

The Last Days – Signs Of The Times

In our first lesson dealing with the last days, we found it provides hope and comfort. Because Jesus ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father, the Holy Ghost was sent to be with us and indeed in us. Our second lesson exhorted us to be busy going about the work we have been commanded to do by Jesus. This is mainly going out and spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every creature that others may be saved, also. We do this by commandment and are empowered by the Holy Ghost who brings to mind those things Jesus told us. So the last days are a time of comfort and a time of work, for Christians that is. The world sees things much differently as it is not looking for the return of Jesus to establish his kingdom, but looking to themselves for all things.

Scripture not only tells us there will be a period of time when things will come to an end, but tells us to look for certain events to transpire that will lead up to that time. What are those signs that we should be looking for? That is the subject of this study.

Let's start off by looking at Matthew 24:1 - 16 and see what it has to tell us about the last days.

- 1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.
- 2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.
- 3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?
- 4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.
- 5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.
- 6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.
- 7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.
- 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.
- 9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.
- 10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.
- 11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.
- 12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.
- 13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.
- 14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.
- 15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)
- 16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

When studying the word of God there is something that stands out dealing with God's timing of events. There are distinct dispensations of time in God's plan. At the same time, there is always some overlap of events between these dispensations, but there are definitely different dispensations. The time of man in the garden is different from the time of man when he was expelled from the garden. That time before the Flood is different than that time after the Flood. In like manner, the time leading up to the time God deals with the nation of Israel is different from the time He does pass judgment on the nation of Israel. That overlap might even be better described as events now foreshadowing events to come in

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the future. Just as many things in the Old Testament foreshadowed events in the New Testament, things now are a foreshadow of those things to come in the last days.

We just read the section in Matthew where Jesus is telling his disciples about the signs of his coming and the end of the world. If we carefully read this section, we discover three periods being dealt with. Verses 4 through 8 talk about the times leading up to the seven year period of time where God deals with the nation of Israel. That last week in God's timetable for the nation of Israel. This is the period we are in right now. There are numerous examples of people claiming to be Christ and deceiving many. Interestingly enough, many of these people are those who have lived in our lifetimes.

1. Marshall Applewhite claimed to be Jesus Christ in this posting on the internet, *"I, Jesus—Son of God—acknowledge on this date of September 25/26, 1995: ..."*. 2 years later he and his Heaven's Gate followers committed suicide to meet up with a spaceship hiding behind comet Hale-Bopp.
2. Inri Cristo, a Brazilian man who claims to be the second Jesus.
3. Matayoshi Jesus, established the World Economic Community Party in 1997 based on his conviction that he is God and Christ.
4. Jose Luis de Jesus Miranda, organizer of Growing In Grace who claims that the resurrected Christ "integrated himself within me"
5. Jim Jones, claimed to be the resurrection of Jesus, and several others, and then organized a mass suicide in Jonestown, Guyana.
6. David Koresh, leader of the Branch Davidians, declared that he was, "the Son of God, the Lamb."
7. Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church claims to be the second coming of Christ, but not Jesus himself.
8. Jung Myung Seok, founder of Providence Church, also claims to be the second coming of Christ, but not Jesus himself.
9. David Shayler, a former British Security Service officer in June 2007 claimed to be a reincarnation of Jesus Christ.

There are many other individuals who have made claims like this and led others to destruction with their claims of being the Messiah. But let's not forget that these are individuals that have deceived some. There is a much larger group that has literally deceived billions of people with their claim. The Catholic church has made the claim that because they consider Peter to be their first leader, or Pope, all other popes afterward when operating as teacher of the whole Catholic church, ex cathedra, can make claims for Jesus that are considered infallible. This includes the worship of Mary which directly contradicts Scripture itself.

There are and have been wars and rumours of war, nations rising up against nations, kingdoms rising up against kingdoms, famines, pestilences and earthquakes in divers places. This describes the period of time that we are currently in. All these are the beginning of sorrows, but we are not to be troubled because all these must happen, but the end is not yet.

We now come to period two beginning in verse 9. Now as I've said, there is always some overlap in events between dispensations and that is the case here. But while there is some overlap, the events that happen in a dispensation are prominent. There is an event that occurs here, also, between this first period and the second period we are about to look at. That event is the Rapture! I believe the second period is accurate because of that first word in verse 9, "Then" which marks the beginning of something, and the statement made in verse 13, "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." We see a period of time that speaks of times even worse than what we experience today. I've said it

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many times myself and heard others say it, too. "Just when you think it can't get any worse, it does!" Imagine what it will be like when the Church has been removed and there is no longer that group praying, living in a way that is pleasing to God. That time when the Age of Grace has ended. The overlap mentioned before happens because during the first period we talked about the Church is still around, along with the unbelieving Jews and unbelieving Gentiles. The second period has those that are unbelieving Jews and unbelieving Gentiles because the Church has been removed. Jesus in this second section is speaking to his brethren, the Jews. This second period has a different gospel. We find that gospel in verse 13, "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." How do we know this is a different gospel than that which we have now? We know because of what is said in verse 14, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." What we have now is the gospel of Jesus Christ unto salvation. What is to come is the gospel of the kingdom and it is what is preached unto all nations at that time. Now, if the Church has been removed and what is left behind are unbelieving Jews and unbelieving Gentiles, who will preach the gospel of the kingdom? The seventh chapter of Revelation speaks of 144,000 who were called by 12,000 out of each of the tribes of Israel. These were all sealed with the mark of God on their foreheads and are the ones who would preach the gospel of the kingdom. Revelation 7:13 - 17 shows the results of their efforts.

Verses 15 and 16 of Matthew 24, tell us of that third period. When the Anti-Christ sets himself up in the Temple and declares himself as God, that third period will begin and this will mark the beginning of the Great Tribulation.

Events Leading Up To The Second Period

As we've seen previously, those who have believed on the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, that is those who are saved, will be looking for His coming. Those who do not believe, will live their lives as if none of the things God said are to happen, will happen. But, we've been given many things that show us when that time of His return is nearing.

While there are many signs concerning the last days, some of which we have already looked at, there is one that stands out among the rest. Throughout Scripture, you will find a couple of underlying themes. Both of these God claims as His own! One is His people and the other is the land. If you can come across a prophecy dealing with these two combined together, then you have come across the most important of prophecies because it deals with His people and His land. Let's turn to Amos 9:13 - 15,

13 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.

14 And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

15 And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God.

In 1903, Great Britain offered the country of Uganda to the World Zionist Organization for the establishing of a new Jewish nation. They were offering land that was good land and larger in size than

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that of what was given to the Jews by God. The Jews declined the offer citing Scripture as the reason. That Scripture that was quoted is Jeremiah 32:44,

44 Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences, and seal them, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the mountains, and in the cities of the valley, and in the cities of the south: for I will cause their captivity to return, saith the LORD.

It had been prophesied the Jews would buy back the land given to them by God and that land was not located in Uganda. The land promised to the nation of Israel was under control of the Ottoman empire at that time. There were some Jews that lived there already, but most were still gone after the Diaspora. Nevertheless, the Jews began to buy up land that became available and often had to pay for it twice. They would buy it from the Arabs who were living on it, but did not have clear title to the land, and then they would have to pay full price again to the Ottoman empire who had control of the land. After WWI, however, Great Britain gained control of portions of the Ottoman empire including Palestine. It was during this time the Arabs became alarmed at the amount of land being purchased by the Jews. They petitioned Great Britain to disallow any more purchases of the land by the Jews. This was to be accomplished by three rulings,

1. Establish a democratic government in Palestine
2. Completely halt Jewish immigration
3. Make it illegal for any Arab or Palestinian to sell land, buildings, or property to any Jew

Nevertheless, the area of Tel Aviv that the Jews had purchased and had clear title to now had grown to over 125,000 Jews. They were firmly entrenched there and this would eventually lead way to the establishment of the nation of Israel.

May 14, 1948, is a date in history that is unmistakably one of the most important days in human history. The headline of the Palestine Post read on May 16, 1948, "**State Of Israel Is Born.**" Isaiah 66:7 - 9 says this,

7 Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child.

8 Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.

9 Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the LORD: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God.

The nation of Israel was born in a day! After 1900 years, a remnant of Jews returned to the land and established the nation of Israel. This had never been seen before in all of history!

Israel, born as a nation in a day, was now once again available for Jews that had been scattered all over the world to come back to. The Lord promised to bring His people back to the land. Let's look at Isaiah 43:3 - 6, 10, 21 - 22,

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3 For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.

4 Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.

5 Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west;

6 I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth;

10 Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

21 This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.

22 But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.

God establishes the fact that He is God and there are no other gods besides Him that Israel shall call on. He is their Saviour. God being Himself would bring back Israel to the land even though they did not call upon Him. He would do this because of His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Here, God even gives the order in which He would cause the Jews to come back to the land promised to them. From the east, the west, the north, and the south.

According to the *Judiac Encyclopedia* there were 300,000 Jews in Turkey in 1900. By 1939, there were only 30,000. This same rate of Jewish immigration to Israel from other Middle East countries including Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and others occurred in this same time period.

Jewish immigration from the west was next. Jews in Europe totaled nearly 9.5 million in 1939. By 1948, this population had dropped to around 3.7 million. After the Nazi holocaust in which nearly 6 million Jews were killed, thousands more fled to Israel.

The third phase of return according to prophecy would be from the north. It was not until 1988 under the *Glasnost* policies of Gorbachev that it was legal for Russian Jews to emigrate. Some then left by going through Helsinki, but the prime minister of Finland halted this under pressure from the Arabs. Interestingly enough a constituent of the ministry of Southwest Radio Church, Siiki, who was also a friend of the prime minister's wife, told him that unless he opened the door to Jewish immigration from Russian again, God would do to him what He did to the king of Edom. Well, that opened the way to more than 400,000 Russian Jews to go to Israel.

Finally, there would be a return from the south. In 1991 around 14,000 black Jews were airlifted out of Ethiopia to Israel in a maneuver called Operation Solomon. Probably so named because these Jews are alleged to be descendants of a son born of the Queen of Sheba by Solomon. Amazing how even the order of return is correctly called in Scripture and all leading up to the time of the Messiah's return! In Luke 13:23 - 28, Jesus is speaking about those unbelievers who would not be permitted to enter into the kingdom of God. But it closes out in verses 29 and 30 describing the exact order of return as prophesied by Isaiah.

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23 Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them,

24 Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

25 When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:

26 Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

27 But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

28 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

29 And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.

30 And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

There are so many signs we can look at concerning the nation of Israel and the things to happen before the return of Jesus Christ, but we just do not have the time to go into all these now. We could talk about the return of the Hebrew language, the return of the Shekel as the currency of the nation of Israel, the productivity of the land when the Jews again occupy the land, the turning of a wasteland back into a lush agricultural center and all the trees when the Jews return. The return of the vultures and eagles when the day draws close. So many prophecies and so little time! I will close with one more prophecy, though, and that out of Zechariah. Let's turn to Zechariah 12:6,

6 In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem.

Now what is interesting about this prophecy is the fact that it is specifically talking about the current nation of Israel and the current city of Jerusalem. Consider the following:

1. This prophecy cannot be talking about wars in a pre 1948 Israel. Israel during the time talked of in this prophecy is ruled by governors and not a king or a prince. When the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity they were militarily weak and under the control of Persia, Greece, Syria, Egypt, and Rome. This prophecy could not refer to the Jews during 66 - 70 AD either, because it was the nation of Israel that was devoured and not those on their right hand or on their left.
2. This does not refer to wars during the Kingdom age either because all weapons of war will be destroyed and there will be a 1000 years of peace.
3. These could not refer to the time of Armageddon either, because at that time, only about a third of the Jews would still be alive and they will be in hiding in Petra at that time.

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4. These wars, therefore, have to occur between 1948 and the time of Jesus' return. Several of these wars have already occurred just as Zechariah foretold.

Three wars stand out in particular. The **War of 1948**, **1967 Six-Day War**, and the **Yom Kippur War** of 1973. These wars involved Egypt on the left and Syria and Jordan on the right. These enemies vastly superior armies were soundly defeated by the tiny nation of Israel.

The day after David Ben Gurion declared Israel to be an independent nation on May 14, 1948, Egyptian airplanes bombed Tel Aviv. Within that same week Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq combined to take over the cities of the north and in the Galilee area. Arab militants armed by England came across the Jordan to Jericho to occupy Bethlehem and Jerusalem. At the same time, a large Egyptian army moved across the Sinai to occupy Gaza and take Tel Aviv. Within six months, these mighty armies lost their battle against a much smaller Israeli army. Even the US believed Israel would be destroyed within hours of the onslaught. General George Marshall is that man who thought that within 72 hours Israel would be no more. Miraculously Israel defeated her foes.

After periods of terrorist type attacks during the 1950's and '60's, things came to a blow in 1967. Russia heavily armed the Arab nations from Morocco to Iraq and goaded the Arab alliance to destroy Israel in a final gigantic war. Forces from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Algeria, and Lebanon all combined to war against Israel on May 30, 1967. Six days later on June 4, 1967, Israel defeated all these forces. Israel recalled the prophecy of Zechariah that in that day the weakest Jew could be stronger than King David.

One would think that after these two wars and the humiliation of these mighty armies being soundly defeated by a much smaller Israel would just give up. Not so. The Arab mindset is they may lose 99 battles, but if they win the 100th they are the victors. It was this mindset that allowed the Arab coalition to once again arm itself with the help of Russia, once again, so that it could destroy Israel. The tactics of the attack to come was carefully planned out. Surely the Arabs would win out this time. This battle came on October 6, 1973, and was called the Yom Kippur War. The thinking was the attack would be on the Jews most holy day. A day that no Jew was allowed to work. It was reported none of the Jews were even watching TV. This attack did come as a surprise. Egypt and Syria attacked Israel on this day with one thousand airplanes, four thousand tanks, and eight hundred thousand men. Israel was caught by surprise as most of their army was on leave at the time. However, when Israel gathered her forces together, she was only able to muster up five hundred planes, seventeen hundred tanks, and three hundred thousand soldiers. It took only two weeks for Israel to destroy her enemies. Israel could have taken Damascus and Cairo at will, but because Russia threatened nuclear war an armistice was signed. Add to that one of our lamest presidents on record, Jimmy Carter, in 1978, garnered a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt that included Egypt regaining control of the Sinai.

Well, there is a lot more involved even in these wars, but it points out the fact of the truth of Zechariah's prophecy that Israel would be regathered and would "devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem."

I pray and hope this introduction to the last days will prompt you to do your own study of this time. There are so many prophecies we did not cover due to time. It is a study that will richly bless you as you see the prophecies of God that have come to pass already of these last days. With this knowledge you will then have the assurance that what God has said will come to pass. It only helps to develop our faith in Him. We know that we can look up for our redemption draweth nigh!