the Antichrist to power in the Church and in the world at large. The spirit of antichrist always begins in association with the Church.

*(1 John 2:18-20) "Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us."*

The Lord Jesus is telling us in verses twelve and thirteen of Matthew chapter twenty four that the falling away in the last days will be primarily due to the increase of wickedness. In the last days wickedness will be so prevalent that only those who are living close to Jesus will survive spiritually. Remember the words of the apostle Peter when he says, "If the righteous are scarcely saved where will the ungodly and sinners appear."

Finally Jesus says, "He who stands firm to the end will be saved." If we have been born again then we are saved now but in order to stay saved we must endure until the end. The Greek says, "He who has endured to the end will be saved." As the

coming of the Lord gets closer living for Jesus will not get easier. The pressure for us to compromise will increase at an alarming rate. The pressure will be so great that no one will be left in a vacuum. Just before Jesus returns everyone will be forced to decide, Christ or the Antichrist. Joel the prophet says, "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision" (Joel 3:14).

Multitudes of believers in the Church in the West are sitting on the fence trying to live in this world as well as in the Kingdom of God. However, God is starting to 'electrify' the fence. Ultimately they will all have to jump one-way or the other. The apostles now knew about the general signs that would specifically precede His Second Coming. In the next verse the Lord Jesus answered their second question.

## **Question 2.**

### **What will be 'The Sign' of Your Coming? The Proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom.**

*(Vs 14) "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."*

The last great sign that will mark the end of the age will be the worldwide proclamation of the Gospel to every nation. Jesus cannot return until this job is done. God in His foreknowledge knows when it will be completed; however, Jesus' coming will be delayed as long as the Church does not do what Jesus commanded us to do. Remember Jesus said, "Work while it is day for the night is coming when no one will be able to work." The 'night' used in this context teaches us something about the conditions that will prevail during the Antichrist's reign. During the time that

the Antichrist rules it will be virtually impossible to preach the Gospel in the way we do now. Paul tells us in Second Thessalonians that the Holy Spirit who has been restraining the Antichrist from coming to power will no longer restrain him and only then will the Antichrist be revealed to the world.

The Gospel will still be preached but open proclamation will be a crime punishable by imprisonment or death because the Antichrist and his global empire will actively oppose and try to suppress the preaching of the Gospel. This was the case in the ancient Roman Empire and it will be so again in the last global 'beast' or empire ruling the earth just before Jesus comes back.

In some way the Holy Spirit will not be convicting people in the same way that He does now. Apart from the faithful remnant the majority of mankind will have already given their allegiance to the Antichrist and taken the mark of his empire.

The last great sign before Jesus returns will be the worldwide preaching of the Gospel in every nation. Again the word 'nation' implies 'ethnic nations' i.e., the different nationalities within those nations.

We have one primary purpose and responsibility on this earth and that is the proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom. This command to preach the Gospel was the last one Jesus gave before He ascended to heaven. (Matthew 28:16-20) This is the last 'great sign.' Finally the Lord Jesus answered their third question.

### **Question 3. When would the Temple be destroyed?**

Now for the answer to the disciple's question concerning the destruction of the

temple we need to turn to Luke's gospel.

*(Luke 21:20-24) "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."*

In 70 AD the Roman army laid siege to Jerusalem so that no one could escape. Its destruction was certain, as Jesus had prophesied 40 years before it actually happened.

A political situation arose in Rome that required the armies to withdraw for a very brief period of time. During this time all those faithful Christians who believed what Jesus had said fled the city and gathered at a place called Pella where they found refuge from the Romans. After this the Romans returned and laid siege to Jerusalem once again and continued the siege until the city was taken and the temple destroyed.

The soldiers raised pagan emblems of worship on the ruins of the temple mount where the Holy of Holies had been situated and worshipped them. This was the 'abomination of desolation' that Jesus spoke about that happened in 70 AD and would be repeated throughout history with a final abomination perpetrated by the Antichrist right at the end of this age.

In Luke's gospel the Lord Jesus accurately described what would happen in

70AD and in Matthew chapter twenty-four He speaks about the same situation but His primary focus is placed on what will happen at the end of this age during the period called 'The Time of Jacob's

Trouble.' After this time the Lord Jesus will return to set up His Millennial Kingdom. 'The Time of Jacob's Trouble' will be the subject of our next study.

**BLOW THE TRUMPET IN ZION**

\* For no one can lay any foundation other than the one  
already laid, which is Jesus Christ \*

