

Certainties During Uncertain Times (Pandemics, Persecutions, Perilous Times)

Pastor Kelly Sensenig

When Henry Drummond the great scientist and lecturer of Glasgow University, Scotland was forty-six years of age, he was found to be dying of a mysterious disease. Weary of the jungle philosophy of evolution and tired of rattling the dried bones of dead monkeys as a means of finding the origin of life, he said to Sir William Dawson, a scientist and a devoted Christian, "I am going back to the Bible to believe it as I once did. I can no longer live in uncertainty." He did go back and his days of intellectual wandering and weariness were over.

Drummond was talking about the evolutionary uncertainty about the origins of life but found in the Bible the certainty of the origin of human life which came from God the creator. This account teaches us something important for Christians today. It reminds us that we need to remain settled and grounded in the Biblical certainties and Scriptural revelation that we already possess and hold dear to our hearts. Especially in times like these.

“In times like these you need a Savior,
In times like these you need an anchor;
Be very sure, be very sure,
Your anchor holds and grips the Solid Rock!”



Friends, in our present times, we need to fall back on Biblical certainties and remain committed to traveling the straight and narrow road that reflects Biblical revelation and truth. For such a time as this, and in times like these, we need to be certain and sure about what the Bible teaches, cling to it tenaciously, “hold fast” (Rev. 2:25; 3:3) until Jesus returns and don’t back down from our unwavering stand for Jesus Christ.

I've entitled this study, "Certainties During Uncertain Times." I think we need a study such as this during the difficult days in which we are living. We need to cling to what we know is right and unchanging because we definitely are living in uncertain times. We are uncertain about the direction of America, unsure about what is happening all around us, uncertain about our future securities and freedoms which we have been blessed with, and unsure about what the future holds for us personally. There may be other uncertainties related to our Christian lives as well, our health, our finances, our job, and other personal things related to our daily living. How do we deal with life's uncertainties? How do we deal with pandemics, persecutions, perilous times and other personal problems that come into our lives?

Our focus in this study is going to be centered primarily upon the uncertainty of our freedoms, the future of America, the socialist and marxist (communist) agenda which is continually threatening to overtake our country, and how we as Christians need to view all of these things and deal with them from a Biblical and spiritual perspective. There will be applications from various Scriptures that pertain to all the uncertainties we face in life but in light of the times we must focus on the uncertainty of what lies ahead for America, Bible-believing Christians, churches, our constitutional freedoms, the fallout of persecution, economic hardships and other related uncertainties related to a marxist takeover of society.

In the midst of all this uncertainty, we can live with a Biblical world view and understanding of what is going to occur during the Last Days, what we might experience and the world could look like as the End Times (Tribulation Period) gets closer, and how we as Christians can deal with the changing landscape within our world, society, country, and live victoriously "in the midst of a crooked (untoward) and perverse (corrupt) nation" (Phil. 2:15). Perhaps the simplest and yet profound way to keep our spiritual sanity in the midst of all the changes occurring around us can be summed up in the words of the hymn writer who wrote these lovely words long ago:

"Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away.
Change and decay in all around I see.
O thou who changest not, abide with me."

In short, we must walk with God (Gen. 6:9). We must stay close to God (James 4:8) and experience His sufficiency or complete spiritual provision in our daily lives (2 Cor. 3:5).

Here is our main point. Christians can possess CERTAINTY during UNCERTAIN times.

There are four certainties we must maintain during uncertain times.

I. Our righteous mandate to obey God

In today's virus and political environment, the socialists of this country are beginning to use the virus epidemic as a means to attack the local churches and keep them from meeting. This is becoming more common place today. Places like California have banned inside church meetings and they are forcing the churches outside their regularly scheduled meetings.

As I write, John MacArthur's Grace Community Church in California has been under attack for holding church services as normal. The governor and authorities are threatening to cut off the electricity from the church and who knows what else the leftist socialists of this country will try to do in the name of virus protection. Folks, this is not about the virus. It's about control. It's about winning a presidential election by cheating, lying, scaring people, and keeping our economy down. It's about changing our country into a socialist nightmare.

These people like Governor Newsome of California are called progressives. Let me tell you who the progressives really are. Progressives are the illegitimate children of marxism. In other words, they are nothing more than followers of Karl Marx (they are control freaks!). Today they are openly trying to control the local churches. This left-wing lunatic has also tried to ban in-home Bible studies.

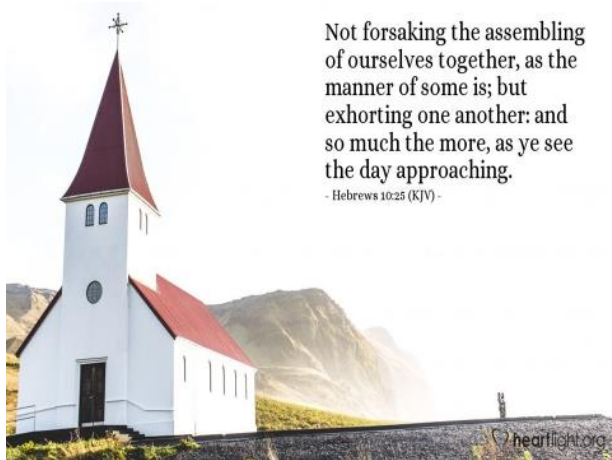
Governor Newsome of California



There is great hypocrisy with these liberal governors. It's okay for thousands upon thousands to walk the streets, protest, loot, attempting to burn down government

buildings night after night, but it's not okay for God's people to meet together on Sunday. This is a travesty and attack upon our freedoms and rights as God's people. The leftist tyrants will keep abortion centers open, casinos open, and allow the Black Lives Matter marxists to destroy our statues and society but they don't want the churches to remain open.

Let me share with you what God and His Word says about the church meeting together.



Hebrews 10:25

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

THIS IS OUR MANDATE!

When the Bible says “the day is approaching” it is referring to the imminent and impending Rapture of the Church. Folks, the countdown is getting closer every day! The fact that it “is approaching” (at hand) is a statement of faith that means we should continue to believe that the Rapture is going to happen someday. Perhaps today! This is a statement of fact that is expressing faith in the imminent return of Christ – that it could happen at any moment! It is impending and imminent and our faith says, “it is approaching.” The early church used to also say, “Maranatha” (1 Cor. 16:22).

2 Thessalonians 2:2

“That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand” (approaching).

Philippians 4:5

“Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord *is* at hand.”

1 Peter 4:7

“But the end of all things is at hand (approaching – same word as in Hebrews 10:25): be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.”

Revelation 1:3 and 22:10 add, “the time is at hand.” We can believe every day, as we lift up our eyes heavenward, that Jesus is going to return for His Church. We know it’s at hand for the Bible says the Rapture could take place at any moment. We don’t need to look for signs and changing times, we simply know it’s going to happen for God told us it will happen. That is good enough for me! We must see it with the eyes of faith! We must “look for the Saviour” (Phil. 3:20).

“It could happen in a moment! In the twinkling of an eye!
It could happen in a moment he could split the eastern sky.
Though our hearts will feel unworthy yea how happy we will be.
When the saviour comes from Heaven when his blessed face we'll see!
I am listening every moment,
For the mighty trumpet sound, what a time we'll have together
When the saints will leave the ground!
All our toiling will be over! All our sorrow and its pain!
It could happen in a moment Jesus Christ could come again!”

The writer of Hebrews teaches us that we should keep meeting together (“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together”) in view of the imminent Rapture of the Church. There is a connection between the two and the connection is this. We must maintain our spiritual edge, stay in the Word, and keep obeying the Lord until He returns. Why? It’s because we want to be found obeying Him, living for Him, and doing what is right when Jesus returns! This is God’s command given to New Testament saints – it’s not a suggestion. This is our righteous mandate to follow!

Here is some practical advice:

“When a Christian keeps missing church meetings they eventually don’t miss church meetings.”



There's no way around it. Life can be uncertain and scary at times, even as we pass through this corona virus pandemic. But God still commands us to meet together for He knows the importance of gathering together to feed upon the Scriptures and experience

the fellowship of the saints. There is strength in numbers. We need to keep walking by faith and not fear (Ps. 27:1; 46:1-2; 2 Tim. 1:7) during this pandemic and be careful that we do not fall into the mold and trap of "forsaking" or abandoning God's House. God works in amazing ways during these uncertain times, to minister to fearful hearts, but Satan is also at work. Let us be sober and vigilant and not succumb to Satan's allurements and distractions (1 Pet. 5:8).

Our church gatherings are a time when we exhort one another, learn God's Word, grow, worship together, and experience our togetherness in Christ. Any church will eventually collapse when the people stop meeting together on a long term basis. Satan knows this. We cannot give him the victory. This is the practical side of Hebrews 10:25. We must see through the Devil's schemes to defeat the church through suffering, hardship, and persecution (Eph. 6:11). God does not get the glory when His saints are continually scared to meet together. Although there must be much understanding extended toward all the saints during this pandemic crisis (Col. 3:12), particularly toward those who are more vulnerable, there cannot be ongoing and wholesale isolation of the saints from Church. This becomes a way Satan can eventually take down a once fruitful church ministry.

Here is our main point. When socialist government officials restrict church attendance to a certain number, they attempt to impose a restriction that makes it impossible for the saints to gather as the church is commanded in Hebrews 10:25. Here is something else to consider. When



government officials prohibit singing in worship services, they attempt to impose a restriction that makes it impossible for the people of God to obey the commands of Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. We are to sing and worship together.

Colossians 3:16 states:

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

We cannot sing together if we cannot meet together! Yes, some of these crazy socialist governors have also banned singing among the Christian meetings! But singing and worshipping together is our righteous mandate. God places a high priority not only upon the corporate teaching and preaching of God’s Word (2 Tim. 4:2) but also singing together in worship as we reflect upon the teachings and promises of God’s Word.

Who are we going to obey – God or man? Friends, here is the point. We must first and foremost submit to our Lord and Biblical mandates – not the government. The commands of Christ which He has given to us must override lunatic governors. These are liberal governors who will let people riot and harm the police, but who will not let God’s people meet together in churches, or allow the saints to meet while imposing strict guidelines upon them and making it extremely difficult if not impossible to conduct their gathered times of worship. Enough of the church police!

In Acts 2:42 we see the early churches fellowship and gathering:

“And they continued stedfastly (true commitment) in the apostles’ doctrine (teaching) and fellowship (togetherness), and in breaking of bread (testimony of Christ’s death), and in prayers” (talking to God).

This verse echoes the same truth of not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. The word “stedfastly” means we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together! God did not say stop meeting for one or two years until a virus passes. He did not say stop meeting to please a socialist, left-wing governor, a modern-day type of Caesar who hates God and Christianity. We must keep meeting as God’s people and not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. We cannot allow hard times and socialist agendas to stop us from our gathered meetings. Those who live in hardline communist countries are actually meeting secretly out of fear for what the communists will do to them, if they are found worshipping God

and studying the Bible together. This is very sad but communism's goal is to silence other religions and promote atheism, which actually is their own religion.

Here is the point. God knows the lifeline of the church is found in its gatherings (sacred meetings), when the church comes together to learn the Scriptures, fellowship, worship, and experience their oneness in Christ. But Satan knows this as well and the Devil will use people like Newsome and other liberal, socialist governors to ban the meeting of the saints, or either make it next to impossible to meet because of strict guidelines. And if you think these types of church restrictions are going to stop in California, then you are only kidding yourself.

These philosophically debunked socialist governors are like piranha's that feed off the same marxist philosophies and they follow each other's patterns to silence people and keep them under their control whether it has to do with controlling the churches, the schools, or other meeting places. This is not an overstatement. It is not conspiracy preaching. If Biden gets in as our president along with His communistic cabinet, they are coming for our churches, our guns, our God, our freedoms, our democracy and republic. They are already censoring almost everything on the Internet that is conservative and which they disagree with.



Sadly, our left-wing secular colleges have abandoned free speech and persecute conservatives and Christians on campus. This is what marxist societies do. The leaders and perpetrators within a marxist movement want to control everything and this includes controlling the free speech and daily living of people. "Comply or suffer the consequences." "Obey or we are coming after you." "Get with us or get out of the way."



Many are crying for tolerance today but what they really want is tolerance for their marxists views while at the same time expressing intolerance for any other view of free speech, societal norms, religious liberty, and protective governmental restraints and authority.

When getting in their way, the anarchists, treasonous and tyrannical leaders and groups seek to ignore and override facts and history, change the understanding of normal speech or language to advance their agenda, “call evil good, and good evil” (Isaiah 5:20), and accuse others of the very things they are doing (anarchy). They must turn the truth and societal norms upside down to bring in their false, utopian world system.

Again, this is not some kind of conspiracy theory. These “cancel culture” marxists are wicked people who want to change America totally and forever by taking away our beloved freedoms and the right to worship God when and how we please. Of course, marxism has always had a disdain and hatred for Christianity. The persecution of Christianity in America is on the rise and will get worse if the socialists/marxists get in power. You can be sure about this. This is because the marxist philosophy is atheistic and believes that a utopian earth is a world without God, Christianity, religion, and rich people through the banishment of societal norms and the equal distribution of wealth.

Jesus forewarned in John 15:20:

“Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.”

Paul warned Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:12:

“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

What is the church mandate during uncertain times? Here it is! Do not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. The word “forsake” (Heb. 10:25) means to abandon the church meetings and no longer participate with them. Christians, if we allow the liberal governors to get a hold of our churches and dictate *when* we can meet together, *how* we can meet together, of *if* we can meet together, then we are headed for a lot of trouble. We are headed toward an unprecedented overreach and power grab like this country has never seen or experienced before.

Let’s not bury our heads in the sand and believe that liberal and left-wing governors are actually concerned about the spread of the virus when they want to shut down

church meetings. Folks, they are coming for our churches! They want us bound to the state and Big Brother! Don't fool yourself. They show exactly WHO they are by WHAT they are saying and doing to churches. Let me give you some good advice: Never trust a marxist or communist!



We can be sure that Jesus Christ is Lord over all! He is Lord over the liberals, Lord over the socialists, Lord over communism, Lord over marxism, He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev. 19:16). This means that He is more powerful and possesses full authority over any person or system on earth. It also means that our righteous mandate is to

obey the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ! He is our personal Lord – not the liberal governors, swamp people, and marxists in Washington which are pushing their agenda in our country and who want to subvert our liberties to live and worship God as we please. “And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God” (John 20:28).

“He is Lord, He is Lord
He has risen from the dead
And He is Lord.”

Folks, Jesus Christ is Head of the Church – not the tyrannical marxists who are trying to lord it over our local churches. Using a metaphor of the human body, the Bible pictures Jesus Christ as being the HEAD (leader) over His Body (the Church) which shares a living union with Him.

Ephesians 1:22

“And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church.”



Ephesians 5:23

“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.”

Colossians 1:18

“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence.”

Jesus Christ is the Head of the church - not left-winged tyrants, liberal governors, socialists, or any other person. We must follow our Leader and Head who is Jesus Christ, keep meeting together, and not allow socialism to take the place of our spiritual leader – Jesus Christ. We are not to yield our spiritual authority to the secular government but only to Jesus Christ! He is our Lord and Savior! He is our Head. We must keep looking unto Jesus (Heb. 12:2) in times like these, being encouraged by His example, remaining obedient to His Word, and submitting to His authority and lordship over our lives.

Generally speaking, most churches tried to accommodate the initial pandemic crisis in various ways. Most churches wanted to show that they truly cared about others. When the lockdown began, it was supposed to be a short-term measure with the goal to “flatten the curve.” This means that health experts wanted to slow the rate of infection to ensure that hospitals weren't overwhelmed. On top of this, there were horrific projections of death. We were told that several million people could potentially die from this pandemic. In light of these factors, we (Berean Bible Church) supported the shutdown measures, voluntarily complied to some of the mandates of the state, and observed some of the guidelines that were issued for churches. However, when temporarily shutting down the weekly meetings, the elders at the Berean Bible Church did not submit or yield the church's spiritual authority to the local government. We could NEVER do this for Jesus Christ is our Head and His Word is our guide, faith, and practice!

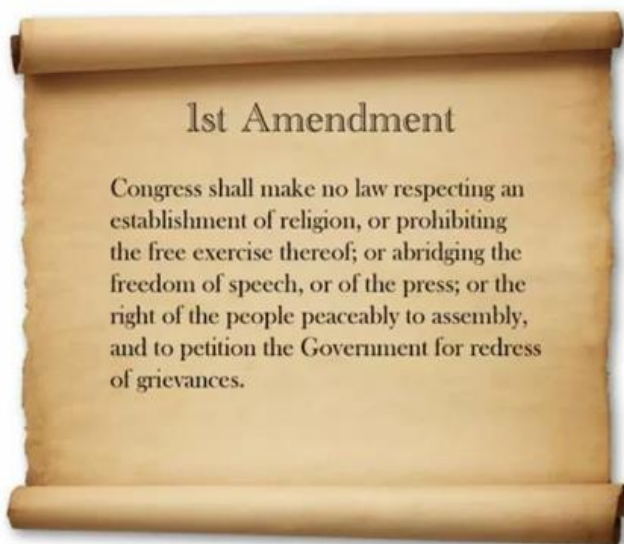
John MacArthur concluded this when initially complying with the government mandate: “In doing this, we did not yield our spiritual authority to the secular government. This was a voluntary compliance that always was subject to change if the restrictions dragged on beyond the stated goal, or politicians unduly intruded

into church affairs, or if health officials added restrictions that would attempt to undermine the church's mission. We made every decision with our own burden of responsibility in mind. We simply took the early opportunity to support the concerns of health officials and accommodate the same concerns among our church members, out of a desire to act in an abundance of care and reasonableness."

Philippians 4:5 says:

"Let your moderation (gentleness and kindness) be known unto all men."

All of us wanted to do our part. But enough is enough! The socialists have hijacked this virus and gone way too far! We understand much better whom we need to protect and how to protect them. No church should have to fall down to a government-imposed moratorium or prohibition that perpetually stops their churches from meeting. It is a sad day in American history when certain governors are demanding churches to be shut down!



A governmental edict to limit or shut down our church meetings is not only a violation of our American Constitution, even more importantly, it would result in the church violating God's Word! In short, we would disobey our Lord's clear commands if we begin to succumb to any government edict to shut down our local churches and no longer meet with one another. The church in our country has a Christian Constitution

(the Bible) and also the American Constitution (1st amendment) which they adhere to for the right to freely meet together without government-imposed intervention, limitations, and harassment.

If the churches give in to the commands of communists, do you think they are going to give us a break later on? I don't think so. Once they have their paws on the church

they won't remove them. God has called us to follow our Biblical mandate which is to continue meeting together as God's people and not adhere to the mandates of men which override the pattern of Biblical authority and truth. We should not listen to those who want to police the church by restricting its worship services, the preaching of the Gospel, the teaching of God's eternal Word, and the fellowship of the saints.

Of course, there are legitimate times when we must obey the government as Christians. There are two passages in Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 which speak about obeying the laws of government. Let me share one of them with you.

Romans 13:1-2

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" (judgment from the government ordained by God).

The Bible clearly teaches that when government authorities do not attempt to assert their authority over the church or issue orders that forbid our obedience to God's law, their authority is to be obeyed, whether we agree with their rulings or not. The Biblical instruction given in Romans 13 must be followed by individual Christians. We are to obey our civil authorities as powers that God Himself has ordained. We must obey them when they do not interfere with our obedience to God's Word and Jesus Christ, the Head and Leader of the Church.

We must remember that God has established the institutions of the family, the church, and government. These are Biblical institutions within human society.

John MacArthur was right when he stated:

"Each institution has a sphere of authority with jurisdictional limits that must be respected. For instance, a father's authority is limited to his own family. Church leaders' authority (which is delegated to them by Christ) is limited to church matters. And the government is specifically tasked with the oversight and protection of civic peace and well-being within the boundaries of a nation or community.

“God has not granted civic rulers authority over the doctrine, practice, or polity of the church. The biblical framework limits the authority of each institution to its specific jurisdiction. The church does not have the right to meddle in the affairs of individual families and ignore parental authority. Parents do not have authority to manage civil matters while circumventing government officials. And similarly, government officials have no right to interfere in ecclesiastical matters in a way that undermines or disregards the God-given authority of pastors and elders.

“Pastors’ ability to shepherd their flocks has been severely curtailed. The unity and influence of the church has been threatened. Opportunities for believers to serve and minister to one another have been missed. And the suffering of Christians who are troubled, fearful, distressed, infirm, or otherwise in urgent need of fellowship and encouragement has been magnified beyond anything that could reasonably be considered just or necessary. Major public events that were planned for 2021 are already being canceled, signaling that officials are preparing to keep restrictions in place into next year and beyond. That forces churches to choose between the clear command of our Lord and the government officials. Therefore, following the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, we gladly choose to obey Him.”

The apostles were commanded to stop preaching in Jesus’ name but they chose to obey God over the religious authorities of that day.

Acts 5:27-29 gives us the Biblical account:

“And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council: and the high priest asked them, Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? (notice he hated Jesus so much that he did not mention Jesus’ name) and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.”

The religious leaders did not want the apostles preaching in the name of Jesus whose name the high priest avoided mentioning! Why? It’s because people hate the name of Jesus! But for the Christian we can say:

“Jesus is the sweetest name I know,
And He's just the same as His lovely name,
That's the reason why I love Him so;
For Jesus is the sweetest name I know.”

The religious leaders were commanding the apostles to not preach in Jesus’ name. Well, the apostles effectively said: “Not so, no deal, we are going to obey God rather than your manmade dogmas.” There comes a time when the church must obey God over governmental edicts and this occurs when man’s rulings are in conflict with God’s rulings. When governmental authorities tell us to limit or suspend church meetings indefinitely, the pastors must respectfully inform their civic leaders (the liberal governors) that they have exceeded their legitimate area of jurisdiction and let them know that we will not obey man over God!



We must also remember that we live in a unique governmental system which consists of a constitutional republic where elected officials represent the people according to the rule of law under a constitution. The Bill of Rights consists of 10 amendments that explicitly

guarantee certain rights and protections to US citizens by limiting the power of the federal government. This means that the rulers within our governmental system must also follow the constitution. They live under and are bound to the legal document of our constitution and have limits on the realm of their authority over the lives of people. When they defy the clearly stated laws of our country and constitution, we also have the right to not obey them.

Someone said this about obeying the government:

“If it’s silly, uncomfortable, even just plain dumb, obey the governmental authority. If it’s illegal, unconstitutional, or unbiblical, obey God.”

I think this is basically the right approach! Of course, you can carry “being dumb” way too far! At one point, the governor of Michigan (a socialist tyrant woman) said that the people living in the state of Michigan could not even go fishing.

Here was the policy:

“Effective at midnight Friday, the use of motorized boats in Michigan will be prohibited per an Executive Order (EO) from the governor. This order extends to fishing from a boat with a gas or electric (trolling) motor affixed to it.”

The poor people of Michigan had to socially distance themselves from the fish. But don't worry. There is a solution for this. The fish can also wear masks!

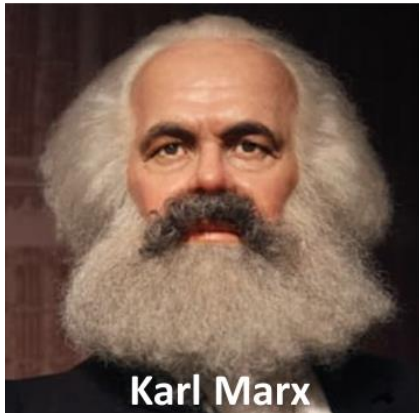


These crackpot governors are nothing more than lunatics and hypocrites “full of dead men's bones” as Jesus taught (Matt. 23:27), who crave to possess power over the lives of people. They are modern-day marxists who want to run our society like a marxist society, such as China, Cuba, or Venezuela. Of course, they claim that American Marxism is not the same as Cuban Marxism. Don't let them fool you! They have proven where and how far they will go if they are given the power to fulfill their dream of a socialist and communist manifesto!

There was a young Jewish boy who grew up in Germany many years ago. The lad had a profound sense of admiration for his father, who saw to it that the life of the family revolved around the religious practices of their faith. The father led them to the synagogue faithfully. In his teen years, however, the boy's family was forced to move to another town in Germany. This town had no synagogue, only a church. The life of the community revolved around this church and all the best people belonged to it. Suddenly, the father announced to the family that they were all going to abandon their Jewish traditions and join the church. When the stunned family asked why, the father explained that it would be good for his business.

The youngster was bewildered and confused. His deep disappointment soon gave way to anger and a kind of intense bitterness that plagued him throughout his life.

Later he left Germany and went to England to study. Each day found him at the British Museum formulating his ideas and composing a book. In that book ("The Communist Manifesto") he introduced a whole new world-view and conceived a movement that was designed to change the world.



He described religion as the "opium (drug) for the masses." This young man committed the people who followed him to a life without God. His atheist, non-capitalistic and utopian ideas became the norm for the governments of almost half the world's people. What was his name? It was Karl Marx, founder of Communism and the communist movement.

Socialism and communism are twin systems. The system of communism is more militant than socialism but the two are inseparably tied together. They are really two peas on the same pod and when taken to their fullest extent, they become a tyrant over the people religiously and economically. When the tracks are greased with marxist philosophy, it's only a matter of time until a country begins to slide into the same patterns and perils of full-blown marxism, communism, and socialism. History demonstrates that totalitarianism happens quickly. The simplest way to overtake a country boils down to the fastest way to overtake a country. Do it speedily, as fast and as ruthlessly as possible. Do whatever you can as quickly as you can.

The ideology and iron fist of communism basically goes like this: corrupt the young people, suppress the people, create fear in their hearts, break the economic system and cause inflation and discontent among the masses, create disorder, question and destroy the people's faith in the leadership, cancel the previous culture of moral, ethics



and religion, get a hold of the media outlets and make them a propaganda machine, do away with freedom of speech, confiscate firearms leaving the

populace helpless, and then replace it with marxism, which is governmental control over wealth, health, culture, and the daily lives of people, suppressing their liberties and freedoms.

Communism & Anarchy

The attempt to control our wealth and lives



The Socialist Party of America was established in 1901. By this time, anarchism also established itself around the country which is part of the socialist or communist party. Anarchists are those who “despise government” (2 Pet. 2:10), including God’s authority and role over their lives. They seek “to change times and laws” (Dan. 7:25). Violence is the way they overtake society to create their utopian world. So this kind of tyrannical and anarchical behavior that we are seeing today is nothing new. It is certainly raising its ugly head in the past several months as these marxists maniacs are trying to overtake the governmental system (attempting to burn down the courthouses and government buildings), seeking to defund and destroy the police force, and cancel our culture and Christian history (burning Bibles!), so they can create a new utopian rule of alleged communistic dictatorship, power, and peace.



No logical person would want to live under the rigid systems of socialism or communism if they knew the real costs of these philosophies which were practiced in many nations over the past century. Whenever marxism or communism is instituted it denies free speech, a free press, and free assembly, the imprisonment and execution of those who oppose it, no free and open elections, no independent judiciary or rule of law, and the dictatorship of the Communist Party in all matters and on all occasions!

Communism is an atheistic system that is against God, against Christianity, against capitalism, against freedom, against the constitution, and seeks to control the lives of people religiously, economically, and socially. The communists in this country want to abolish the police, abolish prisons, and abolish the courts to create the communistic dawning of the Age of Aquarius which is when humans take control of the earth and bring the earth into its rightful destiny. Dearly beloved, only Jesus Christ can bring the earth to its correct destiny and will do so when He returns as the sovereign King to rule and reign over planet earth (Rev. 19:11-16; 20:1-3; Jer. 23:5).

Let's be clear about something. Communists want to control your thoughts, your schooling, your business, your family, your churches, your religious beliefs, your everything! Communism is an anti-God system that destroys freedom **WHENEVER** and **WHEREVER** it has been instituted – economic freedom, religious freedom, and personal freedoms. The socialists in government today are “softening up” our country and making it ripe for totalitarian takeover.

If you were asked, “How many victims of communism have there been?” You would probably hesitate and respond — “Five million? Twenty million? Fifty million?” Few of us would know the right answer: at least 100 million men, women, and children have lost their lives in order to obtain the utopian world of communism. Of course, it has been proven over and over again that there is no utopian world connected with communism, only death, destruction, misery, and persecution. Don't be fooled by this philosophy and system of Satan.

Colossians 2:8 reminds us:

“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy (human wisdom) and vain deceit (deceitfulness, deception, trickery, lying, etc.), after the tradition of men, after the rudiments (principles) of the world, and not after Christ.”

The sinister philosophy of communism is actually a pseudo-religion grounded in pseudo-science and enforced by political tyranny. Socialism has been compared to a god that failed, a science that never was, a political system that is only fit for the ash heap of history.

1 Timothy 6:20 gives this timely warning:

“O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane (wicked, godless, heathen) *and* vain babblings (empty sounding, fruitless talk and discussion), and oppositions of science (in conflict and contradiction with true knowledge) falsely so called.”

Paul is warning about false (pseudo) knowledge – theories of evolution, existentialism, hedonism, socialism, marxism, and such like. Our righteous mandate is to obey God and not the pseudo and sinister twin systems of socialism and communism which steal away the freedoms of people and replace them with marxist ideologies. The quack theories of socialism and communism involve the vision to create a utopian society through equal distribution of wealth (common ownership) and eliminating all religion in society, while enforcing this atheistic ideology through militancy. Folks, this is not a true knowledge, it’s knowledge that originates from hell. It’s a way of thinking that has proven itself to be devilish in its origins (James 3:15) and detrimental to human societies all over the world.

My prayer is that God might deliver America from the evils of societal socialism, the kind of communistic socialism that controls the lives of people, dictates to them how to live, promising them a FALSE freedom, while at the same time binding the masses of people, through anarchy, to a system that is anti-god, anti-Christian, anti-capitalism and anti-American.



PRAYER: “Dear Heavenly Father, in Your wise providence and in accordance with Your purpose of the ages, I pray, along with millions of other Christians, that you might deliver this nation from the evils of socialism and marxism, and that America could realign itself to its spiritual heritage and not be overtaken by evil leaders who promote atheism, who are haters of God and Christianity. I pray that you might not allow our country, after several hundred years of independence, to spiral out of control economically, socially, politically, and religiously. I pray for strong leaders to rise up and protect our freedoms and allow us to maintain the liberties that our founders gave us and so many Americans have lost their lives protecting. I pray this in Jesus’ name, Amen.”



In the frigid waters around Greenland are countless icebergs, some little and some gigantic. If you would observe them carefully, you'd notice that sometimes the small icebergs move in one direction while their massive counterparts flow in another. Why does this happen? The explanation is simple. Surface winds drive the little ones, but the huge masses of ice are carried along by deep ocean currents.

There is a lesson to learn from these floating icebergs. When we face trials and tragedies, it's helpful to see our lives as being subject to two forces--surface winds and ocean currents. The winds represent everything that on the surface is changeable, unpredictable, and distressing.

But the ocean currents represent the undercurrent of God's sovereign purposes coming to pass in our lives. You see, operating simultaneously with these gusts and gales is another force that's even more powerful. It is the sure movement of God's wise and sovereign purposes, the undercurrent of God's providence, and the deep flow of His unchanging purpose, plan, character, love, and provision for our lives.

The next part of our study touches upon the sovereignty of God and His eternal purposes and plans.

II. Our response to the sovereignty of God

What if socialism wins out during this next election and evil takes the upper hand in this country in a greater way? What should our response be if the left-wing marxists take control of our country in a greater way? In the coming elections many of our freedoms are at stake and the real possibility exists of Americans losing their beloved republic ("we the people"). How should we react if the next president, vice-president, and set of leaders in this nation actually override our constitution,

the founder's vision, and eliminate many of our freedoms this country has enjoyed for several hundred years?

Of course, we would naturally be very saddened to see America lose its original governmental structure and purpose. We would be saddened to see our religious freedoms, rights, and liberties vanish away after being able to freely express ourselves in this country and be a voice of reason. We would be saddened when realizing that our children and grandchildren would not grow up in a republic and experience the freedoms we once had and enjoyed for centuries in this country, where the voice of the people could be heard and the message of freedom (free speech, free religious expression, free enterprise, free decisions on how to live) could no longer be experienced. What if these precious treasures were taken away from us or severely diminished as a result of a hijacked election or because people have been indoctrinated by the evils of communism and actually think marxism will serve our nation better?

Our response and reaction to unexpected outcomes and hard times moving forward in America should be one of surrender to God's sovereignty and acceptance of God's providential ways. Even when those ways involve the evil and wicked plans of man. I must admit that marxist philosophy taking hold on this country would be a hard pill for many Americans to swallow, but at the same time, God's sovereignty and providence is also a soft pillow upon which we can rest our heads, knowing that an all-wise God is moving everything, every event, every change, and every country according to His overall plan and purpose of the ages.

The words sovereignty and providence are not found in the Bible like the words Trinity, discipleship, Rapture, evangelism, and many other words. However, the inspired words of the Bible reveal these truths to us, including the twin teachings and aspects about God and His ways – His sovereignty and providence over all things.

Definition: God's sovereignty is His right and power to do all that He decides to do. It speaks of His supreme ruling, authority, and control of all things that occur in the universe.



Psalm 115:3

“But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”

Someone said:

“You are not God, get over it!”

God is the superpower of the universe and He does whatever pleases Him. This verse speaks of His sovereignty, his supreme power and right to do whatever He pleases in the universe, without America, and with you personally.

God does WHATEVER He wants to do, WHEREVER He wants to do it, WHENEVER He wants to do it, with WHOMSOEVER He wants to do it. The scope of God’s sovereignty includes the things that occur in your own personal life and also the country of America, along with all the events that transpire in this world and universe. Nothing is outside the boundaries of God’s sovereignty and supreme rule.

Psalm 103:19

“The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.”

The expression “his throne” speaks of the place where God rules from and carries out His sovereign plan or supreme will. The next expression “his kingdom” refers to God’s universal (macrocosmic) rule and dominion over the events of the entire universe. It points to God’s sovereign rule over the events of time and eternity. Nothing occurs outside the scope of God’s sovereignty which includes the covid 19 (China virus) pandemic, your own personal trials, and America’s foundation and future. All of it, everything happens, not by chance, but according to God’s sovereignty (His supreme rule and will over all events of all time and in all places and with all people).

If you think we will lose our freedoms in this country by chance and fate, then you don’t know who God is! God does not work by chance or luck but by ruling and overruling everything by His supreme rule, will, power, and authority. This would include every event of our personal lives, every event in our country, and every event in the entire universe down to every sparrow that falls on the ground dead.

Jesus said something in Matthew 10:29 that is rather striking:

“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father” (without His plan and approval).

God’s sovereignty and decree extends to every little event taking place on earth. His plans and purposes are intricately woven into every event that we face in life. This is seen in what Jesus taught about the sparrow.



As someone once said,
“God attends the funeral of every sparrow.”

This is because He ordained the end from the beginning and was there when the end came. He purposed it this way. In other words, the Father has planned it all – even the death of one sparrow that a young boy shot with his new BB gun. We will never find closure and rest for what occurs around us and what happens to us until we understand that God is sovereign, ordaining, allowing, ruling over, and bringing every event to pass in this world, which includes the events associated with our personal lives and also with the direction of America.

Listen folks, things don’t happen by luck or chance – they happen according to God’s sovereignty, according to His supreme purpose and will which He has ordained to come to pass. God’s sovereignty (His plans and purposes) is constantly being played out in relation to our marriage, country, health, wealth, and everything connected with our personal lives and in the universe (hurricanes, earthquakes, financial collapse, tyrants ruling nations, evil getting the upper hand, sickness, birth defects, etc.). Nothing occurs outside the sovereign and guiding hand of God’s sovereignty.

Exodus 4:11 is revealing:

“And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb (mental disorders), or deaf (hearing disorders), or the seeing, or the blind? (visions disorders) have not I the LORD?”

The Bible says God is directly responsible for allowing these things to occur in the womb of a mother. This means that God (not Satan and demons) in His sovereignty, according to His supreme rule and purposes, allows physical deformities, Down Syndrome, Spina Bifida, deafness, blindness, or mental limitations to occur within the womb, while the baby is being formed by God the Creator. Many times God does not choose to reverse these disorders from the womb, but He can if He so desires. What we discover is that from the womb (Psalm 139) God sovereignty is witnessed, allowing birth defects to occur in connection with the lives of infants who enter a fallen world of sin with all of its defects and deficiencies.

Our faith must rest in the supreme will and ordaining purposes of God or else we will become very distraught and fail to see the bigger picture and the things God wants to do with our personal lives, the lives of others, and what He chooses to do among the nations of the world, including America, as we approach the End Times. God has a sovereign plan that is always coming to pass and we must learn to accept it by faith and rest in it.

Again, “and one of them (a sparrow) shall not fall on the ground without your Father” (without God’s plan and approval). This means that the Father has planned it all! He has planned the events associated with our personal lives and on a much bigger scale He has also purposed the birth of America as well as the possible demise of America. The Father’s plan will come to pass! We can be sure about this.

“What tho’ the way be lonely,
And dark the shadows fall;
I know where’er it leadeth,
My Father planned it all.

The sun may shine tomorrow,
The shadows break and flee;
‘Twill be the way He chooses,—
The Father’s plan for me.

He guides my halting footsteps
Along the weary way,
For well He knows the pathway
Will lead to endless day.

A day of light and gladness
On which no shade will fall;
'Tis this at last awaits me—
My Father planned it all.

I sing thro' the shade and sunshine,
And trust Him whate'er befall;
His way is best—it leads to rest;
My Father planned it all.

The Father has in some sense ordained and planned everything to come to pass in our lives, even the suffering of godly people for Christ (John 15:18-20) to bring about His own beneficial purposes for His people (Prov. 3:11-12; Ps. 119:67, 71; Job 23:10; Rom. 8:28; 2 Cor. 4:15; James 1:2-4). In fact, as we have already mentioned, God's sovereignty (supreme purpose and will) also includes the suffering of "undeserving" people including infants and children (Exodus 4:11).

We must always remember that God's choice to accomplish His decrees in relation to a fallen world, evil, and suffering is perfectly just. We have no right to question God since whatever He does is in accord with His character.

Romans 9:20

"Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus?"



Romans 9 is not teaching fatalism and ignoring free will (the choices of man). It is teaching that God is moving everything and everyone according to His own plan and purpose. We must never forget that God is in charge of running the earth and universe! The divine Potter is God and the clay are people which have no right to complain to God about His eternal purposes coming to pass in their lives. In fact, their complaints are ludicrous in the ears of God as they promote their own fatalistic outlook on life and actually blame God for their personal actions, choices,

unbelief, and destiny. Although God is bringing His eternal purposes to pass, through His grand scheme and plan, He is not fatalistically overriding man's choices (Acts 2:23).

Here is the point. God in His sovereignty has in some sense ordained all the events that transpire in the lives of people which include those events which surround their lives, as they live among the nations and peoples of the world. The application of all of this to our lives cannot be dismissed. Do we really believe that every event connected with our own personal lives and the lives of our children and grandchildren are governed by the sovereignty of God? Do we really believe this and rest in God's sovereignty, His supreme will and purpose coming to pass for our own personal lives, our children, and also our nation? Romans chapter 9 reveals how God has historically favored nations over others (Israel over Egypt) and people (Moses over Pharaoh) and even certain people within the Jewish nation itself (Jacob over Esau) to bring about His sovereign and ordaining purposes (Rom. 9:13-17).

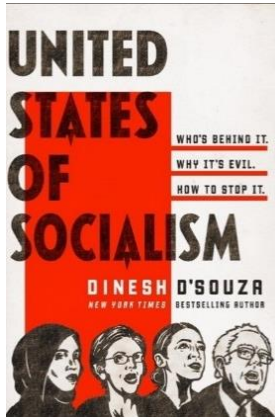
This reminds us that God is in the driver's seat and is taking America in the direction He has planned and purposed for this country. Whatever happens in the next election will be according to God's movement and direction among the nations. Whatever happens and however it happens (through cheating or a rigged election) will not be the result of chance or luck but according to God's planned purpose.

Daniel 2:20-21 speaks of this very thing:

"Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times (the direction and timing of earthly events) and the seasons (the distinction among nature): he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: (the destiny of nations and leaders) he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding."

We see that God according to His own sovereign and supreme will has ordained everything that occurs in the world. He determines historical changes in the world or when historical events will happen and how long each process or phase of history will last ("changeth the times"). He also controls the direction and destiny of nations by setting he sets up kings and deposing them. In other words, God is

ultimately in charge of who will be our next president. God does all of this according to a prearranged plan and purpose that He has designed and determined to come to pass. When we realize this and accept God's sovereign workings among the nations and leaders of this world, we can find some closure when things don't go the way we think they should or end the way we think they should.



A new book has recently been written called the "United States of Socialism." It has been a good selling book. Let's be honest. The very sound of this sends a chill up your spine. Imagine if we would turn into a quasi-socialist nation and the tentacles of marxism would begin to penetrate our society and remove the freedoms that millions of Americans have enjoyed, fought for, and lost their lives over. Imagine the crushing blow this would be for many Christians who be censured for speaking out against sin and unrighteousness and sharing the Gospel and

even meeting together in God's House. The marxists want to label speaking forth the truth about homosexuality, lesbianism, and transgenderism as "hate speech" and "hate crimes." They want to remove the church's tax-exempt status and begin to tighten their grip on what the church says, how the church meets, and begin to put the heavy hand of communism on the churches. This is because marxist communism is an atheistic movement and this is why they have been burning Bibles in our country.

Burning Bibles



What if America would be overrun by these types of lunatics and liars, the wicked weirdos of our day, who are given over to a reprobate or morally depraved mind (Rom. 1:28; 2 Tim. 3:8; Titus 1:16). How should we respond to a turn of events such as this? What Scripture can we turn to find solace and understanding of the rise of socialism in America?

Acts 15:18 gives us one answer:

"Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world."

The Bible repeatedly teaches that God is always at work within the world, in all events of all times, bringing about His ordaining purposes. The “works” (decrees) of God are known even before the world was created because God ordained them to be so and when they would occur. This again speaks to the sovereignty of God – His ordained and unfailing purposes as He rules the universe as the superpower of the universe. Again, God’s “works” refer to His decrees and the way they are fulfilled on earth. God’s decrees speak of His determined actions in relation to the universe, including all that comes to pass in it, both evil and good. In the Bible God’s decrees are called His “counsel” (Isa. 46:10, Ps. 33:11; Acts 2:23; Eph. 1:11; Heb. 6:17), “purpose” (Isa. 14:24-27; Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:11; 3:11), and “will” (Eph. 1:1, 5, 9, 11).

God’s Permissive Will

Remember that both God’s perfect (Rom. 12:2) and permissive will (decree) also falls under the category of His sovereignty (what He allows and ordains). The Bible teaches there is no change within God’s decrees and eternal purpose (Prov. 16:33; 1 Kings 22:34) even though some decrees are permissive in the sense that God indirectly allows or tolerates them to take place at the hands of wicked people in the midst of a fallen world.

Matthew 18:7 is an example of God’s permissive decrees:

“Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!”

In the context of abusing children (Matt. 18:6), Jesus taught that “it must needs be that offences come” (God’s sovereignty) while as the same time He taught about God’s judgment upon those who performed these wicked deeds which are allowed to occur in a world ridden by sinful depravity. Recently in the news we have been learning about what was called pedophile island (a sex trafficking island) where terrible things occurred with minors. Jesus said, “woe to that man by which the offence cometh!” (Matt. 18:7).

Introduction: In today’s political climate, unless you are wearing political, moral, and ethical blinders, you cannot be on the side of the LEFT who is trying to destroy

the foundational principles of our republic. One of the more deceptive and recent tricks of the LEFT is their desire to cancel our culture by remaking 1619 the foundation of our country – not 1776. Beginning this Fall, they are demanding the schools to teach propaganda to our children (kindergarten through high school) that our country was founded in 1619 with the first enslaved Africans in the Virginia colony, suggesting that this date represents the "nation's birth year," the original sin of slavery, and that American was not founded on freedom but to protect slavery. Yes, they want to reframe American history! These people are delusional and evil people. They are the same type of people who wanted to crucify Jesus Christ on the cross.

Acts 2:23 is another example of God's permissive decrees:

"Him (Christ), being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God (the sovereignty of God), ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (the sinister decisions of man).

We see that God decrees all things (sovereignty) but He is not directly responsible for all things (evil and man's choices). However, God has predetermined to use the evil departures of men to fulfill His greater purposes such as Christ's death upon the cross. For instance, God is not the direct author of sin and moral evil (Rom. 5:12), and those things that evil men do. God is not directly responsible for terrorist acts, pedophiles, communism, and other evil actions taking place in the world. God has His sovereign hand over all these events (Rev. 16:16) and maintains His sovereignty or control over everything that takes place in the world, but this does not make Him the instigator of evil actions.

James 1:13

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil (God has no dealings with evil), neither tempteth he any man" (God does not entice others to sin and become and instigator of sin).

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God"



This basically is teaching that God does not cause others to commit evil acts. But others commit

terrible acts of sins and these actions are known as the permissive decrees of God which take place in a fallen world of sin.

Now think about this. If the marxists get into power, according to Acts 2:23 they will do so by “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (His prearranged decree, plan and purpose). They won’t get in by accident!

All things, such as sin, disease, death, war, rape, abortion, child pornography and molestation, starvation, aids, floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, communism and totalitarianism, which claim the lives of untold millions of people, and which are looked upon as something evil and frightening to man, are all part of the permissive decrees of God. None of these things happen by chance but by the sovereignty of God (allowing them to occur in a sin-fallen world).

Isaiah 45:7 declares:

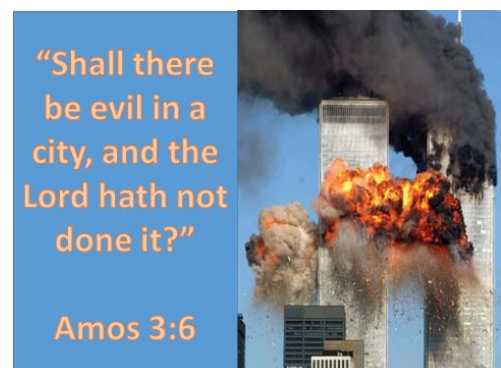
“I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace (peaceful relations between nations and people), and create evil (as it relates to war, bloodshed, and death between nations and other moral evils): I the LORD do all these *things*.”

The fact that God does these things means that He is in control of these events. They are the direct result of His sovereignty (His supreme rule and will over all things that occur in the universe). Of course, the Bible is not teaching here that God is directly responsible for evil occurring on earth. What He is said to “create” it means that He permits evil to occur and superintends it in relation to His sovereign rule over in the midst of a fallen society. God never causes moral evil (Isa. 48:11; Hab. 1:13; Mal. 3:6; Jam. 1:13) but in His decrees He has chosen to allow and even direct evil for His own glory (Exod. 14:8; 1 Sam. 2:25; Ps. 76:10).

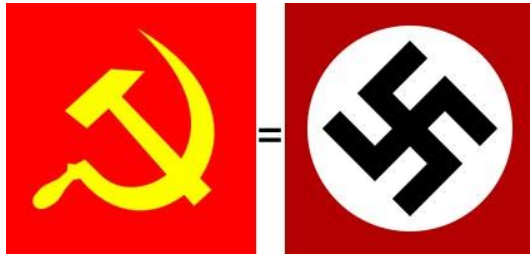
Amos 3:6 asks this question:

“Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?”

No disaster will come to a city or nation until the Lord has determined it to be so. But once His



decision is made – the outcome is unavoidable. Yes, God did it! In doing it, God orchestrated this event, allowing one group of people to invade another and cause death, misery, and destruction. Such was the case with 911 and so many other attacks upon innocent people which came from those who are evildoers. God can and does justly ordain calamity and adversity and sometimes He does this to judge a nation for its reprehensible sins.



What this means is that God is in control of all the evil and disastrous systems that are related to the fruits of sin (Gen. 3) such as the evils associated with terrorism, Nazism, socialism, Marxism, and communism. In other words, God is sovereign and therefore in some

sense controls every bad and evil event that occurs in this sinful world. This is because being sovereign, He allows those events to occur which He has originally prearranged and ordained to happen within the scope of a sinful and depraved world.

No, we cannot can't blame God for sin or socialism and all of the problems and miseries they bring with them (Hab. 1:13). We can't blame God for the terrorist attack on the United States and the recent surge of marxist madness occurring in our country. Ultimately we must blame man because man chooses to sin and reap the consequences of that sin in a fallen world where a sovereign God is working His purposes behind the scenes.



The sovereign God is simply orchestrating the events that occur in a fallen world of sin without being the instigator or directly responsible for the sinful acts and evil occurrences in the world. Although God allows people to sin, He is not the author of their sinning. Although God allows evil to occur, He is not responsible for it. All of the evil atrocities in the world are considered

“the acts of God” in the sense that He allows them to occur in a fallen world of sin. Beloved, God is still on the throne! His supreme will cannot be thwarted by the liars, lunatics, and loud-mouth politicians.

People will often blame God and ask questions like this: “Why did Obama become president? Why is He allowing marxists and anarchists to destroy our cities? Why would God ever allow communists to rule in America? How could He possibly allow our freedoms to be taken away?” The blame game goes on and on. The fact of the matter is this. It’s the sinful depravity of man that results in wickedness and vile acts of sin being committed against mankind. Man is reaping the fruits of his own doings. God did not create any evil in a direct sense (James 1:13) but He allows or permits it and orchestrates it within a sinfully depraved world.

Nobody can blame God. God is in one sense using man’s depravity and directing the evil actions of man to bring about His greater purposes. As we contemplate the supreme and sovereign will of God coming to pass in all the events of human history, man should stop blaming God and instead blame evil people for doing evil things (the Hitler’s, Nazis, communists, marxists, abortionists, anarchists, pedophiles). This is because God is merely allowing man to have his own way in a fallen world. God permits man to do his own wicked and dastardly deeds under His sovereign direction but He is not responsible for their actions (“ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain” - Acts 2:23).

William J. Wolfe has called Abraham Lincoln “one of the greatest theologians of America.” He added that Lincoln’s theology was profound, “not in the technical meaning of producing a system of doctrine, certainly not as the defender of some one denomination, but in the sense of seeing the hand of God intimately involved in the affairs of nations.”

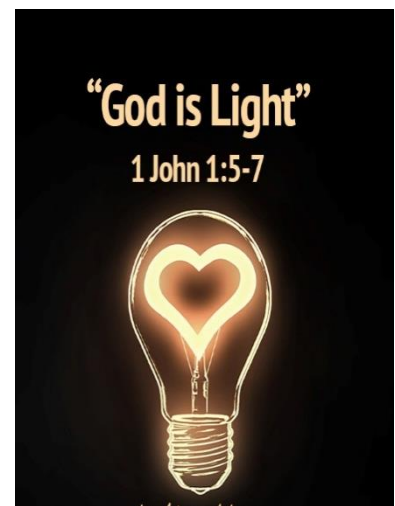
We need to remember this if we see the heavy hand of marxism bearing down on our country and when evil is overcoming good. God is in control (bringing about His sovereign and supreme purpose) even when He lets man have his evil way and when evil has the upper hand.

Psalm 76:10 says:

“Surely the wrath of man (anger and sinful hatred man expresses against God in His words and actions) shall praise thee (glorify God): the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain” (stop from occurring).

We see here the purpose for sin and evil. We also discover how God has His thumb on every event and situation that is happening. Sometimes He allows sin to raise its ugly head to glory Himself while at other times He suppresses it which also brings glory to God. My prayer for the coming election is that God will suppress the evil agenda of the liberals and marxists and that Americans would elect President Trump so we might in some measure “restrain” the downward slide of our country into the pit of marxism and put America on a different path that would lead to a loss of religious liberty, freedom of speech, and liberties which pertain to normal and everyday living.

Amazingly, Psalm 76:10 teaches that man’s expression of wrath and hatred against God actually glorifies Him for all the evil hatred and atrocities committed against God becomes like a large black piece of cloth, a backdrop of blackness and evil, which allows God’s impeccable purity, holiness, and light to shine and be clearly seen against this evil backdrop of sin. The blackness is seen to be terrible when compared to the purity of God’s holiness and God is actually glorified in His eternal being as His holiness shines above the evil in the world. The greater the darkness the brighter God’s holiness shines against the darkness and God is glorified!



Dearly beloved, we need to possess great faith and ongoing faith in God’s sovereign ways so we do not find ourselves complaining to God about what might happen to America if the socialist party overtakes our leadership. We must stop complaining and start resting in God’s sovereignty! Submit to it, whatever situation it might be, and do not allow ourselves to be troubled and filled with anxiety.

Illust. – I remember when a lovely Christian woman had a terrible accident. Her car veered off the road and plunged into a body of water. All of her children drowned. It was a very sad funeral but the minister talked about the sovereignty of God and as difficult and heartbreaking as it was how we needed to find rest not only in God’s peaceful provision but also His ordained purpose and plan.

God is sovereign which means He rules by possessing complete authority and absolute control over all things, even Satan (Job 1:11-2; 2:6), and fulfills His purposes on earth (Dan. 4:35). God's sovereign purposes relate to natural forces (Ps. 104; Job 38:4-38) and animals (Job 38:39-39:20; 40:15-41:34), His controlling the affair of nations (Dan. 4:25; Isa. 10:5-6; 2 Chron. 10:12-16), individuals (Isa. 44:28; Jer. 1:5. Prov. 16:9; 20:24; 21:1), and even the misfortunes of people (Gen. 39:1-2, 21-23; 45:7-8).

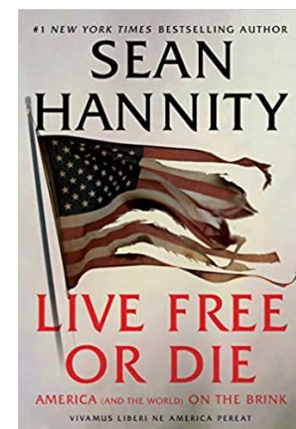
Daniel 4:35

“And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing (God's eternal greatness and majesty above all): and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven (God's sovereignty and supreme will above all), and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”

Once again, we need to stop grumbling against God – “What doest thou?” Why are you doing this God? As the story was told and retold on the House floor, Franklin was walking out of Independence Hall after the Constitutional Convention in 1787, when someone shouted out, “Doctor, what have we got? A republic or a monarchy?” To which Franklin supposedly responded, with a rejoinder at once witty and ominous: “A republic, if you can keep it.”

What if progressivism (the child of marxism) and the socialist gang take over the American way of life and we lose our republic as we once knew it? Are we going to get mad at God and say, “God, what are you doing? How can You let something like this happen?” If we come to these conclusions we are questioning God's sovereignty or supreme rule and purpose for our nation and America's place and role in the world during the End Times.

Sean Hannity has a new book he has written entitled “Live Free or Die.” It might also be termed “Liberty or Tyranny” depending on which way the election goes. The death of our freedoms and the America we once knew is somewhat of a looming reality in view of the recent socialist push in America. But the seeds have been sown for many years. We have allowed communist professors to teach our children in the



liberal universities. We have allowed communists to be hold governmental seats in Washington. How can someone sign that they believe in the constitution and still be a communist? What we are seeing today is the fruit from the root of communist teaching which tells young people to hate capitalism, American exceptionalism, and the Christian values of America.

How should we respond to all the socialist agendas which are being pushed on America and propogated in this country? Yes, I wholeheartedly agree that we should fight to maintain our liberties which include the freedom of speech to spread the Gospel and share our Christian and conservative perspectives. We should continue to suppress the lawlessness up to the Rapture (2 Thess. 2:7). And there is good reason to do this.

Psalm 33:12 declares:

“Blessed *is* the nation whose God *is* the LORD; *and* the people *whom* he hath chosen for his own inheritance.”

This Bible verse teaches us a very important lesson. If a nation wants the true blessing of God, a nation must make God their LORD. In other words, a nation and its leaders must not disregard God’s moral laws and ways and ignore Him but embrace Him and His ways in order to really experience God’s blessing. The further away a nation moves from God, they are inviting God’s wrath and judgment – not His blessing.

But Psalm 9:17 warns the nations:

“The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.”

They should write this verse across the gates of Washington DC! To “forget God” means to ignore God and His moral ways which results in God’s judgment. This means that God ultimately brings the wicked people within all nations to a place of judgment which is hell.

The word “turned” is a Hebrew expression that is used for death and judgment. This indicates that someday unsaved people living within a godless nation will die and go to a place of doom and judgment. Their spirits will be ushered into a place

where God's wrath will be meted out on them. This expression "turned" would then speak of the unsaved being turned away from God in judgment for their sins. The word "hell" (sheol) can mean the grave or the place of departed spirits. The given context will let us know what the meaning is. Here the reference is not to the grave but to the place of suffering where people go after they die.

Only 59% of Americans believe in hell, compared with 74% who believe in Heaven, according to the recent surveys from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. The Rev. Fred Johns, pastor of Brookview Wesleyan Church in Irondale, Alabama, said after a workshop discussion of hell that pastors do shy away from the topic of everlasting damnation. Why? He said: "It's out of fear we'll not appear relevant," he said. "It's pressure from the culture to not speak anything negative. I think we've begun to deny hell. There's an assumption that everybody's going to make it to heaven somehow." The soft sell on hell is the result of an increasingly market-driven approach to evangelizing people without repentance and Judgment Day.

Another preacher said:

"When you're trying to market Jesus, sometimes there's a tendency to mute traditional Christian symbols. Difficult doctrines are left by the wayside. Hell is a morally repugnant doctrine. People wonder why God would send people to eternal punishment."

In spite of what people say or think, the truth about hell cannot be changed or dismissed. It is a clear teaching of the Bible and the people within the world nations of today, including America, need to know this.

But God not only judges people in pagan nations, He also judges the nations on a corporate scale and magnitude. The Scriptures repeatedly teach how God has historically judged wicked and godless nations. He judged Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, the ancient Roman Empire and eventually took them down. He judged many other ancient nations for opposing God's people (the Jews) and His righteous ways (the Canaanites, Girgashites, Jebusites, Hittites Philistines). He also judged cities for their sins such as Sodom and Gomorrah, Babylon, Tyre and Sidon, and many others who sought to disregard His righteous ways and purposes. This is a matter of Biblical and even natural history.

America is not exempt from God's judgment. She is moving in the direction of all other nations that God has historically judged. In fact, she is already experiencing God's judgment in various ways since God's wrath is said to already be revealed in some measure against pagan nations (Rom. 1:18). One way God begins to internally judge a nation is when they lose their moral code and begin to promote the pagan sin of idolatry (worshipping false gods) and also openly promote pagan sexual sins such as homosexuality and lesbianism. The Bible teaches that God judges people within a nation by giving them over to their reprobate minds and way of thinking, causing them to lose all focus on God's moral code and losing their own sexual identity (Romans 1:24-27). This is the judgment of God upon lesbians, homosexuals, transvestites, and cross genderism within our nation.

People wonder how a transgender person like the PA Health Secretary (Dr. Levine) can get up in front of America and openly promote transgenderism and attack people who speak out against transgenderism. The answer is that this individual, like so many others in our nation, is morally depraved and are given over to their horrible, sinful depravity. They have lost their sexual identity and this comes directly as a judgment from God.



Abandoning God means that America will be incrementally judged by God. We don't know where God draws the line before He brings greater calamity and judgment upon America. We have already murdered 50 million babies in this country since 1973 and the Roe versus Wade disastrous decision of the Supreme Court. How can we not expect greater judgment to fall on this country?

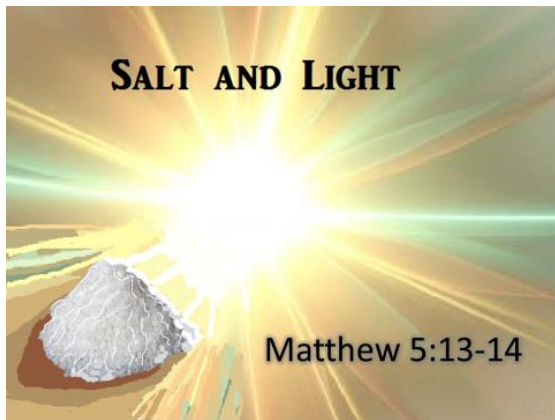
Perhaps the marxist takeover of America will be part of this judgment from God. Eventually, America, with all the other nations, will be cast into the Tribulation Period and experience God's judgment and wrath.

In Revelation 3:10, the Bible speaks of "the hour of temptation (adversity), which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." This

prophetically anticipates the world being judged during a time of seven years. It's a time when God pours out His wrath on mankind for His wickedness and vileness.

Because of the sure hand of God's judgment upon wicked nations, there is good reason to fight, stand our ground, and seek to maintain a standard of righteousness and ethical reasoning within our country. God certainly knows how to judge nations in view of their heathen practices and wickedness. This has been proven historically and will be true prophetically. God does not overlook the sins of the nations.

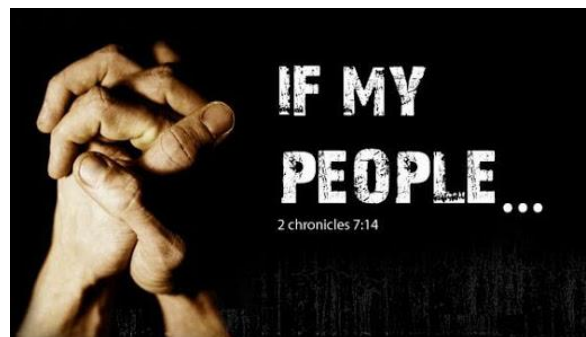
Christians and even common sense Americans should not follow or accommodate in any way the marxist, atheistic, God haters who want to destroy everything that is related to God, the Christian history of this country, and ethical morals. Americans should fight to maintain what has been dubbed as "Judeo-Christian" moral values. Things like the sanctity of human life, moral personal responsibility, a high regard for traditional marriage, and compassion for others should be demonstrated in this country.



It's only through prayer and Christians being salt and light (Matt. 5:13-14) that may keep the country of America from plunging deeper and deeper into godlessness and atheistic humanism, communism, and moral relativism. Prayer, sharing the Gospel, and being light, including voting right, may put the brakes on the present trajectory that America is heading.

2 Chronicles 7:14

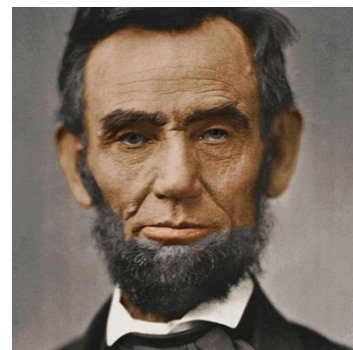
"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."



God's ancient people (the Jews) were to pray for healing of their land from God's judgment (drought, locusts, plagues). They were to confess their sins in order to be freed from God's wrath and judgment. By extension and application, God's people today need to pray first for their own personal cleansing and then extend their praying to national and moral healing. We see from Scripture that God's blessing does not come without prayerful confession and intercession. This passage in 2 Chronicles is not a direct promise given to America and we cannot claim this as an absolute promise from God to America. However, perhaps God, if He so desires, might honor the requests of millions of Christians as they pray for America. We might see a good outcome in the next election and see righteousness begin to triumph over evil in this country. We don't know God's ultimate plan, but we can always pray! We can pray for a turning away from moral depravity and unrighteousness and beg God to not judge America today even as Lot begged God to not judge Sodom (Genesis 18:23-33).

We need keep praying, standing up for what is right, and support and maintain ethical integrity in our nation and then see if God will honor our requests to save America from greater judgment. But when things don't go the right way and the thumb of totalitarianism begins to press upon the church and country, what should be our reaction? Ultimately we must rest in the sovereignty of God and see His hand of providence in bringing about His greater purposes which involve progressively leading America and the world into the End Times (Tribulation Period) and bringing about God's future purposes in the world. God never moves without purpose and plan. We can be sure about this in the midst of our changing times, when the winds of an anti-American spirit are blowing strong and when anti-God and wicked people seem to be getting the upper hand.

Introduction: On the front porch of his little country store in Illinois, Abraham Lincoln and Berry, his partner, stood. Business was all gone, and Berry asked, "How much longer can we keep this going?" Lincoln answered, "It looks as if our business has just about winked out." Then he continued, "You know, I wouldn't mind so much if I could just do what I want to do. I want to study law. I wouldn't mind so much if we could sell everything



we've got and pay all our bills and have just enough left over to buy one book—Blackstone's Commentary on English Law, but I guess I can't."

A strange-looking wagon was coming up the road. The driver angled it up close to the store porch, then looked at Lincoln and said, "I'm trying to move my family out west, and I'm out of money. I've got a good barrel here that I could sell for fifty cents." Abraham Lincoln's eyes went along the wagon and came to the man's wife looking at him pleadingly, her face thin and emaciated. Lincoln ran his hand into his pocket and took out, according to him, "the last fifty cents I had" and said, "I reckon I could use a good barrel."

Lincoln narrates his story in this way:

"I did not want it, but to oblige him I bought it, and paid him, I think, half a dollar for it. Without further examination I put it away in the store and forgot all about it. Some time after, in overhauling things, I came upon the barrel, and emptying it upon the floor to see what it contained, I found at the bottom of the rubbish a complete edition of Blackstone's "Commentaries."

Lincoln later wrote, "I stood there holding the book and looking up toward the heavens. There came a deep impression on me that God had something for me to do and He was showing me now that I had to get ready for it. Why this miracle otherwise?"

"I began to read those famous works, and I had plenty of time; for during the long summer days, when the farmers were busy with their crops, my customers were few and far between. The more I read, the more intensely interested I became. Never in my whole life was my mind so thoroughly absorbed. I read until I devoured them."

History is really His story! We see this with the foundation of this country and the movements of God that birthed America. God is sovereign which means He has an ordained purpose and supreme will that He chooses to bring about in the world. As we see by the above story, God was providentially working behind the scenes to bring about the birth of the nation of America. At the same time, we must realize that God may also be providentially working behind the scenes to bring about the

slow demise of America through various steps of depravity and evil occurring in the world and our own country. One thing is certain, God is always working!

What is the difference between God's sovereignty and providence? Although they are closely related Biblical concepts, God's sovereignty is His right and power to do all that He decides to do while God's providence is when He actually carries out His will and purpose through various means, bringing to pass His sovereign and supreme rule in the earth. God's providence means that He superintends and brings to pass every event in the universe, which includes God allowing specific events to occur in relation to our personal lives, country, and world. Events that are both good and bad, difficult and easy, capitalistic or communistic, and Marxism or freedom.

God's Providence



God's providence speaks of His continuous activity and control in guiding and directing the events and affairs of the world and His own people to their intended goal or purpose. Nothing is beyond the overruling and overriding scope of His providence and sovereign control (Isa. 14:24; 45:7; Dan. 4:35; Amos 3:6).

Psalm 135:6 brings both definitions together:

“Whatsoever the LORD pleased (God's sovereignty – what He decides to do), *that* did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places” (God's providence – carrying out His purposes).

Isaiah 14:24 is similar in nature:

“The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought (the sovereignty and supreme will of God), so shall it come to pass (the carrying out of God's will); and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.”

God's providence is carrying out His sovereign plan. God's providence speaks of God working out His decrees, directing everything to its divinely appointed goal which extends to His care and guidance of the creation and events of the universe (Neh. 9:6; Ps. 104:14; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). God's providence and care

extends to inanimate creation (Isa. 40:26), His creatures (Ps. 104:10-28), all people within humanity (Acts 14:17; 17:25, 28), and His elect company of people (Ps. 37:23-29; Isa. 41:10; Matt. 6:25-34; John 6:39; 10:28).

What we need to remember is this. God's ways are behind the scenes (His sovereignty); but He moves all the scenes which He is behind (His providence). We need to learn and accept this even when things don't go the way we planned. This is true regarding the upcoming election and the possible takeover of socialism in America. We must bow the knee to God's sovereign purpose and His providential working for America and even in relation to our personal and daily lives. Instead of fighting against God's providential ways we must accept them by faith and go on living our lives for God's glory.

Isaiah 55:8-9

"For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Contextually, we discover that sinners need to forsake their ways and thoughts, their actions and attitudes as stated in Isaiah 5:7, since they are not God's ways and thoughts. They must break with their thoughts and comply with God's thoughts and ways in order to have fellowship with God. Of course, by way of application, this would be true about everything that pertains to our personal lives and such things as the course He allows for America and the winner in the upcoming election. We must forsake our thinking and ways concerning how certain events must transpire in America and replace them with God's thinking and way. He knows what He is doing!

God's "thoughts" refers to His eternal purposes and intentions which He has planned and His "ways" are what He brings to pass in the world and even in connection with our personal lives. Sometimes we want to question the way God thinks and what He does. But we are foolish when we do this.

Warren Wiersbe wrote:

“It is not a mark of wisdom to try to ‘second guess’ God, because His ways and thoughts are far beyond our comprehension (Isa. 55:8–9). We make God after our own image and conclude that He thinks and acts just as we do (Ps. 50:21), and we are wrong!”

We should never judge God by our own thoughts and ways. This is because Jehovah thinks and acts in ways that transcend anything we could ever imagine. God’s thoughts and ways exceed all human imagination. No one can fathom the depths of His wisdom and what He does. To state it succinctly, God’s plan is something people would have never dreamed might happen or come to pass.

We must understand that God is more than just a spectator on the sidelines of history. God continually makes all the events of the physical and moral universe fulfil the original plan for which He created it. God is eternally existent and knows the end from the beginning (Rev. 21:6; 22:13) because He has determined the events of the universe.



The dictionary defines “accident” as an unforeseen event or one without apparent cause. Any Christian who understands the sovereignty of God will immediately determine from this definition that there is no such thing as an accident. There are no accidents with God – only the acts of God! We must remember this in relation to our daily living but also in connection with our country of America.

It’s like the cowboy who goes to buy some life insurance. The broker asked him if he had any accidents in the past year, to which the cowboy replied “No. But I was kicked by a horse, chased by a raging bull and bitten by a snake that laid me up for a while.” The agent said, “Weren’t they accidents?” To which the cowboy replied, “No, the horse, bull, and snake did it on purpose.” You see this cowboy realized that there is no such thing as accidents. This is true from the perspective of God’s sovereignty. There are no accidents in the plan and purpose of God. We must remember this when it comes to our national liberties, the advancement of

evildoers, and our own personal trials which are related to our lives. William Cowper (Cooper) wrote:

“God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unsearchable mines
Of never failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs
And works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take
The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings, in blessings
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense
But trust Him for His grace
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast
Unfolding every hour
The bud may have a bitter taste
But sweet will be the flower.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take
The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings, in blessings
In blessings on your head.

Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain

God is His own interpreter
And He will make it plain
In His own time
In His own way.”

III. Our realization of the predictions of God

The Bible prophetically predicts what will occur during the period called the “Last Days” and it also outlines what will occur during the “End Times” (the seven-year Tribulation Period). We are living in the last days right now, prior to the Rapture of the Church and the world is headed toward the period known as the End Times. This is a seven-year period of time when God’s wrath and judgment will fall on this earth in an unprecedented way. What should we expect to see occurring in the world during the last days and prior to the commencement and fulfillment of the End Time prophecies? This is what we will be learning in this part of our study.

The predictions of God apply to two areas.

A. The prediction of the Last Days (Last Days madness!)



What we see occurring in our country and world today is what I term as “last days” madness. It is maddening or extremely annoying, frustrating, and even infuriating to see what has been occurring today in America.

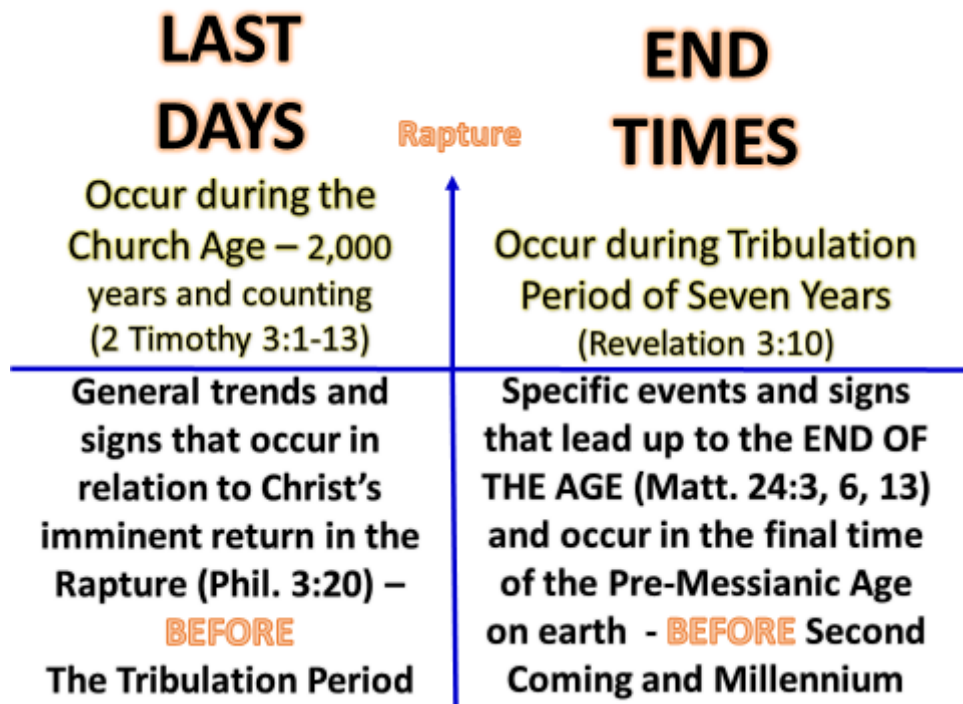
2 Timothy is a “last day” epistle for it was written to include the teaching about what the world would be like prior to the Rapture of the Church. In a general way, the Bible predicts what the world would be like during a period of time known as the last days.

2 Timothy 3:1

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.”

This is something we need to know and knowing it means we must accept it by faith and realize that things are not predicted to get better as we head toward the Rapture. The word “last” (eschatos) which is used in connection with “days” refers to the period of time before Christ returns (2 Pet. 3:3; Heb. 1:2; James 5:3). The “last days” specifically refers to the time period that exists between the formation of the Church at Pentecost (the Church Age – Eph. 3:1-10) and the specific event of the Rapture (“that day” – 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:8).

Ever since the formation of the Church (Acts 2) the earth has entered into a period of time known as the “last days” (some 2,000 years and counting) which would continue to exist up to the return of Jesus Christ in the Rapture for His Church Age saints. The Church Age (when God is forming His Church) exists in this specific period of time known as the “last days” and the Bride of Christ (the Church) lives with the prophetic anticipation of the Rapture (Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Cor. 16:22; Titus 2:13).



Paul viewed this prediction of the “last days” as something that was already occurring during his own day. Other apostles also made this prediction who would sometimes use other synonyms for the last days (1 Tim. 4:1; 1 John 2:18; 2 Pet. 3:3; Jude 17-18).

When Paul said “This know also ... perilous times shall come” he was not making a prediction that they would occur thousands of years later, but that these troublesome times had already invaded the world scene during the early days of the Church and apostolic Christianity. Paul was CONFIRMING they had already come and this was something the people should know about.

Paul uses the future tense (“shall come”) because from the perspective of the past, they were now living in the predicted time of the last days, the time when “the perilous times shall come” upon world. Again, Paul was not teaching that the last days would start up in the 1970’s or at some other particular time in the future when things really got bad. The Christians living in Paul’s day were to know about the “last days” prediction, that these days were already upon them, and the departures from wholesome doctrine and living is what the people were witnessing before their very eyes. What was predicted to happen was now coming to pass in his own day and these conditions would continue to exist throughout the future days of the Church Age.

Think about this. Nobody could ever know when the “last days” would officially begin without the information that Paul and the apostles gave about the last days. The fact that the early church was already experiencing these signs of the last days indicates they began when the church began (Pentecost). The world would not gradually morph into the “last days” but the “last days” were said to already be occurring during the days of apostolic Christianity. This means that the world entered into the last days as a result of Christ’s ascension into Heaven and the birth of the Church (Acts 2). A new period of time began (the last days) before Christ would return in the Rapture.

Here is what we need to understand. Paul used the future tense (“shall come” – 2 Tim. 3:1) to CONFIRM that the last days must happen according to God’s ordained purpose and to PROVE they were already living during these perilous times. In other words, they “shall come” in the sense that these days were upon them, they were already experiencing the effects of these days, and that the people should not be surprised with what was occurring around them. These times “shall come” (a confirming statement that they are here right now) and that the people need to know about this as they view the church and society in which they were living.

When Paul said “in the latter times some shall depart from the faith” (1 Tim. 4:1), he was teaching that this departure from the faith was occurring right now, during his own time, and that it would be a condition that would continue to exist in the world. When Peter said, “that there shall come in the last days scoffers” he meant that what was predicted to happen was already in some measure occurring during

The Last Days Occur Between Christ’s Ascension and the Rapture

1 John 2:18

King James Version

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

his own time. Like Paul, he was CONFIRMING they had already come and that the early Christians were already living during the period of time known as “the last days.” In 1 John 2:18, John taught “it is the last time” and “we know that it is the last time” which is a synonym or similar expression for the last days. John clearly taught that he was already living during the last days.

Once again, the predictions given about the last days were designed to CONFIRM that what God had ordained to happen was already taking place during apostolic Christianity (the early church) and that these “last days” and “perilous times” would continue to exist throughout the Church Age up to the time of the Rapture. Paul is essentially saying, “You should know that these last days are going to arrive in the world and I’m confirming that they are here right now. Therefore, you can look for these signs to occur today and in the future until Jesus returns.”

After the Church Age and “last days” would expire (“After this” - Acts 15:16), the End Times would commence with the seven-year Tribulation Period and specific events (End Time events) that would transpire in the world up to the end of the Tribulation Period (Matt. 24:3).

Paul is teaching in 2 Timothy chapter 3 that there would be some general signs or trends that would exist in the world prior to the Rapture. He outlines these descriptive signs in this chapter and reveals what the world would be like up to the time of the Rapture.



In other words, with the formation of the Church on the Day of Pentecost, the “last days” clock began ticking and moving its hands forward with the possibility of Christ returning at any moment (“Even so come, Lord Jesus” - Rev. 22:20), which would end the period of time known as the “last days.” This period of time essentially occurs between Christ’s ascent into Heaven (Eph. 4:8) and His descent into the air to rapture His Church (“If I go ... I will come again” – TURN - John 14:1-3). The last days are related to the Church Age and have been in place for approximately 2,000 years. The “last days” for the Church age ends when Jesus returns for His people.

“Marvelous message we bring,
Glorious carol we sing,
Wonderful word of the King,
Jesus is coming again!

Coming again, Coming again,
May be morning, may be noon,
May be evening and may be soon!”

Paul said that the period of the last days would be “perilous times” (2 Tim. 3:1) which means they would be hard to bear, harsh, fierce, troublesome, and difficult times. The Bible teaches that the days prior to the Rapture of the Church would become increasingly worse up to the time of the Rapture. Things are not going to stay the same.

2 Timothy 3:13

“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.”

There is a progression of evil and deception that will occur in the world up to the time of the Rapture. I don’t want to throw a bombshell on you today, but things are not going to get better but worse as we approach the time of the Rapture. The

Bible is very clear about this. The phrase “worse and worse” specifically informs us that there will be an ever-increasing progression of evil and seduction in the church and world in general as we move toward the Rapture.

The description of the “last days” is actually a description given of the apostasy (falling away) that will occur in the professing church (of both laypeople and leaders). Why do I say this? It’s because the people described in this chapter claim to be religious for they have “a form of godliness” (2 Tim. 3:5) and are in some way connected to the professing church and nominal Christianity. These people operate under the disguise of religion. They are “religious” but rebellious!

Then there are false teachers or apostates who are termed in 2 Timothy 3:8 as “men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith” (the body of revealed truth given to the church in the Scriptures). They are also termed as “seducers” within Christianity (2 Tim. 3:13). These verses describe the heart-wrenching apostasy that would occur during the Church Age which would eventually culminate with the total departure of the apostate church during the Tribulation Period and eventually the worship of the Antichrist.

2 Thessalonians 2:3 reveals this truth about apostasy:

“Let no man deceive you by any means (we are not living during the Tribulation Period): for *that day shall not come* (the Tribulation Period), except there come a falling away (“apostasia” - a doctrinal departure – not a Rapture departure) first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.”

In this verse, Paul is talking about what will occur DURING the Tribulation Period in order to prove that we cannot be living in the Tribulation Period. The apostasy occurring today during these last days is setting the stage for the final apostasy to occur (a falling away during the Tribulation Period) with the one world church coming into power (Rev. 17) and when the great masses of people living during the Tribulation Period will eventually worship the Antichrist (the culmination of all apostasy and departure from God – Rev. 13). This will become the greatest worldwide anti-God movement the world has ever experienced. Paul said these events must transpire in the world for the earth to have entered the Tribulation

Period. Since they had not yet occurred, then the saints could not be living during the Tribulation Period.

Although Paul was teaching that a final apostasy will occur in the world during the Tribulation Period, he also comments that the “mystery of iniquity” (lawlessness) doth already work” (2 Thess. 2:7) which means that apostasy would be part of the “last days” and lead up the final world apostasy.

Dwight Pentecost has said this about the last days madness:

“In the period of church history known as the dark ages, men were ignorant of the truth; but never was there an age when men openly denied and repudiated the truth.”

That is what is happening today during these “last days” and as we head toward the Rapture. Somebody wrote this strange but telling apostate doctrinal summary:

“We believe everything is OK
As long as you don't hurt anyone,
To the best of your definition of hurt,
And to the best of your knowledge.

We believe in sex before, during, and after marriage.

We believe in the therapy of sin.

We believe that adultery is fun.

We believe that sodomy's OK.

We believe that taboos are taboo.

We believe that everything's getting better

Despite evidence to the contrary.

The evidence must be investigated.

You can prove anything with evidence.

We believe there's something to horoscopes

UFOs and bent spoons.

Jesus was a good man just like Buddha

Mohammed and ourselves.

He was a good moral teacher although we think
his good morals were bad.

We believe that all religions are basically the same.

They all believe in love and goodness.

They only differ on matters of
Creation, sin, heaven, hell, God, and salvation.

We believe that after death comes 'The Nothing'

Because when you ask the dead what happens -

They say Nothing.

If death is not the end, if the dead have lied,

Then it's compulsory heaven for all

Except perhaps Hitler, Stalin, and Genghis Khan.

We believe in Masters and Johnson.

What's selected is average.

What's average is normal.

What's normal is good.

We believe that man is essentially good.

It's only his behavior that lets him down.

This is the fault of society.

Society is full of conditions.

Conditions are the fault of society.

We believe that each man must find the truth

That is right for him.

Reality will adjust accordingly.

The universe will readjust. History will alter.

We believe that there is no absolute truth

Excepting the truth

That there is No absolute truth."

This is a morbid type of commentary on the condition that prevails in Christendom today (the umbrella term of all false religions and denominations). Amazingly, there

are many people that claim to be somehow connected with God and yet reject the clearly revealed truths about God, the Bible, or Jesus Christ.

Mark Hitchcock said:

“Sadly, sins that were not condoned by the most hardened sinners a generation ago are now being accepted as alternative lifestyles for professing Christians and even ordained ministers.”

Folks, if homosexual preachers are not a sign of the times, then I don't what is!! The worst sins one could speak of a generation ago are now ordained in the apostate churches of today. Professing Christians are seen living on the lowest levels of society but are still trying to identify with Christianity. Individual churches and whole denominations are shockingly wading knee-deep into the worst kind of moral filth and depravity the world has ever known. Homosexuals claim to be part of the church today. Apostate and liberal denominational leaders are coming out and promoting a new tolerance of the gay lifestyle. We are living in the last days and the church along with our society is definitely reflecting this at alarming levels.

“Years of time have come and gone
Since I first heard it told
How Jesus would come again some day.
If back then it seemed so real
Then I just can't help but feel
How much closer His coming is today.

Wars and strife on every hand
And violence fills the land.
Still some people doubt He'll ever come again.
But the Word of God is true
He'll redeem His chosen few.
Don't lose hope soon Christ Jesus will descend.

Signs of the times are everywhere
There's a brand new feeling in the air.
Keep your eyes upon the eastern sky
Lift up your head redemption draweth nigh!”

Although the signs mentioned in 2 Timothy chapter 3 seemed to be linked to the professing and apostate church, they are in some ways linked to our degenerate society as well. This is because those who practice these despicable sins are part of society and are actually mimicking the lifestyles of the unregenerate people in our world. So, these descriptions not only portray those who claim to be religious but would also give a general description of our society and world today.

For instance, most politicians claim to be religious in some way even though they live deplorable lives of departure from God's holy will and ways. Oprah Winfrey claims to be "spiritual" and many others today in the world, including those people who are part of the cults (Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, etc.). Just about anyone claims to be "Christian" today.

There are times when haters of God, the Bible, and Christianity are somehow called people of faith. They are looked upon as being religious and yet are ready to persecute those who embrace the truth. Michelle Obama recently called Biden a man of deep faith. This kind of religious rhetoric is preposterous. Biden's faith is nothing more than religious deception and a form of godliness which makes a mockery out of God and the truth and smacks righteousness in the face.

Someone said:

"Joe Biden lives his faith every day. Every Sunday, he is on his knees attending Mass and praying for his country, his family, and all those in need in our beloved nation. I know this because I know Joe Biden and I come from the same Irish Catholic faith tradition."

Christians should be able to see through this religious facade and realize that there is great religious deception and hypocrisy occurring during the last days. This is what 2 Timothy chapter 3 is talking about.

Well, as we begin to look at the descriptions of the "last days" (the apostasy in the Church) we are to some extent looking at the description and condition of society in general. This is because those who claim to be religious and part of Christianity are actually reflecting or mimicking the sinful rebellion and departures within our society.

William Booth once said:

“The chief danger that confronts the coming century will be religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, heaven without hell.”

When I was in Florida, I saw some very interesting road signs. However, one of the most interesting and intriguing sign was found in southern Florida and the area of the Everglades. The sign read: “Warning: vultures may cause damage to your vehicle.” I later discovered that vultures love the rubber on your car and try to sometimes do damage to your car. As I think about this rather unusual sign, I’m reminded how the Bible predicts there will be signs that will occur in the church and society in general. They are some general signs that will occur throughout the entire Church Age and precede the imminent (any moment) return of Christ in the Rapture.

It must be understood that these are not specific signs that must occur before Jesus can return in the Rapture but general trends or conditions that have been occurring since the inception of the Church Age and which coincide with the return of Christ in the Rapture. They are signs which will increasingly get worse (“wax worse and worse”) as the end of the Church Age approaches (2 Tim. 2:13).

We can rightly conclude that the people mentioned here include false teachers and apostates who are leaders in the Church (vv. 6-8) and those who are following their teachings and evil habits. They represent apostate and professing Christianity which has strayed far from the historic roots and practices of both doctrinal and lifestyle integrity. However, even the true church (saved people) can absorb some of the traits or marks of apostasy as it moves further away from God’s standards. I think we can recognize this when studying this portion of Scripture. We live during a time when there is an amalgamation (a uniting together) between apostates and the true church which can also become engaged in the work of false teaching to some degree as people are being led astray into consumerism and many other sins.



So what will the church and world be like during the last days?

1. A defection from true love (2 Tim. 3:2, 4)

There are three phrases in these “last days” descriptions which we will lump together under this first point. The first expression “lovers of their own selves” (vs. 2) means many people living during the last days will be self-lovers instead of God-lovers! This is a defection from the true nature of love for God and means that people live for their own sinful and personal pleasures, wants, and according to their own schedules, instead of God’s schedules. Man has a “love affair” with himself today. Humanism promotes the self-love of man. But Jesus taught something else.

Matthew 22:37

“...Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”

The expression “lovers of themselves” does not mean Christians should not possess a proper view of themselves in Christ and realize that their lives are something that God created (both physically and spiritually), that God loves them deeply, and being made in the image of God means that lives are meaningful to God and should possess dignity. The expression indicates something far different than this. It refers to being possessed with self, to having self as the central motivation for all attitudes and actions.

Today people are being taught to love themselves, and therefore live for themselves, and listen to their own hearts, instead of following truth and what is right. 2 Corinthians 5:15 says, “And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”

When a person loves themselves it means that they focus on themselves more than God and obedience to His ways and Word. In fact, many today in Christendom and

society in general live a selfish and sinful life which demonstrates no love and loyalty to God.

Paul also says in this list that people will be “covetous” (vs. 2) or lovers of wealth instead of lovers of God! This too is a defection from true love. Man today thrives on materialism and money. Everywhere we look we see the push for getting rich and having all that you want in life. The Wealth and Health movement (also known as the “Word of Faith” movement) in the modern-day Church has certainly fallen into this trap of covetousness.

Being “covetous” is to be controlled by money and materialism. There is a strong emphasis of this in various religious ministries today, particularly in the charismatic denominations. They claim that God wants you to be rich – healthy and wealthy! You could never preach this type of message in a third world country. Why? It’s because the “wealth and health” it’s geared around American consumerism – not the Bible.

1 Timothy 6:5 further describes this last day madness and apostasy:

“Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.”

This is what the Wealth and Health movement (Prosperity Theology) is teaching today. This concept (“gain is godliness”) is a similar idea of what it means to be covetous but it adds a spiritual twist to covetousness. Today what is wrong has become right, what is sinful is suddenly godly!

David W. Jones outlines five errors of prosperity gospel teaching:

1. The Abrahamic covenant is a means to material entitlement.
2. Jesus’s atonement extends to the “sin” of material poverty.
3. Christians give in order to gain material compensation from God.
4. Faith is a self-generated spiritual force that leads to prosperity.
5. Prayer is a tool to force God to grant prosperity.

The man who could be considered the father of modern prosperity gospel teaching is Oral Roberts. The faith-healing evangelist became so influential that he started his own school, Oral Roberts University (ORU). At the height of his influence, Roberts oversaw a ministry that brought in \$110 million in annual revenue.

Oral Roberts was the object of jokes in 1980 when he based a fund-raising campaign on a vision he allegedly had of a 900-foot-tall Jesus. Four years later, the evangelist's ministry asked for donations while offering a 7-inch-tall replica of an angel in which Roberts said had visited him.

With his following dropping off, his City of Faith Medical Center unable to fill its beds, and the university named after him struggling, Roberts told viewers he will die in March unless he raises \$8 million dollars for medical missionary scholarships.

A spokeswoman says the evangelist means what he says and that his supporters have no reason to question his methods. Roberts said God gave him the ultimatum in March, warning that he had to raise a total of \$8 million or "I'm going to call you (Roberts) home in one year." The money was to allow Oral Roberts University medical students to graduate debt-free and become missionaries. Folks, all I can say about these types of things is that they are part of the "last days" madness that Paul predicted would be happening in the church. God is not a manipulative God, but today we continue to see many of these types of merchandising tricks in the name of religion.

The prosperity gospel stressed that money (wealth) is essentially the proof of salvation, the goal of salvation, and is the evidence of God's favor upon one's life.

Kenneth Copeland, a student at ORU who served as a pilot and chauffeur for Oral Roberts, also became one of the most notorious (and wealthiest) of prosperity preachers. These men paved the way for the televangelists who became famous in the 1980s, including Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker, Benny Hinn, Pat Robertson, and Robert Tilton (the good old "slick willy" Robert Tilton).

Today, some of the best-known prosperity teachers are Creflo Dollar, T. D. Jakes, Joel Osteen, and Joyce Meyer. Joyce Meyer has been described by one sympathetic journalist as the woman preacher who “sounds like a gravely-voiced waitress in a greasy-spoon diner.”



Then there is Paula White who is one of the biggest prosperity preachers in the country today. I think this is why our president, who is very rich, enjoys listening to Paul White. She is one of the president’s personal pastors and spiritual advisors. Her message of materialism (“godliness is gain” – 1 Tim. 6:5) sounds good to our president but it is not the true Gospel, nor is it God’s purpose and plan for His true Church. Godliness for gain is a false spinoff from the true Gospel. Paul White is described as the woman who “led Trump to Christ.” Her Florida ministry and televangelism made her a multi-millionaire and has attracted scrutiny from congressional investigators. In the early 2000s, as the church gained prominence, Randy (her husband) told the Tampa Bay Times that churches needed to “believe in their product.” He said: “My product is Jesus.”

We find that within the professing church people have become not only charlatans but lovers of themselves, covetous, and are in the end making merchandise of the Gospel (2 Pet. 3:3). 2 Corinthians 2:17 says that they “corrupt the word of God” which literally means that they are peddlers or retailers of the Bible, using and abusing the Bible take manipulate people into giving money to their ministries and also distorting the teachings about wealth and health.

This expression (“supposing that gain is godliness” – 1 Tim. 6:5) tells us how people have fallen into the trap of loving material things instead of truly loving God in a saving relationship through Jesus Christ or a sanctifying and obedient relationship with Him.

The November 1998 *People* magazine describes the famous TD Jakes as having a \$1.7 million Dallas home, his blue BMW convertible, and his colorful expensive clothing. He feels his financial success is a sign of growing economic empowerment

for African-Americans. The *Charleston Gazette* published a story that focused on his \$600,000, 16-room Charlotte mansion with its bowling alley and indoor swimming pool.

What is most disturbing is that TD Jakes portrays Jesus as being rich in order to justify his wealth. He describes Jesus as having been rich in order to support His disciples and their families during His ministry. In the Dallas Observer Magazine, Jakes says the myth of the poor Jesus has to be destroyed because it's holding people back. But the Bible says that Jesus became poor for our sakes (2 Cor. 8:9).

Matthew 8:20

“And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head.”

Who are you going to believe – Jakes or Jesus? We are living during the last days madness! A love for money and materialism in the Church is a sign that the last days are continuing to be played out before our very eyes. We live in a day when greed has gone wild. People live for money, the stock market, and Wall Street instead of possessing a genuine and deep love for God.

Revelation 3:17 describes it in this way:

“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

The Laodicean church is a perfect picture and portrait of a church during the last days. People are consumed with wealth but not consumed with Christ and His truth. They live for themselves, loving themselves and pleasures more than loving God, His truth, and will for their lives. They live in the bubble of materialism, they are self-seekers, and are driven by pleasure. They have need of nothing – not even God! This is true of our society as a whole.

Jesse Duplantis is a "word of Faith" preacher. Jesse lives and breathes the "name it and claim it" theology along with the "prosperity gospel" that he claims belongs to all followers of Christ who embrace the Gospel.

Duplantis says that God told him to pray about getting a Citation X, an \$18,000,000.00 jet plane that has the capacity to fly internationally. Jesse claims that he needs this plane to reach the lost in all the nations as time is short and he needs this plane to hurry things along.

Duplantis, on December 19, 2003 TBN, in a message, "The just shall live by faith" – said this: If I give \$1,000 dollars, I deserve to get back \$100,000 because I am just, that's not greed!"

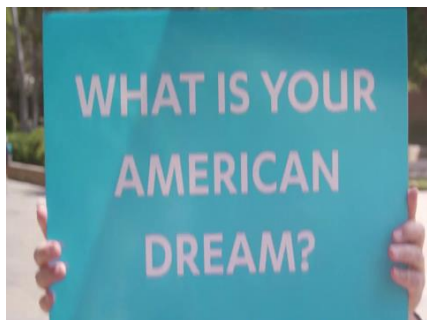
Jesse Duplantis, speaking of the birth of Jesus said:

"That's right! I mean He wasn't three minutes on the ground and the three wise guys are looking for Him with what? Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh. Let me tell you something, this concept that Jesus was in poverty is totally wrong!"

Luke 9:58

"And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head."

Who are you going to believe – Jessie or Jesus? This type of greed apostasy is being promoted today among the professing church.



The American dream is supposedly to own a house, two cars, and have enough money for a comfortable retirement. Well, the American dream should not be our primary focus in life. Our focus is to be upon Christ, our loving relationship with Him (Phil. 1:21; Phil. 3:10), and following His will for our lives.

Luke 12:15

"And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

Our life is not to be centered upon the accumulation of wealth but upon Christ, spiritual living, and serving the Lord. There is nothing wrong with earning a good

living but our life should not revolve around material things and money but accumulating eternal reward.

Jesus taught something very important in Matthew 6:19-20:

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth (covetousness living), where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven (eternal reward), where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.”

God does not give us the promise of wealth and health but He has promised to meet our needs in life.

Philippians 4:19

“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

Yes, God does supply our needs - but not our greed's. We must remember something. Where God guides – He provides. Where God leads – He feeds (Isaiah 58:11). We need to love God and not become focused on the materialism and the maddening pursuit for wealth and pleasures during these last days. A love relationship with God is what satisfies us and fills the deep longings of our soul.

“If you could have the fame and fortune all the wealth you could obtain,
Yet you have not Christ within your living here would be in vain;
There'll come a time when death shall call you,
Riches cannot help you then,
So come to Jesus for He can satisfy.

Only Jesus can satisfy your soul
And only He can change your heart
And make you whole;
He'll give you peace you never knew
Sweet love and joy and Heaven too,
For only Jesus can satisfy your soul.”

2 Timothy 3:4 goes on to say: “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.” Someone said, “The heart of every problem is a problem in the heart.” When a person’s heart is not in tune with loving God, other pleasures will replace God.

This third expression is also is a defection from true love – a love that is to be centered only upon Jesus Christ and not earthly wealth and materialism. It’s an undying love committed to Christ and spiritual living. The expression “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 2:4) should be added to this point about defection from true love. No one can deny that we live in a pleasure-mad world. These are sexual pleasures, hedonistic pleasures, monetary pleasures, sports pleasures, and entertaining pleasures that have swept into the Church today and overtaken the lives of people. These earthly pleasures keep people from loving God and have a saving and close relationship with Him.

“I walked a mile with Pleasure;
She chatted all the way;
But left me none the wiser
For all she had to say.

I walked a mile with Sorrow;
And ne’er a word said she;
But, oh! The things I learned from her,
When Sorrow walked with me.”

The nominal Church of today is caught up with entertainment world of pleasure and Hollywood and has lost sight of what is most important in life. Personal pleasure runs the lives of people today instead of a love for God, His Word, and His will. As I think of the mad craze today for entertainment in the local church, I see how the Church is being pleasure-driven by entertainment, instead of the things of God. Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.

This describes a time when the Church will be characterized by loving entertainment more than God. Think of it! We live in a day when the pleasure related to entertainment is ruling the Church. It is possible that entrainment may have a God-honoring goal, but at the same time, entertainment quickly

degenerates into mere pleasure. The worldwide craving for entertainment is just one more evidence that people's hearts and love have turned away from God.

Max Lucado, preacher for Oak Hills church in San Antonio said this about entertainment: "No longer can we afford the luxury of thinking that the people who are sitting in our pews are going to be there every Sunday. We have to arrest their attention. We have to use every device possible to reach them and to teach them and we need not be so apologetic about entertaining them. I mean, they have been entertained all week long, every time they turn around. I have no apology for putting a good singer in front of them to entertain them if they're not Christians. You've got to do something to reach them ... " (Preaching magazine, July-August 2005, p. 14).

There are four reasons why true worship should NOT be entertaining.

- Because it gives praise to men.
- Because it does not focus on God.
- Because it was not part of the early church.
- Because it does not save people.

For all these reasons and more entertainment should not be part of the local church assemblies. People say, "But people can't be saved if we don't market them and get them into the church!" Who do you think you are? Are you God? Are you Lord of the harvest? It's God that saves soul – not you. All of your marketing techniques are useless when it comes to the salvation of sinners.

1 Corinthians 2:2-4

"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom (not with entertainment and market-driven methods), but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

The power is in the Gospel – not worldly and cheap entertainment.

Ed Young, pastor of Fellowship Church in Grapevine, Texas (a church that draws over 15,000 to its weekend services) said in an interview "I want people at Fellowship Church saying 'What is coming next? I'm not sure what's going to happen next.' He is famous for keeping people guessing, doing everything from driving a Ferrari on stage to showing a video clip of him ordering a hamburger at McDonald's during his "sermon." Once he brought out an espresso machine and told the "parable of the coffee" while making a cup of espresso.

Let me say that entertainment quickly degenerates into mere pleasure. It does not give God the glory but man the glory. The worldwide craving for entertainment, not only in the church, but also in the everyday lives of people, results in people leaving God out of our lives. They are more elated with pleasure than with following God. All of this demonstrates that people's hearts and love have turned away from God toward pleasures.

Love for God, righteousness, and truth cannot be present in the hearts of people who possess a committed love for their own pleasures and leave God out of their lives. The church and society of our day is inundated and overrun with sinful pleasures, entertaining pleasures, and morally depraved pleasures. A true, genuine, and committed love for God is missing in many churches and certainly within our society.

We are living during the last days madness! All of these expressions (lovers of their own selves, covetous, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God) refer to a defection within the professing church from true love – a love that is to be centered only upon Jesus Christ and not earthly wealth, materialism, and pleasures.

Jesus said elsewhere in Matthew 24:12:

"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."

We must guard our own hearts today from losing our first love for Jesus Christ.

Revelation 2:4

"Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

Maybe you need to return to your “honeymoon” love for Jesus Christ. It’s easy to slip away from our first love. Loving Jesus Christ makes our days different. They are fulfilling and rich when we walk with Jesus Christ. It is glory just to walk with Him!

“It is glory just to walk with Him whose blood has ransomed me;
It is rapture for my soul each day.
It is joy divine to feel Him near where'er my path may be.
Bless the Lord, it's glory all the way!”

If you lost the glory – get it back! Loving God and Jesus keeps us from becoming stale and stagnate in our Christian life and walk. If we get back the spark of loving Jesus Christ, our lives will be different!

2. A defection from humility (2 Timothy 2:2, 4)

The words “boasters” (vs. 2), “proud” (vs. 2) and “highminded” (vs. 4) means to be puffed up with pride. All of these should be lumped together in one category. These types of boasters are the people who know-it-all and who try to deceive people into thinking their way is the only way and the right way, while claiming to be a Christian and part of the Church.



They love to see their names in print and their faces on television. They exaggerate their abilities, their accomplishments, their talents, their reputations, and their value to society and to the Church. Even Nancy Pelosi (a Catholic) claims to be a Christian and part of the professing church today. She claims that she prays for the president every day! These types of people glory in making a big display of themselves, their riches, their accomplishments, and even their alternative lifestyles. They are egotistical and full of swelling words.

For instance, the homosexual apostate says, “I’m proud of my homosexual lifestyle and I want show it off to the world. I want the world to know that I’m proud to be gay, and proud to have a same sex marriage, even as a leader in the Church.”

The Beatles rock and roll group once boasted that they were more popular than Jesus Christ. Of course, the Beatles were mild in contrast to their musical heirs, who glorify sex and sodomy, promote lust and rebellion, praise drunkenness, profanity, immorality, and the use of drugs, and sing of hatred, murder and violence.

The inflated egos of people are an important ingredient in the last days recipe that would bring spiritual ruin and harm to the church and society in general. These types of “egomaniacs” have invaded the professing church.

Joseph Smith founder of the Mormon church, boasted of doing a greater “work” than the Lord Jesus. Joseph Smith made this incredible boast: “I have more to boast of than ever any man had. I am the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam. A large majority of the whole have stood by me. Neither Paul, John, Peter, nor Jesus ever did it. I boast that no man ever did such a work as I. The followers of Jesus ran away from Him; but the Latter-day Saints never ran away from me yet.” (History of the Church, Volume 6, Chapter 19, Page 408)

Some of these “last days” preachers brag of their accomplishments or what they have done. They strut on stages like peacocks and promote themselves, their success, and their own greatness. They are showmanship preachers filled with pride. We might term many church meetings today as “showtime for the sheep!”

TD Jakes, one of the superstars “last days” prosperity gospel preachers boasts of his huge successes, his money, and his accomplishments. In a Wall Street Journal article, which described Jakes as a country preacher with a multimillion-dollar religious empire, he was quoted as saying, “I am the power and the kingdom and the glory, and I think I kind of like it that way.” Even if he spoke these words in jest, he mocks God, who will not share His glory with another (Isa. 42:8).

Proverbs 16:18

“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.”

Pride is what took the devil down (1 Tim. 3:6) and we must guard our own hearts and lives from pride. Boasting and pride can very easily slip into our own hearts and lives. We can be proud of our accomplishments, our position, our wealth, and just about anything. We must guard our hearts from elevating ourselves above others, exaggerating our own importance, and glorifying ourselves through the unbiblical teachings of self-concept and self-love that is being propagated in the church today.

John Bunyan

“He that is down needs fear no fall,
He that is low, no pride;
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide.”

3. A defection from wholesome speech (1 Timothy 3:2, 3)

The word “blasphemers” (vs. 2) can be applied to a broad range of things but basically points to those who speak evil of God and the truth. Today the liberal theologians continue to deny the deity of Jesus Christ and the great doctrines of the Bible. Apostates within the church deny the truth of God’s Word with their lips (what they say) and lifestyle (what they do),

Of course, blasphemers would also apply to those who use God’s name in vain and speak evil of the name of Jesus Christ.

John Phillips states:

“Today the Judeo-Christian ethic is increasingly under attack in the Western world. People do not hesitate to say or write the most terrible things against Christ. Much of the fare on television is tainted by profanity. The lovely names of the Lord Jesus Christ are used frequently as swear words in best-selling books and popular movies. The name of God is linked with the vilest words that can be dredged up from the sewer of an unregenerate mind. There was a time when even the mildest swear words were not acceptable in books, television shows, or movies.”

The word “false accusers” (vs. 3) falls under the same category of unwholesome speech. This is the same Greek word that is translated for the “devil” (diabolos) in

the Bible. It connotes the idea of using “slander” or speaking evil. There are several ways a person can be a slanderer.

First, a person can slander those things which are actually true, good, and wholesome. Religious slanderers are those who speak untrue and evil things against God, God’s, people, and God’s truth (the Bible). The apostate teacher slanders dedicated Christians by telling them that they are too narrow-minded and they also slander the absolute standard of God’s Word by sidestepping its inerrant and infallible teachings.

Mormonism claims to be part of the true church. They pose as Christians. But they are false accusers speaking against God’s Word.

A 3rd article of their Faith says:

“We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”

CANON 12 of the Roman Catholicism says the same thing:

"If any one shall say that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in the divine mercy pardoning sins for Christ's sake, or that it is that confidence alone by which we are justified...let him be accursed" (damned to hell).

"If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified; in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema" (Damned to Hell - Canon 9, Council of Trent).

These damning statements are blatantly false and unbiblical. Salvation from hell and eternal life comes to us only through Jesus Christ without man’s obedience. Salvation is a free gift “for the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).



Those who disguise themselves as part of the true Christian church are false accusers and slanderers of the truth of God's Word.

Second, within the professing Church of today, there is another form of "false accusers" which is gossip. Gossip has gone wild which is another form of slander or being false accusers. Gossip means you talk about

others in order to destroy their reputation and make yourself look better. When doing this, you partake of the same character of Satan, who is a slanderer. Are there any gossips in Washington? Yes, many government officials are liars, leakers, and lunatic gossips!

Of course, we are not a gossip when we expose the open and ongoing errors of those who are errant in their positions on the Bible and who are openly pushing errant positions which are not according to God's truth. We are called upon to "prove all things" (1 Thess. 5:21) which includes what everybody says and teaches. This our mandate. Anybody who presents a false gospel, who is a detriment to Christianity and the truth, who is openly leading people astray by false doctrine, is certainly open to scrutiny and denouncement. Jesus called the religious people of His day hypocrites and vipers and He exposed error. We too as a follower of Christ (are commanded to examine everything (Acts 17:10), what others say and do, and make a Biblical assessment of their lives and teachings (Matt. 7:16-20; 12:33-34). This practice is not gossip.

Gossip or Slander



What malicious gossips do is that they talk behind the backs of people and make a point to harm the reputation of others, whether to promote their own interests or agenda, to express jealousy or hatred toward others, or simply to vent their own anger. Gossips take pleasure in damaging reputations and destroying the lives of people. Gossip is a sign

of the apostasy that will take place in the Church during the last days.

Whatever you do don't become a professional gossip and destroy the character and reputation of others. We must be careful about this in relation to our own Christian life.

Proverbs 26:22 states:

"The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly."

Proverbs 26:20 adds

"Where no wood is, *there* the fire goeth out: so where *there is* no talebearer, the strife ceaseth."

There are times when somebody may want to gossip to us but we must kindly say, "I cannot receive this."

Someone said:

"The only difference between a buzzard and a gossip is that the buzzard waits until the person is dead before it tears him apart."

Years ago a Christian radio station called me and asked if they could offer my booklet on "Gossip" to their radio audience. I gave them permission and after one week the radio station contacted me and said they cannot print the booklets fast enough. Why? It's because gossip is a terrible problem in the church. Folks, we must refuse to speak evil of other Christians by trying to defame their character and destroying their lives. We must put a zip on our lips and allow our lips to build up the lives of others through prayer and patience – not defame them and destroy their lives.

I read something on the news yesterday that startled me. The heading read like this: "Transsexual Satanist anarchist wins GOP not for sheriff in New Hampshire." I could not believe what I was reading. Later in the article the woman is on record as saying: "I'm running for sheriff because I oppose that very system, and the sheriff has the most hands-on ability in Cheshire County to oppose that system." Later she

said: "Sweet Satan, how can you not be an anarchist?" And she is going to be sheriff? Folks, this is more of the last days madness that has become increasingly worse.

"Signs of the times are everywhere,
There's a brand new feeling in the air.
Keep your eyes upon the eastern sky,
Lift up your head for your redemption draweth nigh."

We are talking about the "last days" and the general signs of trends that will occur throughout the Church Age and become increasingly worse as the Church Age winds down.

4. A defection from obedience

It goes without saying that being disobeying parents is not a modern development. The expression "disobedient to parents" (vs. 2) speaks of the great rebellion that is evident in the professing Church today among the younger generation. Once again, we must remember that what is reflected in society is also reflected in the church many times since they are following the cultural ways of the world. So, the last day sign of rebellion to parental authority is not only something that is witnessed within the church but throughout society in general.

The rebellion to parents and the older generational values became evident during the days of the Beatles (the 1960's). The Beatles were one of society's heroes. They were a group who paved the way for our present godless culture of rebellion in this country. Although rebellion against parental authority has always flourished in the world since the days of apostolic Christianity and during the inception of our own country (America), there was a pronounced rebellion that began to occur around the time of my birth (the 1960's).

With the hippie generation of the 60's and 70's and our present generation of today we have witnessed a great departure from the traditional family and home structure.

Defiance of parental authority has become an epidemic in the church and society at large. This defiance is fostered by humanistic teachings that tell parents how to raise children. You can listen to the “fake news” today and they will tell you how to raise your children. But the breakdown of parental authority within the home is also seen because of the sinful and indulgent lifestyles of the parents who set no examples to their children.

Disobedience to authority is the seedbed of all apostasy. The spirit of self-will is manifested today in the young generation within the professed Church. Children are disobedient toward their parents and this ultimately funnels over into their disobedience against God and what is right.

Early childhood disobedience carries over into adulthood and church life. Self-rule wins out over God’s rule within a person’s life and decisions. Rebellion in early age often leads to rebellion in older age.

The disobedience of children to parents in our day has become epidemic, and the cause is not hard to find. The disappearance of mothers into the work force and the spiritual failure of both mothers and fathers is the cause of rebellious children. Added to this, there is the failure to train up children in the ways of the Bible and using Biblical patterns of discipline on children to break their will and help them to learn obedience (Prov. 13:24; 22:15). God still tells us as parents to apply the board of education to the seat of learning!

Proverbs 19:18

“Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.”

The failure to discipline has brought on this terrible sign of the last days within the world. The last days madness we see happening all around us has its roots in rebellion against parental authority. Today disobedience is seen to be a psychological dysfunction and many are trying to drug their children to correct their problems. Has the Church gone completely mad today? Whatever happened to old-fashioned discipline?

Proverbs 29:15

“The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left *to himself* bringeth his mother to shame.”

A little girl said to her teacher, “Miss Hayes, I don’t want to scare you, but my dad said, if my grades don’t improve, someone’s going to get a spanking!”

As a younger person and teen, God expects you to obey and honor your parents. This was included in the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 20:12

“Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”

The editor of a small weekly newspaper in a town in the West found it hard to find news to fill his columns. So he put the Ten Commandments, and ran them without making any editorial comment. Three days after the paper was published he received a letter saying: “Please cancel my subscription. You’re getting too personal.”

To honor your parents means to obey them. The Israelites were to honor God because He had given them life, and they were to honor their parents because they were His instruments in giving them life.

As a younger person, you must examine yourself and make sure that you have been honoring and obeying your parents with a right attitude. Are you always arguing with your parents and trying to buck their authority? Have you been rebellious and seeking your own way in life? You might think that it’s the “in thing” to be rebellious but it’s not God’s thing! The Bible says that “rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft” (1 Sam. 15:23).

Someone said:

“Rebellion may work for a time, maybe even a long time, but, in the end, it will lead us to ruin. Sometimes it may take us hitting “rock bottom,” emotionally, financially,

relationally, or all of the above, before we are willing to humble ourselves and admit we were wrong.”

Many experts are trying to analyze the problem with teens in view of school shootings and other horrendous sins being committed by our younger generation. They wonder why there is such rage and brutality among teenagers from the inner city to rural areas? Some blame student cliques, uncensored Internet information, availability of guns, vulgar rap music, gothic philosophy (a dislike for conservative values), or the removal of Bible reading and prayer in the school. The center of the problem is that parents have not raised many of these children and a total breakdown of parental authority and the family unit.

5. A defection from gratitude (vs. 2)

The word “unthankful” (vs. 2) is appropriate for this next category. It means to be ungrateful and lack appreciation to God for His blessings. It describes people who do not express gratitude to God for life, breath, and for everything they possess in life.



Acts 17:25

“Neither is (God) worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.”

Instead of praising God for His blessings, many today praise themselves for what they think are their own accomplishments. The person who elevates himself above others will feel that he deserves everything that he receives and therefore feels no need to express gratitude to God for what he has. The ungrateful person despises the very idea of grace, which denotes goodness received, which is undeserved.

Romans 1:21 states:

“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”

What is true in the professing church is also true in society at large. People are ungrateful to God and in some cases actually replace the true God with idols and idolatry. Being unthankful is a sign of an unregenerate society but it also a sign of the professing church of the last days of which many are unregenerate and lack God's life. The unsaved ungrateful person despises the very idea of grace, which denotes goodness received that is undeserved. This is a particularly terrible sin toward God and results in His wrath being revealed against unthankful sinners who are unsaved (Rom. 1:18, 21).

As Christians, we should be thankful for our health, for God meeting our needs, and for every good gift that God sends our way. If you are unthankful or ungrateful to God for the blessings He has given to you, then you are playing into the spirit of the last days.

Colossians 3:15

“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.”

“How can I say thanks
For the things you have done for me
Things so undeserved
Yet You gave to prove your love for me
The voices of a million angels
Could not express my gratitude
All that I am and ever hope to be
I owe it all to thee.”

6. A defection from holy living (vs. 2)

There's no question holiness is one of the central themes in the Bible. The word “holy” occurs more than 600 times in the Bible, more than 700 when you include derivative words like holiness, sanctify, and sanctification. You can't make sense of the Bible without understanding that God is holy and that this holy God wants to make His own children holy people as well.

When people are “unholy” (vs. 2) it means they disregard sacred things and do not allow God and the Bible to rule and purify their lives. Instead of living a holy or consecrated life toward God, they live a wicked life that is contrary to God’s plan and purity. The unholy person is driven by self-love in order to gratify his own lusts and passions, while giving no thought to decency or God’s approval.

1 Peter 1:15-16

“But as he which hath called you is holy (God’s character), so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (God’s command).

Today the church wants to bypass God’s holiness on many issues as they try to use pragmatism to gain a following. Nominal Christians live without discretion and discipline. They long for worldly things, look like the world, and listen to the same music as the world does. We need to understand something. The musical rebellion of our present-day culture has placed a blot and blight upon the modern-day Church. A vast portion of the Church has embraced and adopted the musical rebellion of Rock Music which began with the music of the 50 and 60’s.



Rock Music is definitely a sign of the last days! I can conclude that there is a lot of musical madness taking place in the church today. Not only does the church listen to secular Rock Music but also Contemporary Christian Music which in its sound and many times shallow message is a reflection and counterpart of the secular form of Rock Music.

There are many Christians within the church who think nothing about listening to a type of music that reflects in both words and sounds that which has been created to promote sex, drugs, and rebellion in the lives of people. Many Christians promote worldliness in their lives when listening to Rock Music and they are unwise in their musical choices and musical listening habits. They listen to a type of music (both sound and words) which the devil has historically used to promote sexual rebellion and control and destroy the lives of millions of people.

The rock stars and pied pipers of rock music have said this for years. Jane Pauley of the *NBC Today Show* interviewed Annie Lennox and David Stewart. When asked what they were trying to do with their music (not their words) they replied, "We are committed to sex in our music – we are becoming like gods." Rock star John Oates was quoted in *Circus Magazine* (1976) as saying that "rock and roll is 99% sex."

"Everybody takes it for granted that rock and roll is synonymous with sex" (Chris Stein, interview in *People*, May 21, 1979). "Rock and roll keeps you in a constant state of juvenile delinquency" (Eddie Spaghetti). "Rock n roll is about drugs" (Marilyn Manson). "There was a time I thought I couldn't enjoy rock 'n' roll unless I had heroin in me" (Joe Perry of Aerosmith). "You can't have rock and roll without drugs, you can't have rock and roll without sex" (Rick James). "Rock Music is sex and you have to hit them in the face with it" (Andrew Oldham, manager of Rolling Stones).

This is the "last days" madness that has overtaken the culture and even the church. Many Christians try and defend Rock Music in one form or another. They will say, "Show me where the Bible says that Rock Music is evil." We might counter with questions like this: "Show me where it's okay to use the same type of musical sound used by Satanists, Madonna, and the sex and drug culture." "Show me how you are not taking on the appearance of evil by using the same sound that has morally corrupted untold millions of people through the years?" "Show me why you should use Rock Music which has the stigma of immorality." Sometimes this type of stinging response actually works by getting lovers of CCM to think about their music.

Music in all of its forms, whether secular or Christian Rock Music, actually in some measure causes a person to bypass God's holiness as it relates to musical expression and worship. I have recently written a 200-page study on the subject of music. Why? It's because we need to know the Biblical truths that will help us to make wise musical choices for our personal lives and families. I'm not trying to take pulpit potshots at people but there are a lot of young people being swept away into musical rebellion and their lives are showing it. They are also living lives of rebellion against God's ways and holiness.

It could be said that holiness has taken a back seat in most churches today. We want lost people to attend our churches, but we do not help them if we mimic their way of life, culture, and worldly practices. The philosophy in the church today that says, “You’re okay and I’m okay” has no regard for the holiness of God.

Holiness should be something that is worked out in our everyday lives. It should be reflected in our attitudes, actions, and aspirations in life. Holiness is to be imbedded within our hearts. It’s to be a natural way of life. It does not consist of a list of rules that we must legalistically follow or comply with out of a cold heart. When we know the truth and have the Spirit working in our hearts, holiness becomes an automatic response out love and gratitude toward God – not a legalistic response out of cold conformity and a sense of duty.

Illust. - When someone is holy it means that they are set apart unto God to be used for His sacred purposes. In the Gettysburg Address (1863), Abraham Lincoln declared the Civil War battlefield in Pennsylvania to be “hallowed ground.” Because of the momentous events that took place in Gettysburg, Cemetery Ridge and Little Round Top would be forever set apart, no longer ordinary or common places, but ones with special significance consecrated for special commemoration. The battlefield at Gettysburg would in some sense be holy ground, a place set apart. In a similar way, as God’s people, we are to set apart, consecrated to God’s sacred purposes and duties for our lives. We are to live our lives on hallowed ground!

2 Corinthians 7:1

“Having therefore these promises (God’s promise of fellowship – vv. 17-18), dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh (the outward purity of the body) and spirit (the inward purity or our human spirit), perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (maturing and growing in holiness and consecration to God).

Is there a hole in your holiness? Is your life set apart for God and God alone? Is there some area that you need to improve in your Christian life? Passionate exhortations to pursue holiness is barely heard in most of our churches today. Too many sermons are basically self-help seminars on becoming a better you. Living and “unholy” life is part of the last days madness that is occurring in the church and

society at large. We are accountable to God for our lives and this will come out at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

7. A defection from family love (vs. 3)

The phrase “without natural affection” (vs. 3) is the translation of one word that describes “family love.” This is a term that speaks of social love among a family unit. So, the concept being promoted here is a lack of true and genuine family love or affection as designed by God. The family is under attack these days, and, as go the families, so goes the church and so goes the nation.

Romans 1:31 gives another list with the same word:

“Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.”

The expression “without natural affection” means that people have become hard-hearted and unloving toward kindred or family members and the way God has designed the family to function and operate. Today there is a breakdown in the family unit. This is a sign of the last days. Parents are not raising their children in a loving, home environment. The younger generation are not expressing love toward their parents.

Our country has been built upon the Biblical and traditional foundation of the family unit, which means one father, one mother, and children living together and loving each other.

Today mothers are working and they are missing out on rearing and teaching their children (Titus 2:5 – “keepers of the home”). Also, fathers are not providing for their families and the Bible says a father who does not provide for his family is “worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8).

Fathers are not playing a role in raising children and showing them loving compassion. They do not help their children and hug their children. Children are being left to themselves today and this is why many are concerned about delaying the start of school. They know that many children need interaction with others

within school. This is because their families are broken and “without natural affection.”

These types of actions are described as living “without natural affection” (expressions of love) in relationship to the home life and marriage. Today there is a growing divorce epidemic among families within the Church. Dads and moms are walking away from their children, committing adultery, and destroying their families. Adultery is “without natural affection” (without love extended toward a marriage partner). It is an act of selfishness which is a sign of the last days.

It’s equally true that killing babies inside the womb and now outside the womb of mothers is “without natural affection” (without any motherly expression of love toward her baby) and this is another sign of the “last days” madness taking place in America and the world at large.

Just to be clear, this is the NEW POINT where Democrats say it’s still okay to abort (murder babies).



We are approaching 50 million babies that have been aborted (murdered) by their mothers and the evil and morally depraved doctors who are one day going to be damned to hell (Lake of Fire) for their evil atrocities.

Friends, we are definitely living during the “last days” madness and these perilous times are getting increasingly worse as the Bible states.

In general, there is a growing epidemic of a lack of affection toward one another in the family unit even among those in the professed Church. This is why priests have been molesting children at alarming rates. They have no regard and affection toward children and family life. This is also part of the last days madness! In fact, the molestation of children and the sex trafficking that is occurring in our country is certainly a sign of the last days. All of this is without natural affection (the true expression of love).

Without natural affection certainly applies to what is happening in America today in the sexual exploitation of children. This is another horrible black spot on American culture.

This was just released this week:

Lawmakers in Washington, most of them Republicans, called Friday for the Justice Department to take legal action against Netflix for streaming the highly controversial film "Cuties" -- claiming the comedy-drama sexualizes young children and "serves as fodder for pedophiles."

The critics included U.S. Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., and U.S. Rep. Jim Banks, R-Ind. -- as well as U.S. Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, D-Hawaii. "There's no excuse for the sexualization of children, and Netflix's decision to promote the film 'Cuties' is disgusting at best and a serious crime at worst," Cotton told the Daily Caller. "I urge the Department of Justice to take action against Netflix for their role in pushing explicit depictions of children into American homes."

This type of thing is "without natural affection." This means it is not true love since it goes against God's normal and natural affections within a family unit. The people who write these movies that sexually exploit children and those who promote them are a bunch of morally depraved perverts and sickos who live in the sewer of filth and transgression.

And we want God to bless America? I know this is our heart's cry as Christians. But at this point, we might need to pray that God will save America!

The phrase "without natural affection" would also apply to the unnatural affection and lust among homosexual marriages. The Bible teaches that God has placed a natural love and drive toward members of the opposite sex which is a genuine and pure expression of affection ordained by God within the marriage unit. But



Last Days
Madness!

today we have a good deal of unnatural love which God has categorially condemned in Scripture (Rom. 1:18–27; 1 Cor. 6:9–10). Unnatural love and affection toward members of the opposite sex is confusion, and God is judging it and will also judge it in the future.

Satan is out to destroy the Biblical and traditional family unit. He wants men living together and women living together instead of the traditional and Biblical family of a man and wife being wed together in marriage for life. The days are getting darker. The last days will increasingly devalue traditional and Biblical love and affection among a God-ordained family unit.

In general, the family is under attack these days to drive them away from the natural love that is to exist within the family unit, whether it's a pseudo type of love in same-sex marriages or a lack of devoted love toward one another in the family unit.

Right from the beginning, Satan tried to disrupt family love toward one another. This is why Adam blamed Eve for sinning (Gen. 3:13) and why Cain rose up to kill Abel (Gen. 4:8). Satan was sowing the seeds of a lack of natural love and affection within the first family unit and he has been doing the same thing ever since the days of Eden.

We must stay vigilant today within our own family unit and make sure that Satan is not getting a wedge between us and weakening our family affection and love toward one another. Satan knows how to drive a wedge between our family members and if we allow him to do his work, our family relationships will suffer.

Men, what you are doing to stop Satan from taking away the love and affection that you are to have within your family? As the leader of your home, you are called to keep the fires of loving affection burning within the home atmosphere and between one another. Satan wants to remove our “natural affection” we are to have toward one another in the family unit. He will do anything to divide families today. Just look around. There are broken families everywhere.

In 1978, Thomas Hansen of Boulder Colorado, sued his parents for \$350,000 on grounds of "malpractice of parenting." Mom and Dad had botched his upbringing so badly, he charged in his suit, that he would need years of costly psychiatric treatment. I don't know if he won the lawsuit. Listen folks, we have a breakdown in our society and within the church of the traditional family unit. When we lose our love for one other in the family, when we move away from a genuine and Biblical love within the boundaries of the traditional family, it's then that we are headed toward heartache and trouble.

Shady Maple Smorgasbord will sometimes have something that is called "Midnight Madness." You can go at midnight and eat a meal at a greatly reduced price. I'm not sure how people can eat a huge meal and then come home and go to sleep. I notice that other stores have tried the same sales trick at the Christmas season (especially the day after Thanksgiving). You can go shop till you drop at their "Midnight Madness" sales and get good bargains. Well, I suppose there is a bit of madness associated with eating at Shady Maple after midnight and shopping at midnight on the day that follows Thanksgiving. But there is a general madness that is definitely associated with the last days in which we are living in today. When we look at the condition of the profession church and society at general, we can be sure that we are living in the period of time that the Bible identifies as the last days (2 Tim. 3:1).

We are once again talking about the "last days madness" – the signs that will occur throughout the Church Age and become increasingly worse as the Church Age winds down. Remember Paul seems to be specifically applying these signs or trends to the professing church for these people will often take on "a form of godliness" (2 Tim. 3:5). Many times these people will identify with the nominal church. They are described as learning but not being able to come to the truth (2 Tim. 3:7). Although they seem religious, they are "reprobate concerning the faith" (2 Tim. 3:8).

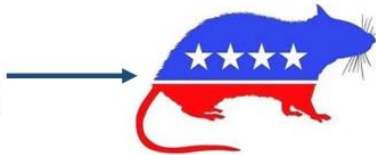
We have placed several descriptions in the same category. We have already seen that in the last days there would be: A defection from true love, humility, wholesome speech, obedience, gratitude, holy living, family love.

8. A defection from commitment (vs. 3)

The definition of a trucebreaker is one who violates a covenant or engagement. The word “Trucebreakers” literally means “without a treaty or covenant” (vs. 3) and describes people who will not agree on anything. It’s not really talking about someone who makes an agreement and then breaks it but someone who does not agree. In other words, a trucebreaker says, “No deal!” They are unwilling to come to terms with other people, and above all else, they refuse to come to terms with God! They are unyielding and irreconcilable and must have their own way. They do not want to commit to anyone or anything. It’s the type of person who says, “It’s my way or the highway.”

The **left-wing Democrat Party** are truce breakers that **do not agree with God or our constitution**. They want to kill babies, take away the freedoms of people, and silence churches.

This is a
Demorat!



This kind of sounds like the left-wing socialist party in Washington these days. They are impossible to get along with! They will not agree to anything unless they get their way all the time. They certainly do not want to follow the constitution and they certainly are not following God’s ways. They don’t want any treaty, covenant, or agreement with God.

Romans 1:31 gives this same idea in another listing:

“Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.”

The two expressions “trucebreakers” and “covenantbreakers” are closely related terms and could be tied together. They basically refer to those type of people who are unyielding to God’s ways over their lives even though they might often identify with the church in a generic fashion. These types of people want no commitment to God, His ways, and reject following His purpose for their lives. They will not agree with God and His ways!

But God says, “Agree with me and I will make something beautiful out of your life.” God says, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins

be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). Agree with me!

But those who are "trucebreakers" do not agree with God and they do want any genuine commitment to God and the truth. They want to live their own life in their own way. We see this happening within the ranks of the church. The word "trucebreakers" (vs. 3) basically refers to those people who want nothing to do with commitment of any kind. They want to live without any real commitment to God, the church, truth, and the Bible. They want to live their lives with no strings attached. Yes, they want to live without any covenant or agreement with God.

A truceless person does not really want a relationship with God and is determined to have his own way, regardless of what God thinks, regardless of what the consequences might be, even when it might destroy his own life, and even the lives of their family.

You cannot reason with these types of people and they are inevitably self-destructive. As far as they are concerned, there is no compromise, no reconciliation, and no court of appeal. Their self-love and desire to fulfill their own goals and purposes is so extreme that absolutely nothing matters except doing as they please.

I think we need to make some application of this to our lives today even as true Christians. If we are not careful, we can become a truce breaker. For instance, we can begin to question God's Word and no longer agree with God over the doctrine of separation and the direction He wants us to take in life. We can raise our stubborn will against the Lord and become consumed in our ways instead of God's ways. Beware of this! There is the danger of drifting and becoming a truce breaker.

Someone wrote this:

"When my wife and I got married in 1960 we made a commitment to one another that was sealed by a legal contract—we call it a marriage license. But as the years go by, we don't maintain that commitment to one another because of a contract. We remain committed because of the love that has grown out of our commitment. That license now is a keepsake instead of a contract."

In a similar way, we should NOT view our commitment to Christ as something that we do out of a mere sense of duty, but as something we want to do out of a deep sense of love and appreciation for what God has done for us and continues to do in our lives.

Romans 14:8

“For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.”

As we think of trucebreakers and a person's lack of commitment to God, the Word of God, and the ways of God over their lives, this brings up a question. Whatever happened to commitment on the local church level? Many Christians today want no real commitment to God's House, God's ways, and God's will for their lives. They are committed to everything else but God! Little do they realize that they have become trucebreakers! They have not agreed with God. Instead, they have said to God, “No deal.” Folks, this is a self-destructive path to follow.

We need to agree with God today on every issue because God is right on every issue. Essentially, we need to make covenants with God and keep them. We are not talking about legalistic covenants but real dedicated Christian living. Instead of being a “fly by night” Christian God has called us to make a truce with Him! He has called us to agree with His ways and stop being disobedient.

“My stubborn will at last hath yielded
I would be Thine and Thine alone
And this the prayer my lips are bringing
Lord, let in me Thy will be done
Sweet will of God, still fold me closer
Til I am wholly lost in Thee
Sweet will of God, still fold me closer
Til I am wholly lost in Thee”

The church and world are filled with trucebreakers. Are you one of them? Have you broken your agreement with God? Perhaps there is something that God wants you to do but you have refused to do it. You have been stubborn. Maybe you have been

ignoring His will for your life in some specific area. It's time to agree with God, remake your covenant and commitment to God, whatever it might be.

9. A defection from self-control (vs. 3)

The motto of our secular society today is this: "It can't be wrong if it feels so right." "Do your own thing and enjoy it." However, this is what the world teaches - not what the Word teaches us. The word "incontinent" (vs. 3) means to live without self-control and restraint. It's a word that denotes lack of spiritual discipline in one's life.

Dr. John Miles, my teacher and president of the Grand Rapids School of the Bible and Music, always would remind us of the important of discipline. God wants us to discipline our lives so that we might experience our true freedom in Christ. Without living a disciplined life (the disciplines of a godly man and woman) we will be "open hunting season" for Satan.

The second word we place under this same category of self-control is the word "fierce" (vs. 3). This word speaks of living a savage and untamed way of life. When a person is "fierce" they lack self-control, which reveals itself in a number of ways – lust, loss of victory, lingering in sin, and loving pleasures more than God.

Today many people are living like the animals. And why shouldn't they? The secular schools and colleges have long been teaching that we came from the animals! You don't need to be a rocket scientist to figure this out! Many people today, even within the professing Church, are living without any self-control or restraint upon their lives. The age of free-sex and do as you please has inundated the professing Church. The pornography industry is exploding because people are living without restraint. A lack of moral restraint is everywhere today.

We mentioned this already. The horrible and terrible sex trade is running ramped in our country. The number of young girls that are being sold into sex trafficking is alarming and heart-wrenching. It is one of the most disgusting, despicable, and disgraceful sins mankind has engaged in. A complete lack of restraint is part of the last days madness!



The rioting, burning, looting, and murdering of police officers is but a few examples of people living without and moral or ethical restraint. Communists in general live without restraint as they will do just about anything to take over a country. They will lie, cheat, murder and try and steal away election in their craze for power and dominance over the lives of people. These are people who live without scruples and restraint.

What does God’s Word teach about discipline and restraint and how does it apply to our own Christian life?

1 Corinthians 9:27 reminds us of the important of spiritual discipline as it related to the Christian life. Paul said: “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection (discipline my body): lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (disapprove at the Judgment Seat of Christ).

The word “castaway” speaks of a person being disqualified and literally means to be “disapproved after testing.” Paul was concerned that he would not practice what he preached and in the end, when he stands before the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ, he would not be a “castaway” or that he would stand unapproved and not pass the test! In other words, he was concerned about God’s disapproval and the loss of reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ for his wayward living.

Of course, Paul is not suggesting that he could be lost after being saved, but that he might not pass the test in relation to his Christian living and be rejected and disapproved and not receive a reward. This interpretation fits the meaning of the word “castaway” or being disqualified from an athletic event or contest. Paul recognizes the awful but real possibility that he might not practice what he

preaches and that he himself might be disapproved from receiving a certain amount of reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ which he otherwise could have received.

Friends, we are to rule over our bodies – our bodies are not to rule over us. In the Christian life, there is a necessity for self-control, temperance, and discipline. As we yield to the inner power and work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we can find the spiritual disciplines we need to live victoriously in our Christian life and walk with God.

Although there will many joys and blessings associated with the Judgment Seat of Christ based upon our grace relationship with Jesus Christ, since Christ will reward all Christians (1 Cor. 4:5), this does not rule out the Bema as also being a time of inspection and retrospection of our lives. There will also be some tears and time of reflection over our lives and we will know in a moment's time our gains and losses in the area of reward.

2 John 1:8

“Look to yourselves (watch out!), that we (both John and his people to whom he writes) lose not those things which we have wrought (the truths that were taught among the people by the apostles), but that we (together – both John and the lay people) receive a full reward” (for embracing the truth and living righteously at Christ's return),

Paul never talks about the loss of salvation but the loss of reward. Here is the point. In view of our final examination, God wants us to discipline our lives today by controlling where our affections are leading us, where we go in society, what we watch on TV and the Internet, what we listen to, what we read, and even what we eat. Living a disciplined life is actually a life of freedom and liberty. Discipline is a necessary prerequisite to living a holy life. We must, of course, avoid the extremes of religious asceticism which is unhealthy and of no value spiritually (Col. 2:18–23).

Pablo Casals was considered the greatest cellist to ever live. When he was 95 years old he was asked why he continued to practice 6 hours a day. He answered, “Because I think I'm making progress.”

Christian friend, we need to remember to maintain discipline in our Christian life. We find our disciplines in the Bible and work of the Holy Spirit. But we need to stay at it if we are going to make spiritual progress in our Christian life. When we stop discipling our lives – we stop moving forward.

10. A defection from goodness

Instead of honoring what is good, many people living during the last days will be “despisers of those that are good” (2 Tim. 3:3). This means that they will be hostile and opposed to those who practice what is considered good, such as Christian virtues and those things which are wholesome and morally right. In our society the standards of right and wrong (good and evil) have been twisted, if not totally destroyed. In our present political climate, harming and even killing police officers is considered to be something that is now good. This is what the insurrectionists or communists are promoting in our country.

This expression “despisers of those that are good” means that people are opposed to living the kind of good life that God condones, and other Christians are living. Many today are opposed to Christian virtues that honor God (what is good) but are quick to promote their secular vices, philosophies, and ideologies. For instance, abortion is now seen to be an acceptable practice by many Americans. Women will tell you that they have reproductive rights over their bodies. Homosexuality is now considered a cultural norm and same-sex marriages are to be accepted and forced among society. They are even changing the English language to make things more unisex in our society. Instead of using mankind we must now substitute humankind in its place and promote a non-sexist and non-offensive terminology. The demoralizing of our police force is now considered as something good.

If you stand against any of these things today, you will be opposed. This is because many people have adopted cultural contamination and have become “despisers of those that are good” or opposers of those who want to maintain a sense of decency, morality, and Biblical norms within a society.

It seems that the tables have been turned and many people love the evil and hate the good. This is another sign of the last days madness!

Isaiah 5:20 exclaims:

“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”

I’m amazed at how man today, even within the Church, who glorify various sins of worldliness and vice. The sins of impurity, immodesty, heathen body piercing, and rebellious rock music seem to be the norm these days. When these things are promoted and practiced in our lives, we become promoters of bad things and actually oppose the good things. Today the modern Church seems to hate what should be loved and loves what should be hated.

John W. Peterson wrote in a song many years ago: “Give me the good life!” However, many are not singing this tune any longer. They don’t want the “good life.” Instead, they want the “worldly life.” This is true within the ranks of the professing Church.

Again, the emphasis here is on people being “despisers of those that are good” which means opposing others who are doing right. Of course, in the climate of the last days, those who want to hold a firm stand against ungodliness within the church and promote separation from cultural worldliness are called legalists, out-of-touch, and divisive brethren. It seems that within the professing church there is a trend to oppose those who try and speak out against the last days madness occurring in the church.

Remember that even genuine believers, in some measure, can promote the apostasy and rebellion that is seeking to overtake the Church. Apostasy can apply to the realms of theology, music, the arts, and secular living. We can see how the modern evangelical church has become corrupted by the secular culture of the last days and will continue to swallow the culture hook, line, and sinker.

11. A defection from loyalty



The word “Traitors” (2 Tim. 3:4) describes people who betray others and cannot be trusted. Neither friendship nor partnership makes any difference to them; they lie and break their promises whenever doing so helps them get their own way. Joe Biden (a Catholic within the professing church) is a perfect example of a “traitor” today. He flip flops on anything and everything to please people. He

betrays the truth, betrays people, he betrays our country, and he will betray anyone and anything to get into power.

Sadly, there are many today within the ranks of the professing Church who betray God, those Christians who stand for the truth, and who betray the truth itself, as they seek to promote their agendas which are contrary to righteousness. There are many who call themselves Christians while denying “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3), which is a body of revealed truth that all true Christians should love, defend, and embrace today.

The term “heady” (vs. 4) can also be placed under this category of defecting from loyalty to God. This term means to be “reckless, rash, acting without careful thought.” It speaks of a person who is not loyal to God but who acts solely on the basis of their feelings and desires. The word literally means to “fall forward” and conveys someone who falls headlong into sin because they have no commitment to God and want to live a recklessness. So, “traitors” and “heady” can be placed in the same category (a defection from loyalty to God).

These types of people have defected from what is good, right, and honorable before God. You cannot be “heady” and “holy” at the same time! This is the person who is careless, negligent, and rash in the decision-making process. Loyalty to God is not part of this person’s agenda and life. Instead, they do what they want to do. This is the type of person who rushes toward the pursuit of their own will and program of life, without considering any loyalty to God and truth. The heady person is not loyal to God, since he wants to follow his own dreams and goals in life, instead

of God's will for his life. A heady person is someone who has no regard for God's will or the interests of others. He only lives and thinks of himself. A "heady" person is a rash person, who reacts without thinking of anyone else, including God, in order to fulfill his own goals and desires in life.

Luke 9:23

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

When we are ready to follow Christ we will say to Him, "Anything, anywhere, any time, and at any cost." We will also say to Jesus, "Whatever, whenever, and wherever." In other words, we will express our loyalty to God and not our own agenda in life.

Vance Havner once remarked:

"We have put the demands of discipleship in fine print for fear that we will scare away the prospects."

12. A defection from real Christianity

Many people within professing Christianity operate under the disguise of religion. They are religious but rebellious at the same time! The Bible describes them as "Having a form of godliness" (2 Tim. 3:5) which suggests an outward appearance and pharisaic religion or religiosity but not true Christian faith. In other words, they defect from the true or genuine version of Christianity. This is because they have never experienced the power of God in their lives which refers to the power of salvation and life-transforming power of sanctification. They have a form without force and religion without reality. They are not the real deal!

Shakespeare wrote of the devil possessing outward religious fakery:

"The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.
An evil soul producing holy witness
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,
A goodly apple rotten at the heart:
O, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!"

You see, many people today within the church only possess this “form of godliness” which basically means they only possess what we might call formal religion (the outward shell of religion but the real version of Christianity). They do not really live and experience the true Christian life which consists of salvation and sanctification through the Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, they do take on the appearance that they are religious and linked to God and Christianity. They wear the right robes, sing the songs, and appear to be part of the true Church, and yet, they are imposters! They are tares among the wheat (Matt. 13:24-25). They possess a religious form without godliness! They might call themselves Christianity 2.0 but there has only been one version of Christianity – Biblical Christianity.

This “form without godliness” speaks of religion without a true relationship with God. It involves religion and regulations without real Christianity. It is the social gospel without substance. These people may be a Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopal, or Baptist, but they do not possess the true thing, which is salvation through Jesus Christ and His new and abundant life (John 10:10).

The expression “denying the power” means several things. First, they deny the power of the Gospel to save them. many today within the professing Church deny the only power that can save them, which is the power of the Gospel message.

Romans 1:16 states:

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

False teachers deny the power of the saving Gospel message. This is why they don’t preach it. Although the messages that they give are presented in many persuasive ways, their messages are actually empty, worthless, damning messages that keep people out of the Heaven. In failing to preach the Gospel they deny its power to save souls.

Second, they deny the power of God to transform them. Many in the professing church deny the power of God, which can transform their lives. Titus 1:16 says,

“They profess that they know God; but in works they deny *him*, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.”

Many nominal Christians keep up “a form of godliness” but they don’t want the liberating force or power of grace to change their lives. This is religion without reality. Outwardly these people seem religious; they make a profession of Christianity, but their actions speak louder than their words. By their ungodly behavior, they show that they are living a lie. There is no evidence of the power of God working in their lives. While there might be reformation, there never was regeneration. This is the sad reality of what is occurring in the lives of many people today within the last days.

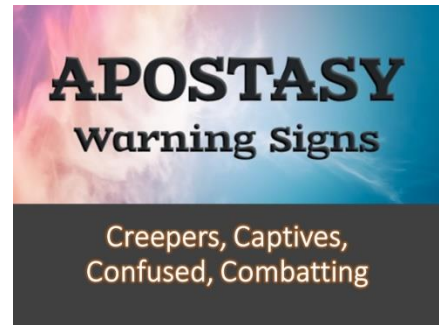
Edmond Hiebert extends this warning about the form of godliness or the false disguise of Christianity today: “It is the fearful portrayal of an apostate Christendom, a new paganism.” He’s got it right! Today many of the leaders in the Church are masquerading under the name of Christianity, and immature members in the church will accept their apostate and paganized form of Christianity, as the true faith. .

I remember going into a store and they had some fake fruit sitting on the table. It looked real. They also had a piece of apple pie with a side of vanilla ice-cream. It looked very real, but it was fake. It was created out of wax. Of course, wax fruit is not real fruit and it possesses no nutritional value. This is the picture of many who are living during these last days. They sometimes look good on the surface. They appear to be religious and doing what seems to be right. They have a “form of godliness” but they have not embraced the power of salvation and sanctification in their lives.

We are commanded to “turn away” (vs. 5) and separate from the apostates (1 Cor. 15:33). This forbids ecumenicalism with those who wear a religious disguise, and even with those who are not part of the true Church but who are compromising with the deception. The Word of God is very clear about this. Don’t associate with apostasy! Don’t attend churches that are apostate and don’t associate with those who promote ecumenical ties with apostasy! We are to steer clear of it in every way and stay clean at all costs This leads into our next point.

13. A defection from truth

Paul finishes the description of the last days as being overrun with false teachers who are apostates and who are leading others astray. The apostates overturn and override Biblical maxims and living. They also confuse and control others who follow their teachings and examples. Together, both the false teachers and their followers are seen to be defectors from the truth.



The defectors are described in four ways.

a. They are creepers (referring to teachers)

The Bible says “For of this sort are they which creep into houses” (2 Tim. 3:6). The fact that they “creep into houses” may refer to the local house churches during the early days of the Church. The apostate creeps or secretly enters into homes and churches, with a disguise, and promises a new start and life, but he does not have the right message. They are actually coming into the local churches with false messages and false hopes. Jude 4 describes them in this way: “For there are certain men crept in unawares (stealthily, secretly), who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Secrecy and disguise are still the hallmarks of apostasy. This is the way they capture the clueless and weak.

b. They are captives (referring to the victims)

The Bible goes on to say, “and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts.” In this case, the victims are women. Some have use 2 Timothy 3:6 to argue that Christian women are not as discerning as Christian men. But the Bible does not say that Satan deceives godly, discerning, and spiritual women; he deceives “silly women” or foolish women, who are living for themselves, and who

have no spiritual discernment in life. God does not want you to be a silly woman; He wants you to become a spiritual woman who loves God and follows His will for your life and marriage.

Many cults today are directed and dominated by silly women (foolish women) who have had their lives taken captive by Satan. These foolish women are “laden with sins” (vs. 6) which means they are already weighed down with various sins and they are open game for Satan. When a person plays around with sin they are easily overtaken by Satan’s foolish tactics. In any event, it’s these types of women that are “led away with divers lusts” which indicates that these foolish women are led into sinful living, by their ungodly impulses, and they are weak spiritually and emotionally, because of sin. Again, these types of women are easy targets for Satan and his religious quacks that are in Christendom. Don’t be a silly woman, learn to be a spiritual and discerning woman of the last days!

c. They are confused (referring to the victims)

2 Timothy 3:7

“Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

This gives the sad story of many people today within the professing Church. These silly women and many others people in general are always learning something new from someone that is false. But in spite of all the new things they are learning, they never can understand the truth of God’s Word and allow the truth to change their lives. Through false teaching and error, people remain confused and don’t understand the truth of God’s Word, and how it applies to their lives.

The expression “ever learning” or always learning does not mean that they are continually learning more about the Lord Jesus and the Word of God. Rather, it means they are constantly being confused, as they delve into one form of error after another but are never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:4 says this:

“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”

A person cannot be saved who is always learning error but not learning the truth! In fact, many teachers and people use the Bible to promote their own errant teachings. The way I figure it, many churches refer to the Bible but they do not teach the Bible. Some churches talk about the Bible but they do not learn the Bible. They are using the Bible but not discovering the true meaning of the Bible. They never come to know the truth about salvation and sanctification or the way that God wants them to live.

d. They are combatting (this refers to the teachers)

2 Timothy 3:8 goes on to say: “Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.”

The apostate combats or fights against the truth and the right way. He combats God’s Word, God’s preacher, and God’s people. The two men mentioned here, withstood Moses, by imitating his works. They made their rods into snakes as Moses did (Exodus 7:9-12). Of course, they accomplished this miracle through the assistance of demons. One way Satan combats God’s people and God’s Word is through imitation.

This reminds me that the last days sign of defecting from the truth is often accompanied with a revival of demonism performing miracles. Yes, Demons can perform miracles. Levitation, clairvoyance, astral projection, and paranormal powers all testify to this. The cultic world of Satanism is filled with miracles. Then too, we have the deception of miracles occurring today in the modern Charismatic Movement. Not all miracles are of God and we must come to grips with this reality today. The miracle-making men of today who claim to be apostles are often hailed as the greatest superstars in the Church.

But let us remember that we are living during the Last Days and are quickly approach the End Times (Tribulation Period). Today, great deception is occurring through miracles. The fact that a person claims to perform miracles is no sign that this person is from God. Jannes and Jambres were not of God and they performed miracles. They were nothing more than religious magicians empowered by demons.

Matthew 7:22-23

“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works (miraculous feats)? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

The truth is that during the Last Days (Pentecost to Rapture) and End Times (Tribulation Period to Second Coming) there will be an increasing effort to deceive people with miraculous signs. Miracles will be performed by Satan’s men, which will cause the world to follow these men and their false teachings. They will perform miracles which will seemingly validate their claims to be prophets and teachers of God, but in reality, they are actually imposters promoting Satan’s agenda.

Today apostates are imitators of religion. They have a form of godliness (2 Tim. 3:5), but in actuality, they are defectors, who “resist the truth” (2 Tim. 3:8) of God’s unchanging Word and standard. They are constantly combating the truth. Why are they combating or resisting the truth? It’s because they are said to be “men of corrupt minds” (depraved minds – 2 Tim. 3:8) who think thoughts contrary to truth and righteousness.

Warren Wiersbe defines the apostates like this:

“They deny the authority of the Bible and substitute human wisdom and philosophy. In their attempt to be “modern,” they deny the reality of sin and people’s need for salvation. “Reprobate” is the word Paul used to describe them. This means “tested and found counterfeit.”

They are said to be “reprobate” is a word that was used to test metals and determine their trustworthiness. This means that the apostate is tested by God and disapproved and rejected “concerning the faith” (the body of revealed truth - what all Christians believe and embrace in the Bible). In other words, when the apostates are tested concerning the major tenants of Biblical Christianity, it will be discovered that they have discarded the faith.

So, these apostates are defectors from the way of truth, the God of truth, and people of truth and are disapproved or rejected by God as heretics. Listen, if a man refuses to share with people the true Gospel message and does not tell people how to be saved from hell, then he is a reprobate (one who God rejects). If an individual does not take a stand against homosexuality and stand up for the historic doctrines of the Bible, he is an apostate (one who has abandoned the truth).

We are familiar with things like Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons and Christian Science and Unity Cult. But we can hardly keep up with all of the wave of the new cults. Here is a list of some of them that are moving rapidly in our society: The River of Life Ministry, The Body of Christ, Mizpah Brethren, The Community Chapel, The Family of Love, The Alamo Christian Church, the Church of Bible Understanding, The Love Family, The Church of Armageddon, Faith Assembly, The Church of the Living Word, and The Christ Family. The onslaught of these kinds of isms is unending against the church.

The Church of the Armageddon caught my attention who believes that by simply loving one another we can have eternal life. Deaths of family members were the cause of some confusion among members who believed that they, and fellow members, were eternal. Over the years, it appears that members' interpretations of what it meant to be eternal shifted. The idea that "Persons who have true loving relationships with one another will overcome the appearance of death, for the love we share is eternal—indeed, that love is God—and we will be together forever in eternity...through love for one another we can have eternal life, even though the body may give up."

Beloved, time is running out! The Bible predicts that during the "last time," or the period of time before Christ returns in the Rapture (1 Tim. 4:1), Apostasy (defection from the truth) is a tale-telling sign that we are living in the last days and that Jesus Christ is coming soon.

"Signs of the times are everywhere,
There's a brand new feeling in the air.
Keep your eyes upon the eastern sky,
Lift up your head for your redemption draweth nigh."

Thank God we can live Biblically, discerningly, victoriously, and fruitfully during these last days. God is on our side!



Have you ever sat on your porch and watched a summer thunderstorm approaching? Way off in the distance you can see the darkness, blackness, and lightening flashes. You can begin to feel the air increase as the storm approaches. Your weather app on your iPhone tells you that this is going to be a bad storm. You prepare for the worst. You close your windows and perhaps

pull out some of your electrical cords from their outlets in case of lightening strikes. You close the garage doors. You can see and hear the thunderstorm off in the distance. Your hair begins to blow as the storm gets closer.

An approaching thunderstorm is one way to view the next part of our study. Today we can see the End Times (a Biblical expression referring to the seven-year Tribulation Period) approaching like a distant thunderstorm. We can hear the thunder and see the lightening of what is soon to occur and be unleashed on the earth. The storm is not here but it is approaching and looming over the horizon. And it's approaching fast.

According to a Pew Research Foundation, about one in five Americans believe that Christ will return in the current generation. A U.S. News and World Report poll revealed that 60 percent of all religious Americans believe the world will end eventually, and about 20 percent say earth's life expectancy is just a couple of decades away.

Today many people everywhere share a common belief that the world is getting near its closing time. Apocalyptic thinking is in the air. I'm glad the Bible gives us

the answer regarding what is going to take place in the future. We have a “more sure word of prophecy” (2 Pet. 1:19) and can know the events that are going to unfold in this world.

We have confirmed that the predictions of God apply to two areas.

- A. The prediction of the Last Days (Last Days madness!)
- B. The prelude to the End Times (What to expect!)



**Occurring
TODAY in
the world
(2 Timothy 3:1-13)**

**Occurs in
the FUTURE
(Matthew 24)**



End Time events can only occur in the seven years (Dan. 9:27) which is the final period of time that leads up to the end. What is happening today in the world is a preview of coming attractions. In other words, what is occurring in the world today is a prelude to the End Times. It’s paving the way for the End Times to begin. It’s a shadow of the reality that lies ahead for planet earth or what is on the horizon of earth’s climactic future.

Someone said:

“Prophetic events often cast their shadows on earth before they are fulfilled.”



The prophetic Scriptures and events that deal with the Tribulation Period are in one sense casting their shadows on earth today as we begin to see certain events in our world lining up in some measure with what is going to occur in the future seven years. There is an ominous shadow lurking over today's events in the world – it's the shadow of the Tribulation Period. Today

we are seeing general trends that are leading up to the beginning of the prophetic period of time known as Daniels 70th week (Dan. 9:27) or the prophetic week of years (the seven-year Tribulation Period) which will finish out Daniel's prophecy of the 490 years. Right now 483 years are history but there are still seven years that must be fulfilled to finish Daniel's prophecy of the 490 years. 483 years have elapsed but there are still seven years that must be fulfilled.

In Matthew 24:3 Jesus was answering the disciple's questions when the "end of the world" (age) would occur, which means the end of the pre-Messianic Age (the age before Messiah rules over the earth), the period of time that occurs just prior to the Second Coming of Christ to earth. Jesus clearly outlines that there would be a seven-year time period (based on Daniel's prophecy – Matt. 24:15) which consists of seven years. He divides this specific period of time into two sections ("the

beginning of sorrows" – Matt. 24:8) and the second half of this time period He identifies as "great tribulation" (Matt. 24:21) or the greater birth pangs that planet earth will experience.



**Beginning of sorrows
(Matt. 24:8)**
first 3.5 years

**Great Tribulation
(Matt. 24:21)**
second 3.5 years

In other words, Jesus clearly outlines that the seven years of Daniel's prophecy will be divided into two section – a lesser and greater time of judgment. These two time

segments would be separated by the event called the abomination of desolation (Matt. 24:15) when the Antichrist desecrates the Jewish temple by standing in the h holy place and declaring himself as the only true God (2 Thess. 2:4).

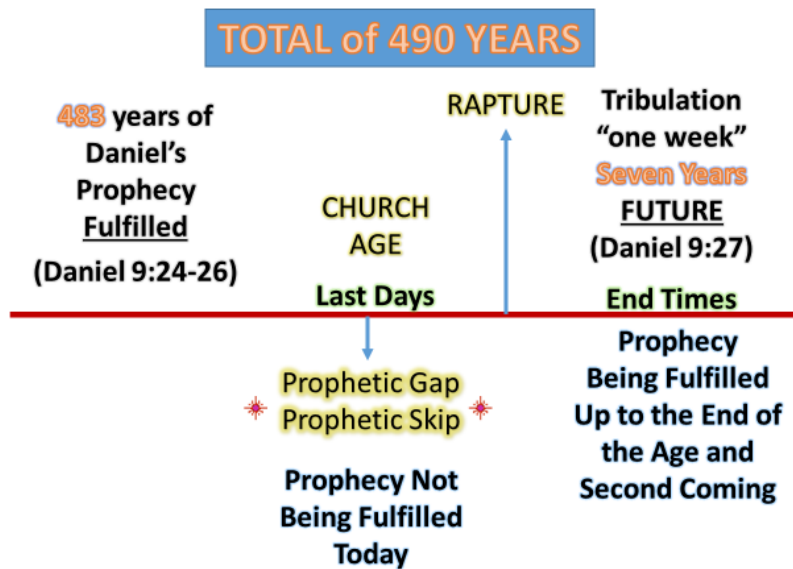
It should be noted that both of these expressions (the beginning of sorrows and great tribulation) do not have any direct fulfillment in our present day (Church Age). They are specifically said to occur during a future period of time known as the Tribulation Period which occurs seven years prior to the Second Coming and the establishment of the Millennium over the earth.

End Time events occur AFTER the Rapture (Rev. 3:10) and they are directly associated and linked to the seven-year Tribulation, a specific period of time when these events would transpire on earth. The term “end” is used on several occasions in Matthew 24 (Matt. 24:3, 6,12,13). Therefore, these are specific events that occur during the seven years (just prior to the end of the age) and have become known as End Time events. They are NOT prophetic events that are being fulfilled today in our world but are projected to be fulfilled during the Time of the End (the seven years leading up to the end of the age).

I was in a grocery store a while back and a man told me that we are living in the period of time known as the “beginning of sorrows.” Another man told me the same thing at a funeral. “We are in the beginning of sorrows.” I did not want to correct his incorrect view of prophecy at a funeral (it was not the place and time to do this) but we are not living during the End Times (the Tribulation Period), the time of the birth pangs. We should never associate what is occurring in the world today to what Jesus says will occur during the seven-year Tribulation Period and End Time events that occur during this specific time period.

This is called newspaper exegesis. You read the newspaper and conclude that what is happening in our world today is a direct fulfillment of the prophecies that Jesus gave in Matthew 24. How can this be? How can something occurring today be a fulfillment of what Jesus taught would occur only during the seven-year Tribulation Period? It’s impossible. We should not be so sloppy when talking about the fulfillment of prophetic events. Let me be very clear about something. We are not living in the era of the fulfillment of Bible prophecy.

We are not going to study in any detail Daniel’s prophecies but here is a chart and general review of where we are today and where the world will be in the future.



We are in a “prophetic gap” of time or “prophetic skip” when prophecy is not being fulfilled on earth. However, we are living during a unique time which can be viewed as a prelude to the End Times, a time when the stage is being set for End Time events to occur in the world.

At some point after the Rapture, the Tribulation Period will occur, and End Time events will then begin to transpire and be fulfilled on earth. But not until after the Rapture. Until then, we are living during a period of time known as the Last Days which occur just prior to the End Times (Tribulation Period and End Time events).

Jesus taught that specific signs would occur during the seven years which lead up the end of the age (Matt. 24:33) but these are signs that will specifically and only occur during the seven years (Tribulation Period). They are then known as End Time signs which take place during the seven years just prior to the Second Coming of Christ to rule over the earth.

The world is heading toward the End Times, but we are not living in this era or period of time. So, what we see occurring today in the world is setting the stage for the End Times to begin. What we see occurring today in the world are stage setting events which are preparing planet earth to enter the specific and unprecedented time period known as the Tribulation Period. Nothing that is occurring in the world is a direct fulfillment of the Tribulation Period signs but is a prelude to what will happen someday. What is occurring today in the world is NOT prophetic fulfillment but preparatory steps that occur as we head toward the approaching thunderstorm of the Tribulation Period.



For this part of our study, we want to review some of the signs and events that Jesus said would occur soon after the Rapture during the first half of the Tribulation Period. We can readily see that these prophetic events which will be fulfilled during the End Times (Tribulation Period) are starting to cast their ominous shadows upon the earth today.

So, as we study about these prophecies, we want to see how the stage is being set and things are shaping up for the End Times to begin. Although these prophecies are not being literally fulfilled today, we want to view these prophetic events as an approaching thunderstorm that is looming on the horizon. All of this means Jesus is coming again in the Rapture and the world is going to pass through momentous changes.

We need to get to know especially those events that will transpire during the first three and one half years of the Tribulation Period for it's these events that will most likely cast their shadows on the earth prior to their prophetic fulfillment. In other words, we can see these types of things occurring in some measure today even before they will come to a climax and be literally fulfilled during the Tribulation Period with dire consequences.

There is a remarkable resemblance between the seal judgments (Revelation 6) and what Jesus taught would occur during the first 3.5 years of the Tribulation Period – "the beginning of sorrows" (Matt. 24:8).

SEAL JUDGMENTS Revelation 6; 8:1-5 FIRST 3.5 YEARS	JESUS' PROPHECY (Matthew 24:3-14) FIRST 3.5 YEARS "BEGINNING of SORROWS"
(DECEPTION OF PEACE) "a bow" (no arrows) "white horse" Rev. 6:1-2	DECEPTION "that no man deceive you" (Matt. 24:4, 11)
WAR "take peace from the earth" "great sword" (Rev. 6:3-4)	WAR "wars and rumours of wars" (Matt. 24:6)
FAMINE "a pair of balances" (Rev. 6:5-6)	FAMINE "shall be famines" (Matt. 24:7)
PESTILENCES "death .. beasts of the earth" (Rev. 6:8)	PESTILENCES "and pestilences" (Matt. 24:7)
MARTYRS "souls ... slain" (Rev. 6:9)	MARTYRS "shall kill you" (Matt. 24:9)
EARTHQUAKES "an earthquake" (Rev. 6:12-14; 8:5)	EARTHQUAKES (Matt. 24:7) "earthquakes in divers places"

The prophetic statements of Jesus in Matthew 24 which deal with the first half of the Tribulation Period align with the prophetic statement that John gave which covers the first half of the Tribulation Period. There seems to be a correlation between what Jesus and John taught and said would occur during the first 3.5 years of the Tribulation Period. Comparing these two will enable us to see what is going to occur during the first 3.5 years of the Tribulation.

Once again, prophetic events are in some measure casting their shadows over the earth today even before they come to fulfillment. We will in a general way see the parallels between the Matthew 24 and Revelation 6 judgments which will occur during the first 3.5 years of the Tribulation Period.

Jesus predicted that there would three major signs.

1. The sign of world chaos.

It's no secret that we are living during times of increasing chaos in the world. Jesus predicted that the world would enter a stage of chaos, calamity, and violence

during the End Times. A time of world upheaval would be experienced by mankind. In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus is speaking about the signs of God's judgment that would occur on earth during the future seven-year Tribulation Period. However, we already see similar events occurring today in the world, and these events can be viewed as trends or developments (precursor signs) of what Jesus said would take place in the future. Again, coming events often cast their shadows on the world before they arrive. Changes in the world are occurring at an alarming rate. Both natural disasters and manmade disasters are creating a dangerous world. World violence and upheaval are everywhere today.

The world chaos of the last days will be witnessed in four ways.

➤ Deception

Matthew 24:4-5

“And Jesus answered and said unto them (His disciples), Take heed that no man deceive (mislead you and cause you to go astray) you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.”

The first birth pang is that of deception which is what catapults the world into chaos and confusion as the Tribulation gets underway. The chaos of the Tribulation Period will not only be physical but spiritual in nature. Jesus taught how great masses of people will be deceived who are living during the End Times. The deception of these future days will be intensified and escalated as never before. During this time there will be many false Christ's (Messiahs), each claiming to be the true Christ. This religious and spiritual deception will occur during the first half of the Tribulation Period. With the true Church raptured into Heaven, the false, apostate church will promote many false Christs. There will be many who claim to be the true Christ but are nothing more than imposters who are trying to deceive people and damn their souls to hell.

Matthew 24:23-26 gives us more information about this:

“Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here *is* Christ, or there; believe *it* not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders (the performing of miracles); insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall

deceive the very elect” (God’s chosen people – the Jewish people who flee into the wilderness). Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he (Christ) is in the desert; go not forth: behold, *he is* in the secret chambers (a private location); believe *it* not.”

By the second half of the Tribulation Period, there will be many claiming to be Christ and false teachers who will evidently infiltrate themselves into the chosen group of Jews (the Jewish refugees) who are fleeing into the wilderness (Matthew 24:16; Revelation 12:6).

In an atmosphere of crisis, reports will circulate that the Messiah is in some secret location. Such reports could be used to trap those Jews who are sincerely and lovingly look for Christ. So, the Lord warns His Jewish brethren not to believe reports of a local, secret appearance of Christ. During this future time period the false teachers will also be Satan’s emissaries who hope to entice the Jewish people away from God and into the hands of Antichrist. They will share his satanic desire to annihilate all Jews. So, they will make the claims to be Christ while at the same time be demonically and satanically inspired to perform miracles to prove their false claims. Think about this. Miracles will be performed to try and deceive the Jewish people from accepting the true Messiah as His Second Coming.

Here is something to contemplate. The Jewish fugitives running into the wilderness will have access to Jesus’ words recorded here in the Scriptures. Jesus will in one sense be speaking to them prophetically across the intervening centuries from His day to their time. Jesus is basically saying to these fleeing Jews, “Pay attention only to what I am teaching you, not to anything else you will hear or see in your day, no matter how authentic and compelling the message and miraculous signs may seem to be. Don’t believe them!”

Matthew 24:11

“And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.”

During the first half of the Tribulation false prophets will join the false Christs (vv. 4-5; 23-26) in seeking to deceive people and keep the Jews from coming to salvation through Christ. They will teach doctrines that seem true but are actually false and satanic. The great harlot church of the End Times (Revelation 17) will

promote false religion and many false prophets who will steer people away from the true Christ and the way of salvation.

As I think of the future deception that will occur during the Tribulation Period, I cannot help but think how this Tribulation sign and birth pang is in some way casting its shadow on the earth today. We live in days of marked deception. It is getting worse!

2 Timothy 3:13

“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving (others), and being deceived” (themselves being deceived).

Even today, there is the religious deception of false Christs, satanic miracles, and false teachings being propagated to deceive God’s people and the world in general.

Today there is the matter of satanic miracles.

We have known for some time of the reported miracles of Catholic statues of Mary shedding tears, crying, and bleeding. I don’t believe all of these things are all hoaxes. They are satanic miracles designed to deceive people. A weeping statue can be the result of supernatural means. There are reported statues with weeping tears which appear to be blood, oil, and scented liquid. Other things associated with weeping statues are miraculous healings, the formation of figures in the tear lines, and the scent of roses. If you play around with idolatry, then you open yourself up to Satanism and his deceptive workings.

There is also the matter of false Christ’s.

Arnold Potter came into this world in 1804 in Herkimer County, New York. There is no mention of a special star, wise men, or mangers attached to his birth. He was baptized into the Mormon church and became an associate of the faith’s founder, Joseph Smith. While travelling to Australia to carry out missionary work, Potter claimed that Jesus Christ entered his body during some sort of supernatural experience. Thereafter, he styled himself “Potter Christ, Son of the living God,” and he wrote a book that he said was dictated to him by angels.

Father Divine, also known as Reverend M. J. Divine, was an African- American spiritual leader. Father Divine claimed to be God. He made numerous contributions toward his followers' economic independence and racial equality.

Alan John Miller, more commonly known as A.J. Miller, a former Jehovah's Witness elder and leader of the Australia-based Divine Truth movement. Miller claimed to be Jesus Christ reincarnated with others in the 20th century to spread messages that he calls the "Divine Truth."

Ashley Nicole Bailey, 29, lives near Spartanburg, South Carolina. Police were called to a house there in February 2017 to discover a man with a deep neck laceration. Ashley Bailey told deputies "I ain't owning up to this." She then explained that she is Jesus Christ and that she controls President Donald Trump through a bracelet she wears.

CHARLES MANSON CLAIMED TO BE THE MESSIAH, AMONG OTHER THINGS! In fact, there is a long laundry list of people who have claimed to be Jesus Christ – God's Son. Jesus taught that the End Times would feature people claiming to be Christ. We see this precursor sign today in the world!

Many years ago, I heard Dr. Lehman Strauss tell this story. He was signing some of his books. While signing, a man came up to him and said, "I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Dr. Strauss ignored him while signing the book. Again, the man said, "I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Dr. Strauss put down the book and said, "Sir, hold out your hands. I want to see your hands." The man showed him his hands and Dr. Strauss said, "Sir, you are an imposter. There are no nail scars on your hands. The Jesus I know has the nail prints in His hands. I suggest that you leave this room immediately."

➤ Detection of wars

Matthew 24:6-7

"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. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom ..."

The Bible predicts that there will constantly be engaging in war and also war talk (rumors of wars) during the End Times (Tribulation Period). During the End Times, there will be war unlike the world has never known or seen. Today war is everywhere. This birth pang sign is casting its shadow upon the world even today as we head toward the Tribulation Period. The 20th century witnessed two world wars. Ten million people died during WWI and 20 million people died in WWII, including six million Jews. It is no secret the death toll that warfare can have on human population. The threat of nuclear war is still on the table, keeping nuclear warheads out of the hands of Iranians is a priority for the US and world. There are power hungry countries like China which are trying to seize more land and take over the world economic markets.



First, there will be internal warfare as Matthew 24:7 describes (“nation shall rise against nation”). The term for “nation” (ethnos) refers to the races of Gentile people. In the next statement, Jesus will talk about national warfare between kingdoms on the world stage, so this statement of “nation against nation” refers to the different Gentile races that reside within particular countries who will be in conflict with one another.

In other words, the “nations” (the different races of people) will be opposed to one another during the End Times. This means there will be internal conflicts within countries that will undoubtedly include racial, ethnic, and cultural confrontations much like we see taking place in the world today. However, this type of racial or national fighting will occur on a vaster and more intense scale during the coming Tribulation Period.

The hatred among the races is with us today. It is precursor of even greater racial hatred to come. In fact, today the race hatred is being pushed in ways that we have not seen before. White children are now being taught in the schools that they are essentially inferior to the blacks and today white Americans are told to symbolically bow before black Americans as an act of submission and provide reparations for

African Americans. This kind of rhetoric is racism. It is singling out one race over another and this sparks all kinds of division within a nation.

We are told that only “black lives matter” (not all lives) and if you claim that “all lives matter” (no matter what color skin a person has) then you are labeled a racist. These types of linguistic tricks and rhetoric not only promote racist theories but divide our country. There is no superior race of people, whether it be black, brown, white, Oriental, Jewish or any other color and race. Jesus loves the children, all the children in the world, red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight!

Hitler believed and taught that the Germans were the superior race. In fact, the whole theory of evolution was born out of man’s hatred for the races and judging the superiority of some races over others. Today hatred among the different races still abounds and it seems to be on the rise. This will escalate as we approach the End Times.

Terrorism is WAR



Second, there will also be national warfare (“kingdom against kingdom”). The point is that no group of people will be exempt from war or the threat of war. Military confrontations of every sort will accelerate throughout the world even as we have seen during the recent generations - WW1, WW2. Vietnam War, Korean conflict, Iraqi war, Afghanistan war, etc. You can add to these wars to the more recent

scare of terrorism and the ever-increasing threat of nuclear war. Terrorism is a real threat today in our world. It’s the new type of war that is an ever-present threat to the world. Who can forget 911?

We will never forget the most widely known act of terrorism when nineteen terrorists, affiliated with al-Qaeda, hijacked four commercial passenger jet airliners and crashed two of them into the World Trade Center and one into the Pentagon.

Today we have terrorist groups rising up at alarming rates all over the world but particularly in the Middle East.

Let me says something else while I'm at it. The flag in this country stands for everyone (it represents everyone) – black, brown, white, Chinese, Japanese, (any race or any person). We should not be raising black lives matter flags, white lives matter flags, Chinese or Japanese lives matter flags. In doing this, we are promoting a type of racist ideology! This is because the flag stands for all people united together! This is what our constitution teaches us. But the Marxists in this country do not want racial unity – they are promoting racial bigotry!

Jesus taught “and kingdom against kingdom ...” (external wars between countries or nations). These wars and rumors of wars would include all types of warfare including terrorism which is increasing all over the world today.



Efraim Karsh explains the concept's origin of Islamic terrorists: "As a universal religion, Islam envisages a global political order in which all humankind will live under Muslim rule as either believers or subject communities. In order to achieve this goal it is incumbent on all free, male, adult Muslims to carry out an uncompromising struggle 'in the path of Allah,' or jihad. This in turn makes

those parts of the world that have not yet been conquered by the House of Islam an abode of permanent conflict (*Dar al-Harb*, the house of War) which will only end with Islam's eventual triumph.”

We are not told here in Revelation 6 what causes all of these national conflicts but we can conclude that the focus and description of many of these wars can be identified as holy wars (terrorism wars – jihad and taking over the earth), oil wars (monetary reasons), and territory wars (annexing more land and control). One thing

is certain, people everywhere will begin to slay one another. Revelation 6:4 says they will “kill one another.” This would most certainly include the acts of terrorism.

As we approach the Rapture there is going to be continual unrest, not only in the Middle East, but worldwide as nations position themselves for power and dominance in the world. More recently, China is trying to push its power on the United States in their attempt to dominate and control the South China Sea and other parts of the world. Iran and communist nations will always attempt to overtake other nations and control them through acts of war. Jesus taught that there would be “wars and rumors of wars” (Matt. 24:7) during the End Times. Think of the war zone of the Middle East and the terrible atrocities that are taking place today in the name of the Allah religion. The world today is in a state of unrest.

Many have wondered if President Trump’s peace treaty deal in the Middle East is a sign of the times. Here is what we need to understand about Middle East peace. No matter how wonderful it might be, Middle East peace will only be short-lived. This is because the Bible predicts there will be wars occurring throughout the world as we approach the Tribulation Period. In fact, the Antichrist will actually enforce a peace treaty upon the Middle East (Dan. 9:27) to begin the Tribulation Period and temporarily end the unrest and war occurring in the Middle East. Sadly, the Middle East and world will continue to be a war zone as we head toward the End Times.

Revelation 6:2 does reveal there will be peace before war: “And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.” This predicts how the deceptive nature of peace (represented by the white horse and rider) will result in a false sense

Terrorism on the Rise



Deception
of
False Peace
(Revelation 6:2)



of security for the world as the Tribulation begins. This Middle East and worldwide peace will come about through the Antichrist and this is the way the Tribulation Period will begin. Although the riders of these horses seem to represent impersonal forces (peace, war, famine, death) the Antichrist will be the one who actually brings about initial peace in the Middle East and on earth.

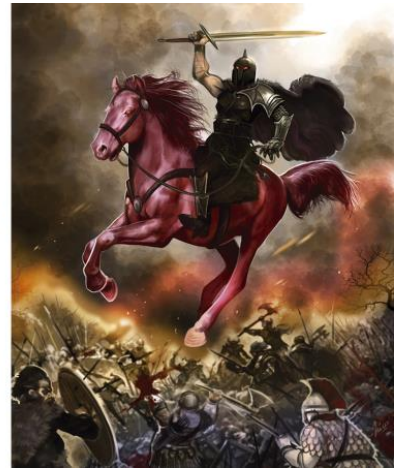
This reminds us that when the Antichrist comes on to the world scene that war will be running ramped throughout the Middle East. But through diplomacy the Antichrist will bring about peace as the Tribulation gets started. People will be lulled into the idea that age of utopia and peace has come (“For when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them” - 1 Thess. 5:3). You will notice that there are no arrows in this rider’s quiver. This means that initial peace will come into the world through diplomatic measures. We know this is the right interpretation for the next horse rider (war) takes peace from the earth, indicating there was peace when the Tribulation Period begins.

Revelation 6:4

“And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.”

“wars and rumours of wars”
(Matthew 24:6)

“a great sword”
(Revelation 6:4)



The Book of Revelation also predicts that during the first half of the Tribulation Period “a great sword” or warfare and death will become increasingly evident and violent. This is what Jesus was talking about in Matthew 24:7. During the End Times, war will result in many untold deaths. As we move toward the period of the End Times, we can be sure that war and rumors of wars will be on the increase. This does not mean there will be times of relative peace, but overall, there will continue to be war and the threat of wars. Have you listened to the news lately or picked up the paper? There are always multiple wars occurring somewhere throughout the world and the talk of war threatening our own country and many other countries

of the world. Today Russia, China, communism, and Islamic nations razing their ugly heads and turning the world against the United States and other freedom-loving countries.

The wars and rumors of war in our world today is definitely a precursor sign of the approaching Tribulation Period.

Remember that we are presently looking at the End Times and what it on the horizon! What Jesus taught about in Matthew 24 is in many ways casting its shadows on earth today.



Imagine sitting in an audience waiting for a play to begin. Before Act One begins you can hear sounds behind the curtain. Perhaps the people are setting up props or placing themselves in the proper position so when the curtain opens everything will be in place and everyone will be ready to go. The actors have taken their place and positions

on the stage and you know that the curtain will soon be drawn and the play will begin. At one point the curtain rises and the act or scene begins to unfold. In a similar way, the events transpiring in our world today are comparable to “stage-setting” events that are preparing the world for the final drama of the ages to begin (The End Times and Judgment Day on planet earth).

Once again, from Matthew 24 and Revelation 6, we can see what is going to occur during the Tribulation Period (End Times). Specifically, we are looking at the events and signs that will occur during the Tribulation Period and lead up to the end of the age. They are known as End Time



Events. Jesus compared these events to birth pangs of a woman – the starting point of labor pain (first half of the Tribulation Period) and the “great tribulation” (the final labor pains) that would occur before the Second Coming of Christ.

I must confirm once again that End Time events are NOT being literally fulfilled today but will be fulfilled during the specific time of the Tribulation Period which leads up to the end. What is prophesied to take place and find fulfillment in the Tribulation Period cannot be occurring in the world today. However, these events are in some sense casting their shadows back on earth even before they are fulfilled. We see precursors of what is going to occur in the future. The stage is being set for End Time events to be fulfilled. The storm of the End Times is gathering on the horizon and we can sense it is coming.

There will be more world chaos during the End Times!

➤ Division within families

In the context of the End Times, Jesus said something that is very startling.

Matthew 24:10

“And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.”

We will talk about the persecution of God’s saints in our next point as depicted in (Matt. 24:9). However, Jesus spoke about the family betrayal of one another because of the truth and the offense that arises from associating with God’s people.

Jesus predicted what will happen during the first half of the Tribulation Period. He said that some family members and family relation will be saved while others are only posing as followers of Christ. However, when the heat of persecution comes for being identified with God’s people, family members will turn on one another for they shall “be offended (because of the truth), and shall betray one another (turning their family in as traitors), and shall hate one another.”

Today in America, our liberal, governors (a Wolf in sheep's clothing) want to run the lives of people but do not want to follow their own rules and reasoning. They have devised something called "the snitch system" which works like this. When a restaurant owner or some other person is not obeying the communist rules, then they can snitch on them, so that the authorities can arrest them, fine them, or do whatever they want to in order impose the governor's orders. This type of snitching mentality is straight out of the communist playbook!

"Snitch On Others Who Are Not Towing the Line"



Jesus predicted that many who are living on earth during the coming Tribulation Period will be offended by the truth and because they have been identified with true saints of God. As a result, they will turn against their own family and friends, by betraying them. This means they will snitch on them and turn them into the authorities. Jesus spoke about this elsewhere.

Matthew 10:21

"And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death."

Mark 13:12 records the same truth: - Quote

"Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death."

During the coming Tribulation Period the family unit will be in disarray and experience unprecedented division. The family will turn on each other. One way this will occur is when one family member turns in the names of another family member to the nanny state religion (Rev. 20:4-5). They will seek the death penalty for their own family members because of their own hatred, intolerance, and disobedience to God and truth. We are talking about times of delusion when family members turn on one another.

Think of this. Those who want to remain loyal to truth and God will experience persecution by their own unsaved family members. A terrible hatred for family members will occur as one seeks to honor God while another seeks to honor the state-run religion and government allowed by the Antichrist.

The Bible teaches there will be severe persecution of God's saints that will occur during the first half of the Tribulation. The persecution source will be religion - the apostate church (the harlot church of the End Times).

Revelation 17:6

“And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.”

The apostate church, which thrives during the first half of the Tribulation Period, will be permitted to exist and thrive while the Antichrist rises to world power. The apostate church will be a constant threat to those saints and followers of Christ who are sharing the Gospel within the world. When unsaved family members turn against their saved mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers, they will betray them by turning them in to the religious harlot system. The religious pagan worship of the End Times will possess great power on a worldwide scale and will not openly allow God's genuine saints to worship God in their way and in freedom. Therefore, if anyone is snitched on, they are liable for persecution.

Families turning against another and betraying one another is a terrible precursor birth pang sign that we see occurring in our world and culture today. Today the secular schools are teaching the children to follow the state and their guidance counselors instead of the parents. They are turning the children against the parents. The secularized and humanistic schools want to run the lives of our children. They want to pollute the minds of our children with race inequality curriculum (not race acceptance). They want to shove down the throats of our children gay marriage and government run ideologies which are against God, the Bible, and Christianity.

They are seeking to gain power and persuasion over our young people. The government is trying to turn our children against traditional and Biblical family

values, as it seeks to run the lives of our children. This is one reason why children are rebelling against their parents today. This is why we have communist young people walking around the streets, burning down buildings and killing policemen.

Families are turning against each other. Mark this down. The goal of humanism and communism is to promote division within the traditional family unit and destroy the nuclear (essential) family. Children are being advised to tell (snitch) on their parents, betray their parents, if they are punished, and children are threatening their parents with lawsuits and everything imaginable. We are leading up to these dreadful days and wicked times which Jesus prophesied would come upon the earth.

This is one reason why Elijah will return to earth someday as one of the two witnesses (Matt. 17:11).

Malachi 4:5-6

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD (SECOND COMING): And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”



The official site of Black Lives Matter is spewing out racial rhetoric to destroy the traditional family unit through a “Marxist and LGBT agenda.”

Here is what their website states:

“We disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement by supporting each other as extended families and “villages” that collectively care for one another, especially our children, to the degree that mothers, parents, and children are comfortable.

We foster a queer-affirming network. When we gather, we do so with the intention of freeing ourselves from the tight grip of heteronormative thinking, or rather, the

belief that all in the world are heterosexual (unless s/he or they disclose otherwise).”

Folks, we had better stick with the Bible these days! We need to stay close to the Lord. There are spiritual forces at work today that are out to destroy our families within this nation. We must push back on all the ungodliness in our country and stand up for the Word of God, righteousness, and the family.

Here is more world chaos!

➤ Devastation among the earth



Jesus went on to say that there will be “famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in divers (designated spots and portions) places” of the earth (Matt. 24:7). Jesus predicted that many worldwide natural devastations would occur simultaneously, in various marked-out and designated places of the earth, during the coming seven-year Tribulation Period.

Natural disasters of staggering proportions will occur as this cursed earth begins to disintegrate. Luke adds that there will also be plagues and terrors and great signs from heaven.

Luke 21:11

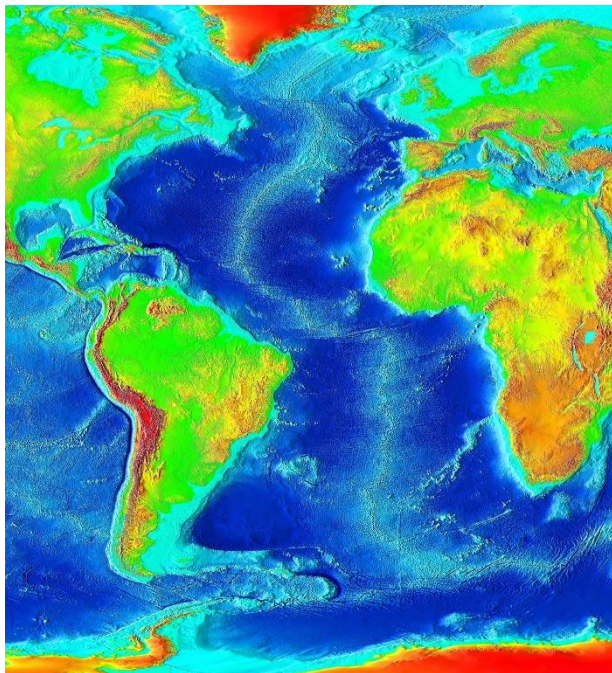
“And great earthquakes shall be in divers (marked out) places, and famines, and pestilences (terrestrial signs); and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven” (astronomical signs).

Earthquakes, epidemics of deadly disease, dreadful happenings of various sorts, and awesome changes in the sky (blood moons, meteorites bombarding the earth) will torment men. They will see the world begin to disintegrate before their eyes.

Revelation 6:14 records that an earthquake at the middle of the Tribulation Period will cause something to happen: “and every mountain and island were removed out of their places.” Jesus taught there would be earthquakes in various portions of planet earth (Matt. 24:7) but by the middles of the Tribulation Period there would be a worldwide earthquake. The intensity of earthquakes will become more severe as the Tribulation Period unfolds. This universal and worldwide earthquake will cause the mountains and islands on planet earth to be moved from their original placement. God knows how to shake the world!

The whole unstable crust of the earth will begin to move and shift causing every mountain and island to shift and move out of its original place.

So, what are the “islands” that John refers to in this prophetic portion of Scripture? The islands are no doubt pointing to all the submerged mountains (undersea mountains) which are spread throughout the vast oceans. The mountains underneath the sea will crumble causing great tidal waves and tsunamis.



The Mid-Atlantic Ridge isn't just the world's longest chain of undersea mountains, it's longer than any of those found on land. And it isn't alone. The ridge that lies roughly in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean is just one of a chain of undersea ridges or mountains that encircle the globe. The ridge, which runs from inside the Arctic Circle south past the Horn of Africa, extends for 15,000 kilometres (about 9 miles), and some of the peaks rise four kilometres (about 2 miles) above the ocean floor.

Haggai 2:6 specifically says:

“For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land.”

The islands are submerged ridges or mountains underneath the seas and they are contrasted with the “mountains” that are visibly seen above the earth’s surface which are mountains such as the Alps, Rockies, Himalayas, etc. This earthquake will leave men with the full impression that the ultimate end has arrived. And yet there is still more to come.

There is something else to note here. The moving of islands and mountains and the shaking of the earth’s crust bellows the ocean surfaces will no doubt cause giant tsunamis to occur. These earthquakes and the moving of the mountains underneath the sea will be tsunamis of unprecedented proportion that will take the lives of millions.



Luke 21:25 adds these terrible signs:

“And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars (changing of their colors through smoke and debris, meteorite showers occurring); and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity (anguish, anxiety, confusion); the sea and the waves roaring” (as a result of earthquakes and tsunamis).

The Bible teaches that these End Time earthquakes will be a direct expression of God’s wrath and judgment being meted out on the world.

Revelation 6:16

“And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.”

The unsaved dwelling on the earth will know by the middle of the Tribulation Period that God had been unleashing His wrath upon the earth for three- and one-half

years. The unsaved dwelling on the earth will know by the middle of the Tribulation Period that God had been unleashing His wrath upon the earth for three and one-half years. They will think that the earth is going to end with this cataclysmic earthquake, and they are about to appear before the wrath of Jesus Christ – the Lamb. Their fear of facing Jesus Christ was so great they would rather be killed by a falling mountains and rocks.

As some parts of the earth starve from famines, others will be shattered by earthquakes, others decimated by plagues, others paralyzed by other unspecified terrors.

The mention of “earthquakes” (Matt. 24:7) by Jesus certainly grabs our attention today. In 1999 an earthquake in Turkey killed 15,000 people and left millions without homes and ill health.

A title wave (caused by an earthquake) in Honduras killed 25,000 people and left one half million homeless. A mudslide in Venezuela killed 50,000 people in just a few days. A tsunami created in the Indian Ocean by an earthquake killed between 175 and 200,000 people. The 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake was an undersea megathrust earthquake that occurred on December 26, 2004, with an epicenter off the west coast of Indonesia. The earthquake triggered a series of devastating tsunamis along the coasts of most landmasses bordering the Indian Ocean. This quake killed nearly 230,000 people in fourteen countries inundating coastal communities with waves up to 100 feet high. It was one of the deadliest natural disasters in recorded history. Indonesia, India, and Thailand were the hardest hit.

With a magnitude of between 9.1 and 9.3, it was the second largest earthquake ever recorded on a seismograph. This earthquake had the longest duration ever observed. It caused the entire planet to vibrate as much as 1 cm (0.4 inches) and triggered other earthquakes as far away as Alaska. Of course, the more recent devastating earthquakes in Haiti and other parts of the world is once again a telling sign that we are headed toward the End Times.

The world has already witnessed many earthquakes, famines, plagues, and even some heavenly signs (meteorite), but those will be nothing compared to the calamities of the End Times.

Today we know about the terrible plagues such as the aids epidemic and even our present Corona Virus or Covid 19 outbreak. Many people in third world counties have died from aids and other diseases. Children are dying by starvation and other plagues at an alarming rate. What Jesus predicted to occur during the Tribulation Period is in some measure casting its ominous shadows over the earth today. Earthquakes, famine, starvation, and death are very real today and we can see the stage being set for these to become even worse during the End Times.

We once again see the parallels what Jesus taught in Matthew 24 with Revelation chapter 6, which are events that transpire on earth during the original birth pangs (the first 3.5 years of the Tribulation Period).

The seal judgments, which include the third and fourth horsemen of the apocalypse judgments, also predict that all of these events would transpire on earth during the End Times. Again, what Jesus taught in Matthew 24 parallels with Revelation 6. The events of the first half of the Tribulation Period are casing their shadows upon the earth! Earthquakes (Rev. 6:12-14), famine (Rev. 6:5) and death by war, hunger (starvation) and disease (Rev. 6:8) are predicted to occur on earth.

Revelation 6:12-14 occurs at the midway point of the Tribulation: “And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood (as a result of the amount of smoke and debris being sent up into the atmosphere causing eerie signs in the sky); And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth (a heaven-quake – meteorite showers will pellet the earth), even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together (the atmospheric heaven will appear



to be rolled up as a scroll as the smoke envelops the sky, covers it, and it seemingly disappears); and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.”

Jesus taught there would be earthquakes in various marked positions throughout the earth but John reveals that there will also be a worldwide earthquake that will occur about the middle of the Tribulation Period which will give way to even greater birth pangs in the Trumpet and Bowl Judgments. This earthquake and heavenquake will result in cataclysmic judgment throughout the earth.

During an earthquake, a few years ago, the inhabitants of a small village were very much alarmed. One old woman, whom they all knew, was surprisingly calm and joyous. At length, one of them said to her, “Mother, are you not afraid?” “No, I rejoice to know that I have a God who can shake the world.”

Jesus once again states in Matthew 24:7:

“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.”



Jesus spoke of worldwide family occurring on earth during the first part of the Tribulation Period. Revelation 6:5-6 also prophetically speaks of famine and starvation: “And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure

of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.”

Once again, this dreadful rider is not yet in the world; however, we do hear the coming hoofbeats of this rider and can see some of these things occurring already in the world. The third Seal Judgment is personified as a rider on a black horse. It

deals with famine occurring on the earth during the first three- and one-half years of the Tribulation Period. This rider is on a black horse (Rev. 5:5). Black is the Biblical color associated with famine.

Lamentations 5:10

“Our skin was black like an oven because of the terrible famine.”

Anyone who has witnessed the scenes of famine on the continent of Africa and other part of the world is aware of this terrible tragedy that devastates whole populations and destroys their will and strength to live. This kind of famine will be scene on a worldwide scale during the first 3.5 years of the Tribulation Period and will result in the death of many people.

Famine
(a precursor of the End Times)



It’s interesting that famine almost always follows war and this will be the case during the Tribulation Period (Rev. 6:3-4). As a result of war and a lack of rainfall there will be global and great famine that occurs on planet earth during the first three- and one-half years of the Tribulation Period. This will be a dreadful time when God starves people as a form of His judgment.

God will bring an unprecedented global famine upon the earth, something of which was never witnessed before. It will be of epic proportions and millions upon millions of people will die worldwide.

a. The rationing

The rider on the black horse (Rev. 6:5) was seen holding “a pair of balances in his hand” (scales) which suggests the weighing of food in relationship to its cost and also the rationing of food due to scarcity. This is an indicator of both famine and runaway inflation due to the scarcity of food. Prices are going to change! You think meat is expensive today; wait until the Tribulation Period. Today we worry about the price of milk going up. The world hasn’t seen anything yet! The scales suggest

that the economic balance of things is going to be altered during the first three-and one-half years of the Tribulation Period.

The precursor to this birth pang (famine and starvation) is seen today. We have seen famine in United States during the Depression, in Europe in the aftermath of World War II, and today in many war-torn and third-world nations, there will be starving people standing in food lines and numbers will be staggering.

Economic inflation will affect the balance between necessities and luxuries. This is seen in the next expressions.

The first expression “a measure of wheat for a penny” (Rev. 6:6) indicates the skyrocketing cost of food. Prices of food will rise. A “penny” (denarius) is a Roman shilling or denarius that was equal to a normal day’s wage (Matt. 20:2). This means that in the coming Tribulation Period famine and inflation will cause food prices to rise so high that a whole day’s earnings will be required to purchase enough wheat or food for one meal for an average family. This is without paying for housing and all other expenses associated with everyday living.

A “measure” is about a dry measurement of wheat that is approximately one quart. In New Testament times this coin (a penny or Roman denarius) would purchase about 8 quarts of wheat. But now the same coin buys only one quart of dry measurement of wheat grain. This again indicated intense famine and skyrocketing prices that will cause many people to starve and barely keep many families alive. This will be a dreadful time to be alive on the earth.

Imagine working and earning only enough money to buy what food was needed for that day! What would a person do about feeding his family and providing the other necessities of life such as housing, heat, clothing, and transportation? This will be the situation in the End Times. The End time will be marked by famine after famine all over the world. It will take all a man can do just to survive.

- ✓ Quality of food will change

This is also true when you go to college! The next expression “three measures of barley for a penny” (Rev. 6:6) explains how even cheaper food (barley) will become an expense during this time. Barley in Biblical times was the cheaper food used for animals or livestock (1 Kings 4:28).

Apparently families living during the Tribulation Period will turn to this kind of livestock food in order to survive. Three meals a day could be provided from barley (mentioned second in this verse) whereas only one meal could be produced from wheat (mentioned first in the verse). In New Testament times this coin (penny or denarius) would purchase about 24 quarts of barley. But now the same coin buys only 3 quarts of barley. This is runaway inflation!

The Bible is teaching that the most basic things for survival will be so expensive in the grocery stores that a whole day’s wages will cover only the barest necessities. This not only suggests scarcity of food but also skyrocketing inflation.

Ray Stedman shares this story:

“During the days of the Weimar Republic in Germany after World War I, I remember as a boy hearing accounts of people taking ten thousand German marks bills, loading them into wheelbarrows, and taking them to market to buy a single loaf of bread. That is what runaway inflation does. It makes money worthless.”

It may be that one of the results of this famine will be the need for stricter control of the global economy. This worldwide famine or famines (Rev. 6:8) that occur during the first three and one half years of the Tribulation Period may enhance the Antichrist’s power over the world population and give him the opportunity by the middle of the Tribulation to impose his marking system on the world (Rev. 13:16-18).

- ✓ Luxury items are still available

The final expression “and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine” (Rev. 6:6) has been interpreted in various ways. Some see these items as referring to medicines, since oil and wine were used for medicinal purposes, but this does not make sense

since great masses of people are dying and since medicines will not be readily distributed to people during these catastrophic calamities.

Some suggest the possibility of this “oil” being petroleum oil and how this commodity will play *into the prophetic scenario* of the end times as a luxury to be maintained by the rich and also the war machine. But this oil is mentioned with items consumed by humans so this interpretation is unwarranted for Revelation 6:8. We must be careful not to fanaticize our interpretation of the Bible.

Others suggest that olive oil and wine, which were used in the preparation and cooking of food, as well as the purification of water, will need to be carefully protected for some people to survive. In other words, the basic essentials for living will need to be preserved and God is making sure that some of these basic essentials remain or else all mankind will die.

This interpretation of the oil and wine seems to miss the point that great multitudes of people are dying for the simple reason that there is no food or because of the high price of food that exists in many regions of the world. I think there is a better interpretation of these two commodities.

It seems more likely that the mention of oil and wine which are used for cooking, purification, and medicine is referring to common items that during the worldwide famine of the Tribulation Period become luxury items, which are now only used by the rich. The oil and wine stand in contrast to the items that will be used by the lower class of people such as “wheat” and “barley.” So, what is occurring? The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer! There is no middle class! This is what happens when communism overtakes a society! This verse seems to be creating a division between the rich and poor and economic unbalance throughout the earth.

Many and most people (the poor) will be regulated to peanut butter and bread (cheapest foods) whereas the rich will still be able to indulge in the finer things of dining. Again, this sounds like socialism! The teaching is this. There will be great economic imbalance during the Tribulation Period due to famine and the scarcity of food. The entire economic structure will be out of sync.

Donald Grey Barnhouse has an interesting comment from his own experience on this point about the luxury items of oil and wine when he says: “Just after World War I, I spent a few days in Vienna at the time when misery was very great....There was a shortage of coal and the police had ordered everyone off the streets by nine o’clock. The city was filled with wealthy refugees from Russia and other countries. Walking along the boulevard one afternoon as the crowds were coming out of the opera which began early to conform with the curfew regulations, I saw men with bare feet in the snow, their skeletons covered with rags, their ribs seen through the holes in the cloths with which they attempted to cover their bodies. From time to time there was blood on the snow from their feet.

“Out of the opera came men escorting women with fortunes in jewels upon them. Never have I seen more wonderful displays in any of the capitals of the earth. The beggars blocked the way to the fine limousines that came for the rich. I saw the men striking the beggars with their canes to clear the way for the women. Poor girls not clad in the gaudy finery of prostitutes, but with poor clothing and in wooden shoes, clattered about clutching at the passerby and offering to sell themselves for a coin which at that moment could be purchased for one five hundredth part of a dollar. Mark well, there was no famine in Vienna. There was scarcity in the midst of plenty, but there was no hurt to the luxuries.”

This is the way it will be during the Tribulation Period. We may not be far from the black horse of Revelation 6! Again, we can hear the hoofbeats approaching and see before our very eyes, in some measure, what lies ahead for this world.



Matthew 24:7:

“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.”

Jesus also mentioned about “pestilences” next. We have repeatedly noticed that what

Jesus taught in Matthew 24:7 about “famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places” parallels to the horses in Revelation 6. The next horse judgment is the pale horse or better known as the horse of death. This is where pestilence comes into the prophetic picture.

The pale horse represents death and there is a special emphasis on death by pestilence in the next horse judgment.

I remember that there was a horse and buggy that came past our house. I heard it coming up the street early in the morning. When it got closer to our house, I saw the pulling the buggy was the horse of death. It was a pale white horse. The pale horse is a summary of how many people will die throughout the first 3.5 years of the Tribulation Period.

Revelation 6:7-8

“And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death (physical death of the body), and Hell (hades) followed with him (spiritual death of the unsaved in Hades). And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword (death by war), and with hunger (death by famine), and with death (death by pestilence which is explained in the final description), and with the beasts of the earth.”

Again, this horse of death is similar to what Jesus predicted would take place on earth during the first three-and-one-half years of the Tribulation Period. Millions upon millions of people will die due to the acts of the “sword” or military warfare (Rev. 6:4) John also mentions “hunger” which is starvation from terrible famine (Rev. 6:5-6). People will die by the millions from war and starvation during the first half of the Tribulation Period, but in this apocalyptic horse judgment, we also discover that untold numbers of people they will also die as a result of pestilence (disease from animals) overtaking the earth.

In Ezekiel’s judgments animals are linked to pestilences and John may be reflecting upon these very verses in relationship to the end times.

Ezekiel 5:17

“So will I send upon you famine and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee; and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee; and I will bring the sword upon thee. I the Lord have spoken it.”

The first mentioned of “Death” covers the overall picture of judgment that comes from war and famine, When he mentions “death” for the second time (vs. 8) John is probably referencing a specific and special kind of death that results from pestilence or disease caused by animals. It is death by pestilence which is spread by the germs of animals. The last term “beasts of the earth” (Rev. 6:8) are obviously linked to what was previously stated about “death” which is an obvious reference to a specific type of death due to pestilence (disease).

This is likely the case since John would have known about Jesus’ prophecy in Matthew 24:7-8 which mentions death by pestilence. “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.”

God’s word uses the word “beasts” in a more limited sense as also referencing smaller animals that can spread disease. The same term “beasts” is also used in Acts 28:4-5 to refer to a poisonous snake or serpent so it is very possible that this passage is also referring to smaller animals that inflict suffering on mankind. Since the beasts are linked with pestilences it may be that other kinds of beasts are in the writers mind in this apocalyptic literature such as rats and other disease carriers.

Pestilence

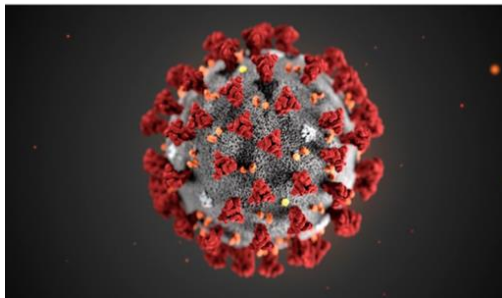


The rat has killed more people than all the wars in history. Rats carry as many as 35 diseases. Their fleas have carried bubonic plague, which killed a third of the population of Europe in the fourteenth century. Their fleas also carry typhus, which in four centuries has killed an estimated 200 million people.

The first half of the seven-year Tribulation Period will result in the death of approximately 1.5 billion people, according to present-day statistics. People will die terrible deaths due to war, hunger, deadly diseases spread by animals or germ warfare, and by animals themselves as they turn on mankind and spread diseases.

Throughout human history, disease has killed people on a far more massive scale than war. More Union and Confederate soldiers died from disease during the Civil War than were killed in battle. An estimated 30 million people died during the great influenza epidemic of 1918–19, which is more than three times as many as the estimated 8.5 million soldiers who died in battle during World War I. In addition, several million more died at about that same time in an outbreak of typhus in Russia, Poland, and Romania. In a world ravaged by war and famine, it is inevitable that such disease will be widespread.

Coronavirus (Covid 19)

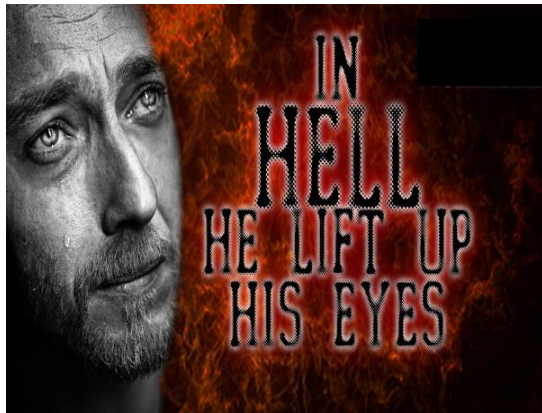


75% of all new, emerging, or re-emerging diseases in humans have animal origins, including Covid 19 (Coronavirus), which many scientists believe came from bats. Death describes how sweeping plagues will overtake the world's population. It will be a time of awful misery even during the first half of the Tribulation Period as these Seal Judgments

envison. We might think that plagues are no longer a threat because of modern antibiotics and wonder drugs. We have seen this is not the case with Covid and it certainly will not be the case in the future Tribulation Period. Mankind will not be able to find vaccines for these plagues during times of complete turmoil and world upheaval.

While the preceding horse riders carried an emblem or symbol (bow, sword, balance) to help identify what they represent this rider on the horse is simply called "Death" since everyone can understand what death means. The Bible then says that following this horse rider of death there was "Hell" (hades). The picture is a very gruesome one. In one sense, Death (a reference to physical death) is pictured as riding roughshod over the world's population, while "Hell" (Hades) is personified or pictured as walking alongside or behind this horseman, gobbling up the souls and spirits of these people, damning them in Hades.

This horse with its rider represents or personifies death. First, it will be “death” for the body which is a reference to the material part of man’s existence. The term “death” in this context is most certainly referring to the bodies of the deceased (bodies die and people experience physical death from these judgments). Second, what follows physical death will be spiritual death. The term “Hell” or “hades” is a reference to the immaterial part of man’s existence (Rev. 1:18; 20:14) and conveys the place where the souls and spirits of unsaved people go when they die in their sins. Hades is the place of judgment for the unsaved spirits of dead people. The term is obviously a descriptive reference to both the manner of judgment (a spiritual judgment) and the place of judgment itself.



Luke 16:23

“And in hell (hades) he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”

This judgment portrays the tragedies of unsaved people during the Tribulation Period. This means that both the *physical* part of their existence (death of their body) and *spiritual* part of their existence (hell or hades) follows this horse and rider. Great masses of people will not only die physically but also die spiritually and meet their doom and damnation in the place of hades.

Hades is a temporary place of suffering until the final judgment of the Great White Throne takes place, when the spirits of unsaved people will be emptied out of Hades and joined with their resurrected bodies, to be judged in the eternal Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:14-15). Revelation 20:14 speaks of “death” (the body) and “hades” (the soul and spirit) being united and thrown into the Lake of Fire.



Death
(physical death)

We see by this judgment that Death takes the body and Hades takes the spirit. As someone has put it, "Death rides the horse, but Hades follows with the hearse." But this hearse is not for the body; it is for the soul which transports these lost or unsaved sinners to hell (hades) where they will be damned following their physical death.

Hell or Hades
(spiritual death)



Hebrews 9:27

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”

There is a hell and that is where you are going if you die without Jesus Christ as your Savior. Revelation 6:8 a gruesome scene of absolute terror and horror. Death is pictured as taking the physical lives of over a billion people by these judgments, while at the same time “hades” comes along behind and gobbles up the spirits of these unsaved people, transporting them to their place of judgment in the center of the earth. So, these unsaved people not only experience God’s judgment in this life but also in the next life.

We are looking at the predictions of God. Jesus predicted about the sign of world chaos. There is another major sign that will be seen throughout the world during the first three- and one-half years of the Tribulation Period.

2. The sign of Christian persecution

Communist Cuomo



Governor Andrew Cuomo is shutting down the schools in New York City. The governor also threatened this week to close down religious gatherings, including large Orthodox Jewish events, in the hot spots and said the state will take over enforcement of rules, including mask wearing and social distancing. He said, “We will shut you down.”

Cuomo stated:

“We know religious institutions have been a problem. We know mass gatherings are a super-spreader event. We know there have been mass gatherings going on in concert with religious institutions in these communities for weeks. I don’t mean little violations – you’re only supposed to have 50, they had 55. I’m talking about you’re only supposed to have 50 outdoors, they had 1,000.”

But what did Mr. Cuomo communist say about the rioting and looting and burning and killing of police officers in New York City. This man is a hypocrite and religious bigot! Cuomo is a communist in American clothing! Some people will tell you that the Democrat Part is going to be a “soft communist” party. Don’t believe a word of this! Folks, they are coming after the churches. They want to control us. You can be sure about this. Don’t second guess it. They are “communist control freaks” who want to put their thumb on religious freedom in this country. In our next point, we are going to study about Christian persecution.

In Matthew 24:9-10 Jesus reveals the reality of persecution:

“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. And then shall many (*professing believer's or saints which are not saved*) be offended (because of the truth and heat of persecution), and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another” (*they shall betray each other, even family members, express hatred toward them, and bring persecution into their lives by turning them into the religious authorities*)

➤ The reality of persecution.

Jesus said “they shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you.” Persecution of Christ’s followers will intensify during the End Times (Tribulation Period) and believers will begin to be arrested, hated, and martyred for Christ’s sake. Jesus predicted that an unprecedented time of persecution would occur in the future which would result in the death of God’s true disciples and saints. The Bible predicts that millions of saints will actually die for their faith in Christ during the coming seven-year Tribulation Period.

Revelation 7:9 reveals a prophetic picture that is both alarming and amazing.

“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.”

Revelation 7:14-15

“And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.”

Countless millions of people will be saved during the Tribulation Period, but many will suffer martyrdom for their faith at the hands of apostate religion and the Antichrist. The reality is this, a time of terrible persecution, unlike anything previously experienced on earth, will sweep across planet earth. God’s people will die terrible deaths because they refuse to join the apostate church (Rev. 17:6; Rev. 6:10) and later identify with the Antichrist’s false religious system of worship (Rev. 13:15).

Even today, as we approach the End Times, we find that persecution for those who identify with Christ is on the rise. The wicked and godless systems of socialism and communism are not the friends of Christ, Christianity, and Christians. These wicked systems are persecuting Christians throughout the earth. When freedoms are taken from us, eventually our freedom to worship Christ is also removed, and Christians begins to suffer for their faith.

Not long ago, this headline was in the paper. “Idaho Police Arrest Three Christians Singing Hymns During Outdoor Worship Service.” Three Christians were arrested in Moscow on a Wednesday evening for participating in an outdoor worship service. This was in Moscow,

Christians arrested for outdoor singing in Moscow (Idaho)



Idaho – not Moscow Russia. In total, five people were cited by police for being in violation of Moscow’s mask mandate and social distancing orders amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Folks, I don’t want to sound like a broken record, but the communists are coming after our American churches. You can be sure about this. When Harris is president, she will put pressure on the churches. She is an outright communist, a wicked Jezebel type of woman.

➤ The reason for persecution

The unsaved world will persecute God’s saints, but sadly, the persecution will come as a result of the apostate church (religion) of the End Times and when many people, including family members, will turn on one another and report Christians to the religious authorities to be persecuted. Again, this type of persecution will occur during the first half of the Tribulation Period.

The first reason for persecution will be hatred. Jesus stated that “ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake” (Matt. 24:9). Even today there is an increasing intolerance against Christians and their Gospel message. The unsaved masses are turning against God and God’s messengers like never before. We should not be surprised of this hatred.

Jesus forewarned about this in John 15:18-19:

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”

John adds in 1 John 3:13:

“Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.”

Hate fuels persecution and this is what Jesus said would take place during the End Times (Tribulation Period). God’s people would be hated for being identified as followers of Jesus Christ.

The second reason for persecution will be offense. Those who profess to be saints and who are living during this time (Tribulation Period) will be offended when discovering that they must suffer for Christ and the truth (“many will be offended”). Jesus placed some of this offense within the very context of the family as we studied previously (Matt. 24:10; Matt. 13:21).

Here is the point. During the first half of the Tribulation Period many people will have had an outward identification with Christ similar to what Paul calls “a form of godliness” (2 Tim. 3:5) but they will prove by their defection or desertion that they never belonged to Him. When the persecution becomes too severe, they will forsake their family members who love Christ and also forsake Christ. In the end, they will join fellow unbelievers in persecuting God’s people for the Bible states that they “shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.”

This obviously means that unbelievers will at one point have a connection with God’s people but eventually they will learn to hate the true believers and seek to persecute them and even kill them. God’s people living during these dark days will be betrayed by those who once were a part of their fellowship, but who become offended at Christ, when the cost rises too high.

Mark explains it in even more vivid detail. There will be family betrayal and persecution and a general betrayal and persecution of all those who once identified with the saints but who turned their backs on them.

Mark 13:9-13

“But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. And the gospel (the Gospel of the Kingdom – repentance and salvation in light of the coming Millennium – Matt. 24:15) must first be published among all nations. But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate (ponder what you might say): but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated

of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”

Those who are saved within the family ranks will be turned in by unsaved family members. Brother shall go against brother, father against his own son, and children against their parents. In general, those who are imposters (not true saints), who are living during the first half of the Tribulation Period, will become offended by the truth and turn on the true saints of God and begin to persecute them. This is how persecution will be experienced against believers during the coming Tribulation Period. People who once identified with Christianity during the Tribulation Period will turn on the saint and persecution will set in.

Jesus speaks of those who are offended in Matthew 24:12:

“And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax (grow) cold.”

The love for iniquity or lawlessness (disregard for God’s moral or ethical laws) will cause most people’s love for righteousness, truth, and the things of God to grow cold. In other words, those who once identified with the saints and truth will abandon God’s saints and the truth and replace it with wickedness. Their love for truth and righteous living will grow cold.

Evil will multiply so rapidly and without shame that many people who may initially identify with the truth, the Gospel, and the saints, will turn away from the truth and God’s people because of the many enticements of sin. Lawlessness will win over love for Jesus Christ and commitment to Him. And the apostates who abandon Jesus Christ and the truth will begin to persecute God’s people.

1 John 2:19 gives this similar picture:

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

John MacArthur said:

“Global violence, immorality, lewdness, selfish desire, and every other moral vice will run rampant as unbridled sin expresses itself. Men will be engulfed in a tidal wave of corruption and they will glory in it.”

Rather than trying to hide their sins, people will flaunt them, and such gross evil will draw many people, including some professed believers, away from whatever interest in the things of God they may once have possessed. Today we see the precursor sign of glorifying and loving sin over the truth and righteousness. We see lawlessness increasing.



We have seen the lawless and unashamed glorification of homosexuality in this country. Homosexual marriages are now looked upon as normal and part of a progressive society who is open to change, tolerance, and acceptance. In fact, those who identify with the church and even leaders within the

church are promoting homosexuality. Others (like Joel Olsten) are not taking a stand against it but accepting it.

Matthew 24:13

“But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”

During the period known as the “birth pangs,” we have seen that the persecution will lead many professing disciples or followers of Christ to turn away from the truth and the saints of God. Their departure and total abandonment from God will be a sign of their unregenerate state.

In contrast to those who are proven to be unfaithful, there will be other genuine believers or saints, who in spite of persecution, will physically survive the seven years of Tribulation (Matt. 24:40-47; 25). Jesus is promising that the saints who physically survive the Tribulation Period will experience salvation or deliverance from all of their suffering and persecution when Jesus returns in His Second Coming and delivers them.

Of course, we know that the sign of persecution which will occur in the coming day is casting its ominous shadow on the world right now.

2 Timothy 3:12 declares:

“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

John and Betty Stam answered the call to serve the Lord in China. One day after they arrived, a band of Communist guerrillas entered their town, plundered the countryside, and killed many innocent people. Discovering that these lone foreigners were Christian missionaries, the rebels treated them brutally, and finally made martyrs of them. On the way to the place of execution they stopped at a small post office, and the clerk asked John Stam, "Where are you going?" "I don't know where the soldiers are going," he replied, "but we are on our way to Heaven!"

Persecution is going to intensify as we head toward the Rapture and the End Times. We might not want to think about persecution taking place in America, but if the present course of socialism and secular philosophy continues to invade and overtake our country, we can be sure that persecution will begin to raise its ugly head in our own beloved land in a greater and more significant way.

I remember driving out west many years ago. I could see a storm moving across the flatlands of Kansas. It looked like a very ominous storm that was causing great destruction wherever it moved. Later we had heard about tornados that had touches down in this storm and caused great damage. When I was involved in a ministry called Old Time Bible and Brass my wife and I were driving in Hidalgo Illinois. We were in my friends little Plymouth Horizon. It was just a scrawny little car. I can remember being blown across those back-country roads by heavy winds that were related to an approaching storm.

Dear friend, someday a storm is going to blow across this world that will unleash its furry. It's the storm of God's wrath which will begin a time of terrible judgments and tribulation upon planet earth. The Bible teaches there will be a literal seven-year period of judgment that will fall upon planet earth.

We have been studying about the sign of persecution. What is going to occur during the End Times (Tribulation Period) is casting its shadows back on earth today.

In Matthew 24:9-10, Jesus once again states:

“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. And then shall many (professing believer's or saints which are not saved) be offended (because of the truth and heat of persecution), and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another” (they shall betray each other, even family members, express hatred toward them, and bring persecution into their lives by turning them into the religious authorities)

1 John 2:19 sounds similar in tone:

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

Hatred and offense are the two reasons for the persecution that will occur during the End Times (first half of the Tribulation Period). The unsaved world will persecute God's saints, but sadly, the persecution will come as a result of the apostate church (religion) of the End Times and when many people, including family members, will turn on one another and report Christians to the religious authorities to be persecuted. Again, this type of persecution will occur during the first half of the Tribulation Period.

Persecution is going to intensify as we head toward the Rapture and the End Times. We might not want to think about persecution taking place in America, but if the present course of socialism and secular philosophy continues to invade and overtake our country, we can be sure that persecution will begin to raise its ugly head in our own beloved land in a greater and more significant way.

WORLD Christian persecution has increased globally after Covid-19. An international Christian reports that discrimination against Christians increased around the world after the coronavirus pandemic. For authoritarian governments, which already limit religious freedom, the pandemic has become a pretext to step up persecution against the Christians.

In many developing countries, Christians are denied food and pandemic-related health care assistance and support systems, said Paul Robinson, chief executive officer of the Christian charity.

In China, churches are demolished, and Christians are arrested for holding online prayers. Release International said that its partners have reported that China has increased its crackdown on Christians after the pandemic hit the communist country. In China, online Church services are totally prohibited, and the participants and their leaders are “rounded up” for preaching and distributing face masks at public places.

A Christian in the coastal province of Shandong in China who urged Christians to pray and fast for nine days for the victims of Covid-19 was picked up for organizing an illegal religious service.

In general, “Cries for help are being ignored by local charities,” who are discriminating against Christians. Christians, who are fleeing persecution, are barred from accessing shelter camps and other UN support systems in various countries. Families disown many people after they convert to Christianity. Such people are also denied access to the support system.

In Muslim-majority Pakistan and Egypt, life has become increasingly difficult for new converts after the Covid-19. Most of the Christians in these countries live in poverty. After the Covid-19 lockdown, Christians face a hard life in these countries as they do not have work. Some of them even lacked the money to buy face masks and hand sanitizers.

Open Doors, a charity helping the persecuted Christians in the world, said that the pandemic had created more opportunities for persecutors to attack believers making a bad situation worse for Christians and other religious minorities within Muslim countries. In a similar way, this seems to be what they are doing in the United States. They are using the Covid Crisis to bring persecution on God’s saints and the local churches. This is what communists do.

The Bible predicts that a primary agent of persecution during the first half of the Tribulation Period will come from the apostate or harlot church which will be like the Gestapo of the End Times.

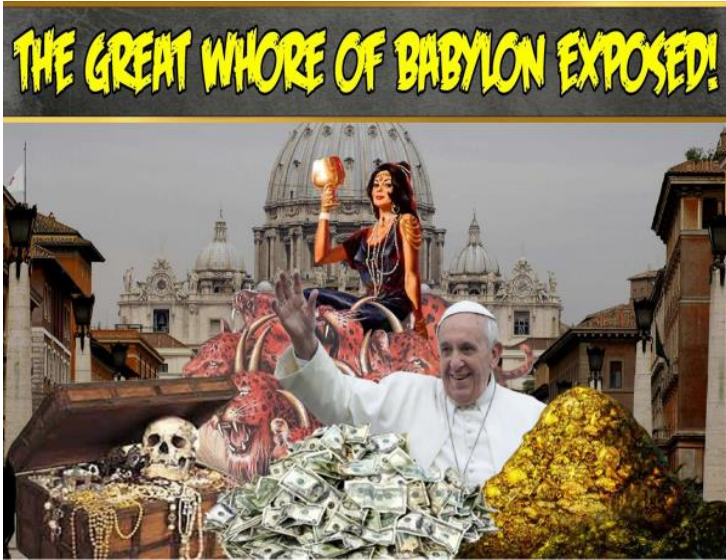
Revelation 17:1-3

“And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore (the apostate church of the End Times) that sitteth upon many waters (interpreted to mean people – Rev. 17:15): With whom the kings of the earth (world leaders on earth) have committed fornication (religious and spiritual fornication), and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication (spiritual and religious fornication). So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman (the harlot church) sit (possessing power and authority) upon a scarlet coloured beast (Antichrist’s imagery), full of names of blasphemy (Antichrist’s mockery of God), having seven heads and ten horns” (Antichrist’s End Time Kingdom – an extension of the world empires of ancient history as explained in Rev. 17:9-10, 12).



The “woman” is clearly presented as the End Time apostate church (“the great whore” – Rev. 17:1) which will raise its ugly head after the Rapture of the Church and rise to world power and dominance. As a “harlot” she represents the prostitute church, the untrue, false, and fake church!

What is noteworthy is that this woman is seen riding the beast (a picture of the Antichrist) during the first three-and one-half years of the Tribulation which means she is controlling the Antichrist’s movements. This means the Antichrist will allow the one-world Church to thrive and control the world economically and religiously. The super church of the End Times will be calling the shots before the Antichrist comes into full power since she is seen riding or controlling the Antichrist. The personal Antichrist will use this religious system to eventually gain world dominance and power. There is coming a time when religion (a harlot religious system) will rule the world! This is scary for the religious system in power during the End Times will be thirsty for wealth and the blood of the true saints of God.



In Revelation chapter 17 we see the religious nature of Babylon (the system and city) while in Revelation chapter 18 we witness the commercialism of Babylon. The religious system is not merely the Roman Catholic Church but undoubtedly she will have a prominent role in the End Time harlot church, as a religious and economic powerhouse, whose center will NOT be in Rome but actually in the rebuilt

city of Babylon. When all the Scriptures are taken literally and honestly compared together, this seems to be the End Time teaching.

Historically, this woman is connected with the ancient, religious past of Babylon which is the origin (“MOTHER OF HARLOTS” – Rev. 17:5) or all religious rebellion that is against God. The idea that she is the “mother” of all harlot systems of religious error indicates that the original city of Babylon gave birth to all of the pagan religions of the world up to this present time. Babylon was the breeding ground of all false religion. All the religious paganism of today and in the future Tribulation Period can be traced back to this one city which was the first to defy God and follow their own established religious system.

Prophetically, this wicked, anti-God, religious movement will culminate into a system that exists during the End Times which will consist of many “harlots” or many false religions ecumenically tied or lumped together which ultimately sprang from ancient or “mother” Babylon. This End Time ecumenical system will be the culmination of all the previous harlots that preceded it. The End Time ecumenical whore has its historical roots in the original city of Babylon, which was built along the Euphrates River, but during the End Times it will consist of many harlot religious systems, whose origins sprang from Babylon, which will unite together and represent an ecumenical religious monstrosity that is against truth, God, and salvation through Jesus Christ.

This could actually be studied separately as another sign, the sign of ecumenicalism, but we will just mention it here. The Bible predicts that false and apostate denominations and religions, including New Age thinking, will join together and form one harlot church during the End Times which is referenced as Babylon (the anti-God religious system).

America is NOT Babylon as some are teaching today. This type of teaching is prophetic folklore! Fanaticism and fraudulent signs take away from the true signs of the times that we can see occurring today in the world. Babylon is both a system (Rev. 17:5) and a city (Rev. 17:18) which means that the literal city of Babylon will be rebuilt to house the ecumenical apostate church of the End Times. It will be composed of all harlot religions and ideologies – Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Spiritism, etc. The ecumenical movement, the uniting together of all faiths, as Roman Catholicism is prompting today, is a sign of the times!

The word “ecumenical” comes from the Greek word, which means “the inhabited world.” The Ecumenical Movement had its inception in 1910 at the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, England. From this conference the growing desire for unity among churches was kept alive and eventually led to the inauguration of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948. The World Council of Churches can be regarded as the visible expression of ecumenism. The emphasis of ecumenicalism was to bring about a visible, outward Christian unity, by removing divisions between the churches. But its hidden agenda, which it had since its conception, is now openly propagated, and this agenda is to unite all faiths into a super world-church for all people. The ecumenical movement of today is paving the way for the harlot church of the End Times.

Revelation 17:6 once again reads:

“And I saw the woman (the harlot church) drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: (the hellish persecution) and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.”

The End Time ecumenical system will be a type of ecumenical jihad perpetrated on the world of humanity. All of mankind will in some sense have to respect and promote the

“And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” Revelation 17:6



ecumenical movement or suffer the consequences. The true saints of God have historically and will prophetically take the brunt of persecution from this wicked religious system.

The Babylonian harlot system has historically murdered many of God's saints.

Lehman Strauss has remarked:

“Rome has historically made her own saints, but those whom she has put to death are God's saints.”

Sir Robert Anderson of Scotland Yard estimates that Rome was guilty of the death of 50,000,000 Christians. The inquisition, the stakes, torture chambers, and catacombs are all part of history. These are a witness against this woman and her bloodshed. The system of Romanism has killed millions. She has been historically thirsty for blood and it will be no different in the future when she, perhaps heading up the apostate church, rules the world during the first half of the Tribulation Period.

Babylon has not changed. She continues to the end as she began in Genesis. She is an apostate religious system that has persecuted God's true saints. It will be no different during the future Tribulation Period.

The same Babylonian system will also prophetically (during the End Times) unite together to once again persecute God's saints. The stage is being set today for all this to transpire as ecumenicalism continues to flourish among the pagan and apostate religions of the world. It's this harlot religious system that will murder the true saints of God living during the first half of the Tribulation Period since this woman is said to be “drunken with the blood of the saints” (Rev. 17:6). The apostate church of the End Times will have power during the first three- and one-half years of the Tribulation Period and seek to martyr those who come to faith in Christ. The apostate church will want everyone to come under the same umbrella, and when true believers refuse to join the ecumenical bandwagon of the End Times, which espouses all types of false religion, they will be persecuted for their faith.

Revelation 6:9 occurs during the first half of the Tribulation Period: (TURN)
“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.”

All those who do not unite with the harlot system (the ecumenical combination of false religion) during this time will be in danger of being persecuted and put to death. Many saints will die when they refuse to participate and espouse the woman’s End Time ecumenical agenda. The woman’s desire for worldwide religious control will cause an edict to be sent out into the entire world, which will in essence say, those who do not unite with the one world church, will be put to death. Of course, true believers will not want to cooperate with an apostate system that is not honoring to God. They will refuse to join the harlot system and suffer the consequences of martyrdom. They will be severely persecuted for proclaiming their faith in Jesus Christ.

One good way to promote the one-world church will simply be to annihilate all those who oppose it. This is what the woman (apostate harlot church) will do to all those who are saved and become true Christians during this time period. If the people do not imbibe her religious cocktail drink of false teaching from her golden cup (Rev. 17:4), she will persecute or slay them. The Bible envisions a massive religious system existing during the End Times that will encompass the globe and severely persecute the saints.

Revelation 18:24 also speaks about this religious woman shedding “the blood of prophets and of saints.” These prophets and saints have to do with those who are actively witnessing and seeking to serve the Lord during the future Tribulation Period. The prophets that the Babylonian system will kill, while headed up by the Antichrist, are the two witnesses, which are said to prophesy during this time period (Rev. 11:3-12). The blood of prophets will be shed as a result of Babylon’s hatred for God and those who represent Him.

The saints refer to the great multitudes that will be martyred during the future Tribulation Period. They are saints who will stand up and witness for Christ during these dark days (Rev. 6:9, 12:11; 7:9-14). The concluding phrase “and of all that were slain on the earth” (Rev. 18:24) points to the total deaths of all God’s servants,

whether prophets or saints, who oppose the Babylonian religious system, which will first appear under the harlot church, and then under the final form of Babylonianism - the Antichrist's system of worldwide worship and dictatorship.

What is going to happen is that eventually the Antichrist will destroy the ecumenical religious system (see Rev. 17:16) so that only He will be worshipped as the only true God and object of worship. The harlot church during the first half of the Tribulation Period will be promoting ecumenically based religion but the Antichrist will eventually do away with this religious monstrosity and begin his own campaign of persecution which will essentially become the final form of apostate religion against God which has emerged from Babylonian idolatry (Rev. 17:11)

Great multitudes of God's servants during the Tribulation period will die a terrible death, first at the hands of the apostate church, and secondly, when millions reject the Antichrist's final world religion and the marking system, which is the ultimate expression of Babylonian religion.

Revelation 20:4 reveals:

“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”



Millions will die at the hands of the God-defying Babylonian system of the End Times (“a great multitude of which no man could number” – Rev. 7:9), as it relates to both the ecclesiastical apostate church and then finally the religious empire of the Antichrist who enforces a religious marking system upon the world. We will talk about this in our next point.

The late Francis Schaeffer wrote:

“Rome was cruel, and its cruelty can perhaps be best pictured by the events which took place in the arena in Rome itself. People seated above the arena floor watched gladiator contests and Christians thrown to the beasts. Let us not forget why the Christians were killed. They were *not* killed because they worshiped Jesus. Various religions covered the whole Roman world... Nobody cared who worshiped whom so long as the worshiper did not disrupt the unity of the state, centered in the formal worship of Caesar. The reason the Christians were killed was because they were rebels. Their worship (speaking of worship of Jesus Christ) became a special threat to the unity of the state during the third century and during the reign of Diocletian (284-305), when people of the higher classes began to become Christians in larger numbers. If they had worshiped Jesus *and* Caesar, they would have gone unharmed, but they rejected all forms of syncretism.”

In summary, both the religious harlot woman (false church) and then Antichrist's dictatorship and religious system of government (the final display of Babylonian defiance against God) will murder many followers of Christ during the End Times.

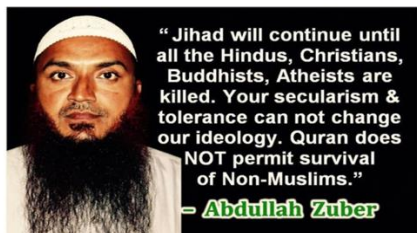
Matthew 24:9-10

“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. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.”

The emperor Diocletian set up a stone pillar on which were inscribed these words: FOR HAVING EXTERMINATED THE NAME CHRISTIAN FROM THE EARTH. This of course never happened. However, Christians are dying in other parts of the world today more than we realize. The persecution of God's people is beginning to be seen and felt, even in our own country, as Christian liberties are being stripped away from our lives with the push of godless and hellish humanism.

Satan wants God out of this country and God's people to be persecuted. Satan wants to dethrone righteousness and enthrone sin instead of the Savior. Satan wants to promote evolution instead of Christianity and Allah instead of God the Father. And if I read the Koran correctly the Muslim religion (true practicing Muslims) want to conquer the world for Allah.

"And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the infidels wherever you find them and capture them and beside them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush."
Quran, 9:5



This means that true Allah followers, who follow the instructions of the Koran, will kill in the name of Allah, if they are given a chance to do so, and they will rise up against true followers of Christ and Christianity. The persecution that is taking shape today is a precursor sign of what will occur during the Tribulation Period.

These two Muslims signed that they believe in the constitution of our country and yet they spit on it and trample it under their feet. They are also bigots of Jewish people and other religious people. If you would give people like this more power, like in the coming Biden administration, you can be sure that they will ramp up the persecution against "the infidels" and follow their Islamic ideology.

First two Muslim women sworn into Congress



Don't let these evil people fool you. This presidential cabinet would have a hodgepodge of Islamic extremists and communists sharing their ideologies to control the lives of people.

How can the swamp creatures of Washington sit back and allow Jewish and religious bigots to control and persecute other Christians and take over our country? They are weak. They have no backbone. Many of them are also paid off by China! They are not loyal to our country and constitution and they certainly are not loyal to the truth. The door to communism and control over our lives as Americans is on the ticket in this coming election. I'm sounding the alarm against it. Don't fool yourself, these are not merely "liberal democrats." They are Marxist Communists and Muslims who want to ramp up persecution against God's people and control the lives of Americans.

These are the predictions of God's Word!

3. The sign of a marking system (Rev. 13)

This will be the last sign of the End Times that we will consider under this point because it relates to what the Marxists and communists want to do today. The Bible predicts that a universal marking system will be required upon all earth dwellers during the second half of the Tribulation Period. It seems that the world is going to be prepared and preconditioned for such a system as this. Today there is much talk about starting a marking system to help the government keep track of who has been vaccinated and who has not been vaccinated.

“to receive a mark (tattoo) in their right hand, or in their foreheads” Rev. 13:16



Revelation 13:13-18 reveals what is coming: “And he (the False Prophet – the second man to the Antichrist) doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means of* those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast (the Antichrist); saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image

(statue) to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live (an alleged reincarnation claim of a historical figure that had died in the past but has now come back to life). And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak (a demonized speaking statue), and cause (by force) that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth (by a worldwide edict that will be enforced) all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark (tattoo) in their right hand, or in their foreheads (a mark of ownership and allegiance to the Antichrist):

“And that no man might buy or sell (their economic well-being will be cut off), save he that had the mark (a scratch or etching, a stamp which is actually describing a tattoo), or the name of the beast (a further description of the mark in that Antichrist’s name will somehow be associated with this mark/markings system during the End Times), or the number of his name (a final description of the mark that reveals how a specific number will be associated with the Antichrist’s name). Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast (add together the numbers which are associated with the letters of Antichrist’s

name): for it is the number of a man; and his number *is* Six hundred threescore *and* six” (the Antichrist’s name, when calculated numerically, will add up to the number 666).

During the coming day, the Bible teaches that the unsaved will be marked to preserve them from Antichrist’s wrath against God’s people. The mark will signify that the person bearing it is a worshiper and loyal follower of the Antichrist. In much the same way, the Roman emperors required their subjects to prove their loyalty by offering sacrifices to Caesar. Those who refused, like those who refuse to take the Antichrist’s mark in the future, will be subject to execution. This is what is coming upon the world in the future. The stage is being set for this mark in the day in which we live with the rebirth and revival of tattoos and the coding system we already have in the world.

The progress in numerical codes along with the prominence of tattoos in our present day is paving the way for this End Time numbering code system to be established on a worldwide basis.

We have code numbers on all food and purchasing items today. But someday, a tattoo code 666 will have to be displayed on one’s body in order to be able to purchase or sell. It may very well be the specific number 666 tattoo that is displayed, or a numerical bar code that adds up to 666. Whatever the case might be, this code will be scanned by a laser which gives permission for people to buy and sell. All economic workings and survival itself will depend upon this code. This is not fanaticism; it is Biblicism.



As already mentioned, today we see trends developing which are preparing and conditioning people to receive a marking system such as this.

This was in the New York Times back in October 14, 2004:

The FDA has cleared the way for a Florida company to market implantable chips that would provide easy access to individual medical records. The approval is

expected to bring public attention to a simmering debate over a technology that has evoked Orwellian overtones for privacy advocates and fueled fears of widespread tracking of people with implanted radio frequency tags, even though that ability does not yet exist.

The manufacturer claims VeriChips, could save lives and limit injuries from errors in medical treatment. And it expressed hope that such medical uses would accelerate the acceptance of under-the-skin ID chips as security and access-control devices. The rice grain size chip is inserted under the skin of the arm or hand with a syringe.

Scott Silverman, Applied Digital Chairman said,
“We believe there are far fewer people resisting this today, but it is far from clear whether implanted identification tags can overcome opposition from those who fear new levels of personal surveillance and from religious groups who contend that the tags may be the mark of the beast..”

More recently, Bill Gates concluded that we should use a mass vaccination campaign against COVID-19 “to implant microchips in people that would be used to track people with a digital ID.” Bill gates thinks he can run the world with his network approaching 100 billion dollars.

George Soros



**Billionaires bringing
the world together
economically**

Bill Gates



In fact, today billionaires like George Soros and Bill Gates are pushing this country into communism and financial collapse. They want America to become a land of the super-rich and the poor (no middle class). This allows the government to control the wealth of people, the health care of people, and the economics of

people. These guys (like many of the swamp creates in Washington) today are globalists trying to bring the world together economically, socially, and

interdependently supportive of one another. All of this is setting the stage for the End Times and the universal marking system. Everyone is talking about a “global reset” or the world where all countries are interrelated economically and governmentally. This means there will be universal marking system to accommodate this type of globalism.

The idea of implanting chips in people is nothing new. This technology may somehow be connected with the End Times. However, taking God’s Word as face value (literally), it seems that a tattoo coding system or a 666 number will be implemented in the future which can be scanned. This seems to be the way the mark of the beast will be displayed and used throughout the End Times.

Some have suggested that if we needed to wait for scanners, lasers, and barcodes that the Rapture could not have happened until after the invention of these particular items in the 20th century. That’s like saying Jesus could not come until the invention of the printing press! Of course, this type of reasoning is flawed. This same prophetic scenario could have been fulfilled in another way, without lasers and barcodes. But with the advancement of technology today, you can see how easily the marking system can be passed upon the entire world.

Today, we can see how lasers and tattoos can easily implement this mark of the beast. John is teaching that the mark will involve the actual number of a man’s name which can be calculated to the numerical equivalency of 666. In other words, this is one specific mark, which is a number (666), that numerically corresponds to the name of the Antichrist.

This brings up the questions: What did John means when he stated that the people living during this time will be able to “count the number of the beast” (Rev. 13:18)? How can the name of the coming Antichrist actually have a number assigned to it? This is very easy to understand when we remember that the Hebrew and Greek letters of the Old and New Testament also were used for their own numbering system.

This actual 666 number of the Antichrist (or a type of bar code adding up to 666) will be displayed on the right arm or forehead of all the followers of the Antichrist which will display the number associated with Antichrist's name.

Roman Letters

$$\begin{aligned} & \mathbf{I (1) + V (5) + X (10)} \\ & \mathbf{+ L (50) + C (100) +} \\ & \mathbf{D (500) = 666} \end{aligned}$$

It's very interesting that the old Roman language was Latin, which also may be significant in connection with the Beast's name. This is because the Antichrist will be a Roman prince coming out of the domain of the old Roman Empire where Latin was spoken by the Romans (Daniel 9:27). This might suggest that the Antichrist may actually have a name written in the Old Latin language, which will have to be numerically calculated.

There are many speculations attached to the calculation of this number. The fact is nobody knows for sure what language his name will be numerically coded to and nobody knows who the Antichrist is today by numerical calculations.

The triple number 666 is the number associated with man and will numerically represent a particular man who will successfully push the epitome of humanism upon a Christ rejecting world. The triple number 666 represents man's day and man's defiance of God under the Antichrist.



The number 666 is seen to be associated with man in the Bible. This is because man was created on the sixth day (Genesis 1:26-27, 31). Man is linked to the sixth day of creation. So, this number then would be associated with man. The triple number would indicate the greatest manmade defiance plotted against God during the End Times. It indicates the epitome of manmade humanism without God.

Scary and times are ahead for planet earth. Today we are beginning to see the forerunners of this type of system. I suspect that as we approach the time of the Rapture, we will see more development in this area of marks, scanning, tracking.

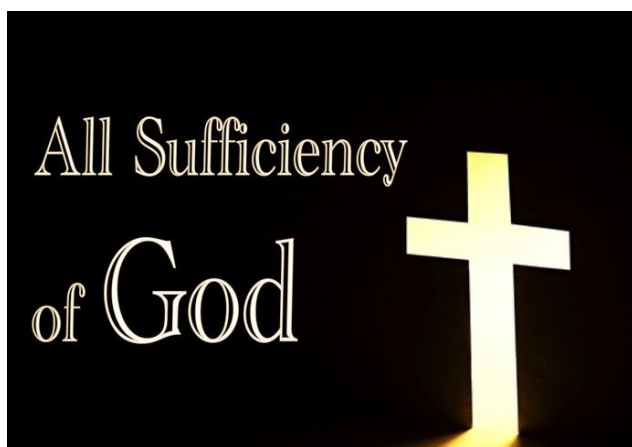
Many people have wondered how bad it will get before the Rapture occurs. To be very honest, things could become very bad, so much so, that we will see increase of marking and tracking systems, the increase of universal agreement on money, a marking system, and meeting certain requirements in order to buy and live a normal life. No one can know to what extend the world will plunge into marking systems before the End Times begin. What I can say today and right now is that we should cherish our freedoms, pray for our freedoms, and vote for our freedoms!

As the storm clouds gather and things “wax worse” (2 Tim. 3:13), the early church was called upon to pray this prayer: “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20). Our deliverance will be that much sweeter as things progressively become worse in our country and throughout the earth. We need to keep the blessed hope in our hearts on a daily basis.

This past July I was in Grand Rapids Michigan. I was visiting a bookstore (Baker Book House) and found a book that seemed rather interesting to me. The title was this: “How to Keep Your Head on Straight In a Word Gone Crazy.”

I’m thankful that the Bible gives us constant reminders how to live during the best and worst of times. It reminds us how to keep our heads on straight when everything around us seems to be turning against us and closing in on us.

IV. Our resource in the sufficiency of God



This is our final major point in this study. If we are going to possess certainly during uncertain times, we need to rely on God’s sufficiency for our daily lives. This is why we don’t need psychology, secular philosophies, humanistic therapies, mind techniques and the mind sciences, experiences which are not validated by Scripture

and which lead us away from our dependency upon Christ and our sufficiency in Him.

If a relationship with the living God (Jesus Christ) and His Word was not adequate for coping with man's problems, and we needed the insights of modern psychology to resolve them, then God has left people without sufficient answers for the past 2,000 years, until Freud and company came along to save the day. This is preposterous! Christ is sufficient to meet all of our deepest longings of the soul and needs.

Where does a person turn for inner healing? God's Word repeatedly claims that God Himself is our healer, sufficient to bind up our wounds and make us whole through trusting in Him.

Psalm 147:3

"He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."

Today God's perfect and complete provision for our needs is found in the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. We are warned not to be taken captive by the world's philosophies and principles, but to walk in the fullness of Christ, Who is to be our all in all (Col. 2:6-15; 3:1-4, 11).

Someone said:

"If our foundations are in place, then nothing else really matters."

Psalm 11:3 reminds us:

"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

If the sure foundation of Christ's sufficiency is destroyed, then we are left all alone on the battlefield, without God's every-present supply and adequacy. We are left alone to fend for ourselves or look to some other cheap substitute to find help.

But God's sufficiency is just that – our adequacy to pass through the most difficult seasons of our lives. His sufficiency or adequacy is there for old age, trials of any age, when the heat is on in life, when everything and everyone seems to be against us, when we are losing our freedoms, and when things have gone upside down in our lives.

Beloved, no matter what the future holds for us, we can be sure that God's sufficiency can get us through the difficult times that might be ahead of us. God can enable us to pass through the perilous times that may be in the future for us (2 Tim. 3:1). No matter when they come and what they might be God has a plan for His children to pass through changing and challenging times victoriously and virtuously. It is to experience His sufficiency in our lives, moment by moment, day by day, year after year.

2 Corinthians 3:5

"Not that we are sufficient (adequate) of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency (adequacy) *is* of God."

As Christians, we can find complete sufficiency in God and His provisions for our needs. There really is no such thing as an incomplete or deficient Christian. Each one must grow and mature, but no necessary resource is missing. There's no need to search for something more or something new.

Sadly, many Christians are not aware of the truth about our Lord's sufficiency. The church is in dire need of a renewed appreciation of what it means to experience God's sufficiency in their daily lives. Things like bad doctrine, legalism, libertinism, humanism, and secularization, and secularized psychology to name just a few are eroding the foundations of the Christian faith. There are many satanic assaults on our sufficiency in God's power, provision, and promises that He has given to us.

The word psychology literally means "the study of the soul." But psychology cannot really study the soul. It is limited to studying only human behavior. This means the behavioral sciences cannot meet the spiritual true needs of people. Outside the Word and the Holy Spirit there are no solutions to any of the problems of the human soul. Only God knows the soul and only God can change it. It's interesting that the accepted ideas of modern psychology are theories that were originally developed by atheists who did not believe in God. They taught that people alone have the power to change themselves into a better person through certain techniques.

Many within the modern church era are searching elsewhere, outside the character and life of God, outside the realm of God's Scriptures and promises, outside the realm of His power to discover a better way. Beloved, there is no better way! The sufficiency of God is the only way to get through life.

The word "sufficiency" (2 Cor. 3:5) literally means God's ability, adequacy, and competency to do anything in and through our lives. The idea is that God Himself is to be our sense of sufficiency, that God is enough, that God is large enough to enable us to get through difficult times.

Psalm 23:1-3

The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

God is sufficient. God is enough!

“When life is not what I want it to be,
When troubles surround me like the waves of the sea,
When just getting by is a struggle for me,
JESUS IS ENOUGH.

When despair and confusion are on every hand,
When all I receive are complaints and demands,
When friends and dear loved ones can't understand,
JESUS IS ENOUGH.

When human compassion seems to fall short,
When no one can offer lasting support,
When hopelessness seems the only resort,
JESUS IS ENOUGH.

When health and prosperity fail to abide,
When the gap between good times is too far and wide,
When a sea could be filled with the tears that I've cried,
JESUS IS ENOUGH.

When loneliness, heartache, and trouble abound,
When joy and contentment can't seem to be found,
When the "bluebird of happiness" won't make a sound,
JESUS IS ENOUGH.

We need to once again soften our hearts to the sufficiency of God operating in our lives and getting us to pass through life with His personal shepherding ministry, His peace, power, and daily spiritual provisions and blessings.

Paul did not place his confidence in himself or his own abilities but in the Lord. God is the one who makes us adequate servants and supplies us with adequate resources to live victoriously, powerfully, virtuously in a very dark world of confusion, compromises, and communistic trends. Paul was actually contrasting God-confidence (sufficiency) with self-confidence (sufficiency). God's sufficiency is the answer to the question found in 2 Corinthians 2:16, "Who is sufficient?" None of us are sufficient to accomplish God's will and live for Him without His sufficient or adequate supply and aid.

Paul realized that in his own strength and wisdom, he could accomplish nothing (1 Cor. 1:18; 2:5). It would take God working through Him to accomplish great things for the Lord and to enable him to pass through life's trails and difficulties.

Philippians 2:13

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will (change your will) and to do of *his* good pleasure" (charge your life with power).

This is sufficiency on steroids! God's redirects our will and desires to do His will while at the same time empowering us to do His will. We are like spiritual energizer bunnies! These words of God's sufficiency are actually a rebuke aimed at his opponents who were known for their self-reliance. They viewed their accomplishments in ministry as a result of their own skills and insights. But Paul reveals that success in ministry comes from God alone. In every way, for ministry, for life, for trials and hard times, we need God's sufficiency – His adequacy and

competency to enable us to be fully supplied for everything we face in life (child rearing, motherhood, physical problems, sickness, heartaches, down times).

John MacArthur said this:

“In the past two decades or so, for example, theology has become more and more humanistic. The focus has shifted from God to people and their problems, and counseling has replaced worship and evangelism as the main program of many churches. Most seminaries now put more energy into teaching ministerial students psychology than training them to preach.

“Evidently they believe therapists can accomplish more good in Christians’ lives than preachers and teachers. That mindset has taken the church by storm. Evangelicalism is infatuated with psychotherapy. Emotional and psychological disorders supposedly requiring prolonged analysis have become almost fashionable. An hour listening to almost any call-in talk show on Christian radio will confirm that these things are so. Or visit your local Christian bookstore and note the proliferation of so-called “Christian” recovery books. Virtually everywhere you look in the evangelical subculture, you can find evidence that Christians are becoming more and more dependent on therapists, support groups and other similar props.

“This shift in the church’s focus did not grow out of some new insight gained from Scripture. Rather, it has seeped into the church from the world. It is an attack at the most basic level, challenging Christians’ confidence in the sufficiency of Christ.”

Another preacher shared this experience. Some years ago I was invited to present the gospel to a group of actors and actresses at a Hollywood hotel. That was a different environment for me, but I was thankful for the opportunity to represent Christ to them. I talked for about forty-five minutes, then challenged the people to trust Christ for salvation.

Afterward a young man came up to me and shook my hand. He was a very handsome young actor from India, who had come to Hollywood seeking stardom. He said to me, “Your speech was fascinating and compelling. I want Jesus Christ in

my life.” I was thrilled and suggested we go into a little side room where we would have privacy to talk together and pray.

We made our way to the room and sat down. Then he said, “I’m a Muslim. I’ve been a Muslim all my life. Now I want to have Christ.” I was somewhat overwhelmed because I had never led a Muslim to Christ and I didn’t expect one to respond so easily to the gospel. I explained in more detail what it meant to open one’s heart to Christ, then suggested we pray together.

As we knelt, he invited Jesus into his life. Then I prayed for him and we stood up. I was excited and he was smiling as he shook my hand firmly. But then he made a tragic and revealing statement: “Isn’t it wonderful? Now I have two religions, Christianity and Islam.”

This man did not have a right understanding of the Gospel and Christ’s sufficiency. It’s Christ plus nothing!

1. Human wisdom is replacing the sufficiency we have in Christ.

Colossians 2:8

“Beware lest any man spoil you (take you captive like the spoils of war – enslave you) through philosophy (man’s wisdom) and vain deceit (empty and delusional teaching designed to trick us – high sounding nonsense!), after the tradition of men (a reference to the religious and ritualistic ordinances which do not align with God’s Word - Mark 7:6-9), after the rudiments of the world (basic, elementary, and worldly disciplines of approaching God on the basis of human performance – religion that seeks to gain God’s favor through keeping rules), and not after Christ” (disregard for Christ, His sufficiency, and teachings).

Philosophy and philosophical-religious views is a love for man’s wisdom over God’s wisdom. Human philosophy is rooted in the traditions of men and rudiments of the world system (a mixture of legalistic and Gnostic teachings). Philosophy is literally the love of human wisdom which rejects God’s wisdom. For instance, much of Christian counseling today is in name only. It’s not Christian. This is because people counsel with Maslow theories and secular human therapies which are replacing

Biblical truth and God's precious promises. Many Christians are not relying on the sufficiency of Christ. Instead, they are imbibing philosophy (man's wisdom) on how to live and resolve their problems.

The phrase "rudiments of the world" literally refers to "things in a column" or "things in a row" (such as 1, 2, 3, or A, B, C). Paul may be specifically referring to religion that seeks to approach God through keeping legalistic rules and ceremonial laws which is nothing but human wisdom and philosophy. The ABC'S refer to the kind of instruction one would give a child. Paul is saying this. Although human wisdom is said to be sophisticated, human philosophy is rudimentary, very childish, and unrefined. To abandon Biblical revelation and the sufficiency of Christ for human philosophy is like returning to kindergarten after graduating from a university. Even the finest of human philosophy can offer nothing over the truth of Christ and His sufficiency. In fact, human philosophy (whether it pertains to religion or secularism) hinders us from receiving true wisdom and produces only foolishness, error, and deceit.

The founder of The Jesus Seminar, Robert Funk, wrote:

"We should give Jesus a demotion. It is no longer credible to think of Jesus as divine. Jesus' divinity goes together with the old theistic way of thinking about God. The plot early Christians invented for a divine redeemer figure is as archaic as the mythology in which it is framed. A Jesus who drops down out of heaven, performs some magical act that frees human beings from the power of sin, rises from the dead, and returns to heaven is simply no longer credible. The notion that he will return at the end of time and sit in cosmic judgment is equally incredible. We must find a new plot for a more credible Jesus."

This demonstrates how people reject Christ and His sufficiency for salvation and transformation of living and replace it with human wisdom and philosophy.

2. Human legalism is also replacing our sufficiency in Christ.

Legalism keeps people from experiencing the sufficiency of Christ as it relates to sanctification and ultimately one's salvation before God. Legalism is when a person

attempts to finalize their salvation or sanctification by obedience to laws. Any person who does this will find themselves missing out on the sufficiency of Christ.

Colossians 2:16 declares:

“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days.”

There were those who were saying that Christ is not enough to save you and make you fit for Heaven. You must also keep the old Mosaic laws regarding the particulars about eating, drinking, holy days, or Sabbath days. In other words, one needed to observe and duplicate these things in order to be sure they were saved.

The Bible is relevant and up to date. Many people are still saying, “Unless you are baptized, catechized, and Lutheranized you can’t go to Heaven. Many people will tell you, “Jesus Christ is a good beginning but only if you keep the rules, or follow the rituals, will you'll get there.” You must follow this procedure or do this or perform this work. No, it's Christ plus nothing! Don't let anybody intimidate you. How can the observance of Passover be considered a means of spiritual perfection when our Passover is Christ (1 Cor. 5:7) and He lives within us (Col. 1:27)? And why would we demand that people keep some Jewish sabbath law when we have entered into our eternal rest and peace in Christ?

Hebrews 4:9

“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.”

Acts 15:1 records the basic teaching of legalists:

“And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.”

Of course, this same type of thing continues to this very day. Many teach that a person must observe the sacraments of baptism and the holy Eucharist, that a person must pray and use prayer beads to help others get out of Purgatory. These religious observances go on and on. There seems to be no end of them. Most people feel they must observe some kind of other rituals in order to get to Heaven. Believing on Christ is not enough.

Most churches are full of people who believe their salvation is attached to how often they read the Bible, or how often they pray and go to church. Their confidence of salvation is connected to the fact that they do certain things and pass through various religious rituals or it's based upon how they don't do certain things. Many people are not really trusting in the all-sufficient Christ for their salvation but their religious activities. Satan has them blinded or confused regarding the sufficiency of Christ for salvation.

Colossians 2:14 gives us this promise:

“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.”

The Bible teaches that Christ took the condemning sentence of the Mosaic Law (legalism) away from us. This sentence was nailed to His cross and He bore the judgment that we deserved for breaking the Law. As a result, we do not have to follow rules and regulation for salvation. He has freed us forever from law and legalism as way of salvation before God.

There is a glaring contradiction in the way many present the Gospel. Although it is touted as a "free gift" many feel compelled to add a host of qualifiers and conditions to it. And here is the truly amazing thing - few people object to their additions! Such an absurdity would immediately draw a negative reaction if the conversation were about anything else other than religion.

For example, imagine a car dealership advertising the giveaway of "free" cars. In no time, there would be a line stretching for miles. And then imagine being handed your set of keys with these words, "Here's your free car, just make sure you don't miss any of the monthly installments!!" There is not one of us that wouldn't see right through such a scam. We would be outraged. We would demand that the dealership take down their "Come get your free car" sign. We would feel as though we had been tricked or lied to. However, for some reason, when it comes to eternal life being offered as a "free gift," the rules of logic change. We don't even flinch when we are told, "Oh, by the way, make sure you don't miss any of the monthly installments!" For many salvation is simply like an installment program where we do our part to meet God's requirements for salvation.

3. Human mysticism is also replacing our sufficiency in Christ.

The Colossian believers were also being intimidated by people who claimed to have a higher, broader, deeper, and fuller union with God than Christ alone could give. They were the mystics. They claimed to have interacted with angelic beings through visions and other mystical experiences.

Colossians 2:18-19

“Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility (*fake humility*) and worshipping of angels (*false worship*), intruding into those things which he hath not seen (*fanatical dreams - the alleged mystical experience of dreams and visions*), vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind (*fleshly pride - mysticism results in prideful thinking*), And not holding the Head (*Jesus Christ – the Head of the Church*), from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God” (*faulty doctrine that leads people away from the sufficiency of Christ*).

Yes, we are to be “increasing with the increase of God” in our lives! This is God’s sufficiency. But mysticism rejects the sufficiency of Christ in the areas of salvation and sanctification by claiming that certain experiences bring them into God’s favor. It is the idea that a person receives direct knowledge from God through personal, subjective experiences apart from, or even contrary to divine and Biblical revelation. Apparently the Colossian mystics claimed that anyone not having similar esoteric visions (mystical encounters through dreams and visions) were not really spiritual. They had not arrived. They were not part of the elite crowd of super-duper saints. In fact, the mystics turned their experiences into a form of legalism that brought people acceptance before God.

I received an email from one of my friends:

Hi, Pastor and Lois!

“I had a weird dream last night about Berean. We were visiting, and there were tons of new people at the Church. There was choir practice afterwards, and there were so many choirs and so many people participating in them, that most of the

people got up and left before the service was over - including you, Pastor! The practices were held outside in the parking lot. Apparently, they were going to go on for so long that two kids were carrying a mini refrigerator out with them. One of the kids had a bass drum (hard to carry when you're also carrying a fridge), so I guess you were expanding the instrumental section!"

Well, maybe there is something to this dream! Listen, God is not guiding us by dreams and visions but by His word and the Holy Spirit. The Gnostics believed that angels directed them in dreams and visions which in return gave precedence over apostolic doctrine or teaching. Like many heretics and cultists down through the ages, they claim support for their false teachings in visions they had supposedly seen.

Mysticism means that people use subjective experiences (dreams, visions, TM, Yoga), instead of objective truth, to guide them on in life. Those who embrace mysticism actually turn away from the sufficiency of Christ, who alone produces true fulfillment and spirituality in Christian living through the infusion of His life and Christian virtues.

There are many self-appointed prophets today. There are many religious quacks who tout their own dreams and visions with a different phrase, "The Lord told me." This too is mysticism and it preys on people looking for some secret truth that will somehow add to or replace the simplicity of God's sufficiency in Himself and His Word.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

"All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Someone wrote:

"Mysticism has caught many Christians unaware. It has thus swept much of the church into a dangerous netherworld of confusion and false teaching. Mysticism has created a theological climate that is largely intolerant of precise doctrine and sound biblical exegesis."

People will sometimes send enormous sums of money in hopes of buying a miracle. By doing this they think they are demonstrating great faith, but in reality, they're showing great distrust in the sufficiency of Christ. What they think of as faith in Christ is really doubt looking for proof. Such weak Christians are easy victims of mysticism's false promises.

A well-known charismatic pastor said that sometimes in the morning when he's shaving, Jesus comes into his bathroom and puts His arm around him and they have a conversation. Does he really believe this? I don't know. Perhaps he wants people to believe he is more intimate with Christ than most of us are. Whatever the case, his experience contrasts sharply with biblical accounts of heavenly visions. (Isa. 6:5; Rev. 1:17). Beware of Charismatic mysticism. It continues to be a problem in the church today and is leading people away from their sufficiency in Christ.

4. Human asceticism is also replacing our sufficiency in Christ.

One Sunday morning a preacher was about to finish preaching when suddenly a man approached the pulpit yelling at the top of his voice, "I have something to say. I have something to say!" Before the ushers could escort him out, the tape recorder picked up what he shouted to the congregation: "You people are religious phonies—materialistic hypocrites. If you really loved God you'd get rid of your cars and your fancy houses and give all that you have to the poor. You'd serve God in poverty like Jesus did." This was his view of spirituality, and he wanted everyone to know it.

Of course, this view of spirituality is not uncommon at all. It's called asceticism, and it has threatened the church for centuries. In fact, it was another heretical teaching that Paul warned the Colossian Christians to avoid.

Colossians 2:20-23

"Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world (*the elementary principles and primary components of the Gnostic teachings which were a mixture of legalism, mysticism, and asceticism*), why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances (*religious decrees which involve ascetic*

practices), (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? (*man's decrees – not God's commandments*) Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility (*false worship and humility*), and neglecting of the body (*giving up the comforts of society and the body to earn God's forgiveness and favor - asceticism*); not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh” (*false standards of spirituality and self-styled asceticism only serves and satisfies the flesh but these practices are not of God*).

The problem here is asceticism (self-denial and self-torture of the body). Asceticism involves giving up certain comforts in society as an attempt to gain spirituality and salvation before God. Many times it would involve torturing the human body in some fashion. It is the belief that through self-denial or self-torture, man can achieve a higher state of holiness and acceptance before God.

An ascetic is someone who lives a life of rigorous self-denial as a means to earn forgiveness from God. Asceticism is motivated by pride rather than humility, and it is an attempt to accomplish in the energy of the flesh a right relationship with God, which can only occur by a divine transformation through faith in Jesus Christ. People today who practice asceticism in various forms and ways will often fall into immorality for they discover that this false spirituality does not provide true satisfaction and sufficiency for living.

Let's bring this up to date. Asceticism says you can't drink tea or coffee as the Mormons teach. You can't have a tractor with rubber tires! However, you can have a wagon with rubber tires. You can't have a car that is red. It must be black. You can't wear a certain color. You must wear a certain type of clothing so God will favor you and accept you. Asceticism! Beware of this. If you think you can give up the comforts of society, change your clothing, give up certain colors, or refuse to marry or eat something, in order for God to approve of you and accept you, then you are deceived! It's Christ that brings us acceptance before God – not our colors, cars, clothing, or our culture.

1 Corinthians 8:8

“But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.”

I once had a cultist woman ring my doorbell and say to me, “I can tell that you eat meat.” I wanted to play her game and replied, “I can tell you don’t eat meat.” We must remember that God created sex, food, drink, and the natural desires to have these things. Sin occurs through their abuse, not by their nonuse.

5. Human entertainment is also replacing our sufficiency in Christ.

This one does not appear in Colossians, but it is worthy to mention.

Acts 2:42 says this of the early church:

“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

The Bible does not say that they continued in their entertaining rock music, their worldly methodologies, and ear-tickling preaching. Jeremiah 5:31 says, “and my people love to have it so.” I think this is a true assessment on what is happening today among many evangelicals. Many people, including Christians, are flocking to churches for entertaining music and preaching. They want the thrill of theatrics and worldly entertainment to captivate them, ring their bell, and motivate them, thinking that these things will somehow fulfill them and get them through life. Religious entertainment is a replacement for the sufficiency of Christ.

Yes, another evidence that many are losing confidence in Christ’s sufficiency is the church’s increasing fascination with entertainment and pragmatic methodology. Secularized counseling is not the only program that has taken the place of Bible teaching, fellowship, communion, and prayer as the chief activities of church life. Now, in addition, many churches have de-emphasized preaching and worship in favor of entertainment somehow believing they must lure converts by appealing to their fleshly interests. It’s as though Christ Himself is in some way inadequate to change the lives of people. Therefore, many church leaders now believe they must excite people’s flesh and fancies in order to win them.

Tozer concludes by saying:

“The church that can’t worship must be entertained. And men who can’t lead a church to worship must provide the entertainment. That is why we have the great evangelical heresy here today - the heresy of religious entertainment.”

6. Human pragmatism is also replacing our sufficiency in Christ.

Pragmatism is the efforts of man to use worldly methods to win people to Christ. The error of pragmatism is that it regards methodologies that seemingly “work” as more important and more viable than those that are Biblical or in harmony with Scripture. The pragmatist starts with the question, “What do the unchurched want?” and builds his strategy to reach people from this perspective. However, a person should ask this question: “What does Scripture teach about church ministry?” and then follow God’s Biblical pattern.

Pragmatism attacks the sufficiency of the Gospel and God’s Word in evangelism. It is marketing the Gospel, disguising it, toning it down, making it acceptable to unbelievers. But it is the Gospel that is the power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). Furthermore, to teach or imply that human techniques can bring someone to Christ is contrary to Scripture because it denies the sovereign work of God’s grace upon the souls of people (John 6:37, 44). Those who substitute entertainment for a clear proclamation of the truth are in conflict with God’s design for the church

1 Corinthians 2:3-4

“And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching *was* not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”

The power of the Gospel and God’s grace is what brings people to Christ – not pragmatism and fulfilling the needs of people through the marketing techniques of man. Worldliness does not win souls to Christ. It’s the Spirit of God that touches the heart of man and saves him (John 3:8; 16:7-8; 2 Thess. 2:13). So, the sufficiency of God is directly related to person’s salvation. Salvation is of the Lord! Pragmatism creates a false sense of independence and self-sufficiency that centers upon human solutions to life’s problems and winning people to Christ.



There was a poor European family who saved for years to buy tickets to sail to America. Once at sea, they carefully rationed the cheese and bread they had brought for the journey. After 3 days, the boy complained to his father, "I hate cheese sandwiches. If I don't eat anything else before we get to America, I'm going to die." Giving the boy his last nickel, the father told him to go to the ship's galley and buy an ice-cream cone.

When the boy returned a long time later with a wide smile, his worried dad asked, "Where were you?" "In the galley, eating three ice-cream cones and a steak dinner!" "All that for a nickel?" "Oh, no, the food is free," the boy replied. "It comes with the ticket."

In one sense, the apostle Paul warned his readers about false teachers who were offering them "bread and cheese" instead of "steak." They were in danger of forgetting Christ's sufficiency and relying on their own self-efforts. We who have trusted Christ for salvation have been assured not only of safe passage to heaven but also of everything we need to live for Him here and now. Christ has all we need for salvation and sanctification. In one sense, our salvation comes with the "ticket" which means we have access to all of Christ's spiritual blessings for our daily living. This is why Paul finally gets to the main thesis in the book of Colossians and speaks of the sufficiency of Christ.

Colossians 2:10 declares:

"And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power."

When the Bible teaches that we are "complete in him" it means that through our union and position in Christ He gives to us everything we need for salvation, sanctification, and satisfaction for living. This important phrase ("in him") denotes the believer's vital union with Christ who is our life. You see, our spiritual union and identification with Christ is the secret of our completeness and sufficiency in Christ. In other words, out of our union and position we already possess in Christ, flows our completeness, or the full resource of our spiritual blessings and provisions. The cult at Colosse was offering to "complete" the Christian believers by initiating them into their secrets. Paul says, "Nonsense! – we are already complete in Him."

Through our union with Christ we have the power to overcome sin (Rom. 6:1-14) and the full provisions of salvation and sanctification. Because of our union with Christ every spiritual need we have is fully met. Possessing Him, we possess all we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). This means that there is no higher plane to reach, no surpassing experience or deeper life that we must discover. Everything is found in our relationship with Christ. Christ is to be our all and all. We are to cling to Him and cultivate our love for Him. This is because in Him alone we are complete!

Spurgeon gives a good definition of our completeness. He says we are (1) Complete without the aid of Jewish ceremony. (2) Complete without the help of philosophy. (3) Complete without the inventions of superstition. (4) Complete without human merit. The word “complete” means to make full, to fill, to fill up to the top. to render full and suggests a complete and total provision of spiritual blessings and supply in Christ. We are literally overflowing with Christ’s provision and sufficiency. This is what the word “complete” means. It speaks of having no deficiency. It points to our total provision for salvation, sustaining power, serenity, and satisfaction in life through Christ’s work and abiding presence. We are complete in Jesus Christ. You cannot add anything to this! You can’t add anything to everything!

We are complete in Christ. Have you been acting like it, living like it, depending on it? One radio announcer used to ask: “How in the world are you doing?” How are you doing in life? What kind of life have you been living? Do you doubt your salvation? Has the devil been working you over? Have you been experiencing victory? If not, why not? It’s because you are not applying your riches in Christ. You are complete in Him – He is your salvation and victory. Trust in Him, live by His power, let him change your character and conduct.

This fullness or completeness (the sufficiency of Christ) has been promised to the Church, applied to the Church, and should be experienced by the Church today. This is a New Testament concept since Christ had not yet come during the Old Testament. The Bible expression of completeness means that Christ becomes everything FOR us and everything TO us! I can’t be saved without Him, I can’t be sanctified without Him, I can’t be satisfied without Him. I can serve effectively without Him. I can’t be spiritual without Him. I need His fullness and completeness operating in my life.

One preacher shares this interesting story:

“I remember on a Sunday night a young man came here after I preached and spoke to me and told me this personal testimony. He was a jazz drummer and he had gone on that very morning, Sunday morning, to his Catholic Church. And he had felt tremendous guilt over sins.

“And as a Catholic he felt the way to get relief from guilt was to go to confession. And so he went and asked that a priest would go in the booth and hear his confession. And he confessed all of his sins. And he said, ‘I want to be delivered from the guilt of these.’ And the priest said, ‘Take your beads,’ and I think it was the number 35, ‘go say 35 Hail Marys.’

So he went over to the altar and he said to me, ‘I said several Hail Marys, and I stood up and I took my beads and I threw them as hard as I could and as far as I could across the church and walked out.’ Somehow in the wonderful providence of God, he found his way to the service here on that Sunday night, heard the message of Jesus Christ and was wonderfully saved. And he said to me, he said, "I knew that all of that was doing nothing to deal with the guilt of my sin."

You see, it wasn't that he didn't believe in Christ's death, it was that he was told that Christ was not enough, Christ was not sufficient to save his soul, that you couldn't just expect Christ to forgive your sin, you had to do something, something religious. This is so prominent in ceremonial ritualistic systems, in self-righteous works systems. People who are told to believe in Christ and then told to try to earn their way into Heaven.

Don't let anybody tell you that it's Christ plus your prayer beads, Christ plus your candles, Christ plus your baptism, Christ plus the sacraments, Christ plus your holy underwear, like Mormon people wear, Christ plus service, Christ plus observing the seventh day of the week, Christ plus fasting, or Christ plus anything!

Colossians 2:10 says, “And we are complete in him.” We don't need anything else but Christ to save us and get us to Heaven. Neither do we need anything else to sanctify us.

Colossians 2:13 summarizes how we were saved:

“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened (made alive) together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.”

Let me tell you how we were saved and how we also live the Christian life. It is summed up in three words – “Together with Him!” We are not only saved (born again) by sharing Christ’s life but we are sanctified by sharing Christ’s life. Christ is enough to get me up in life and get me through life. I’m amazed at how often we live defeated. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves! We live with bad attitudes, unforgiving spirit, and in depression when we can live together with Him!

You are either dead or living! The one who believes in Christ can say, I live “Together with Him! Together we share His life and are born again. But we can also sing:

“Tis done, the great transaction’s done,
I am my Lord’s and He is mine;
He drew me and, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine.”

What does it mean to be saved and sure of Heaven? It means to be in Christ!

Philippians 3:8-9 declares:

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win (gain) Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

I’d much rather be found in Christ than find myself in hell someday.

Romans 8:1 adds:

“There is therefore now no condemnation (no future judgment) to them which are in Christ Jesus (position of saved people), who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (practice of saved people).

Please notice that the practice flows out of the position (one's salvation) – the practice does not create the position (one's salvation). Let me tell you today what it means to be saved. It means to be “in Christ.” In Christ I receive all of His saving benefits from sin's penalty and power.

2 Timothy 2:10

“Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”

Yes, we are “complete in him” – complete in the saving work and person of Jesus Christ (Col. 2:10).

“Complete in Thee! no work of mine
May take, dear Lord, the place of Thine;
Thy blood hath pardon bought for me,
And I am now complete in Thee.”

Ephesians 2:13

“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh (near to God and fully accepted in His presence) by the blood of Christ.”

I stood on one side of the Grand Canyon and looked across the great chasm and wondered how to get to the other side. My friend, sin separated us from God (Isa. 59:2) and created a great chasm between the unbeliever and God. However, when I place faith in Jesus Christ He becomes the bridge that takes me the other side and makes me accepted in the presence of God. In Christ we are complete. God the Son has brought us into the presence of God the Father and God now accepts us as His own child! This is the wonder of the ages! We are complete in Him (Col. 2:10).

“Dear Savior! when before Thy bar
All tribes and tongues assembled are,
Among Thy chosen will I be,
At Thy right hand—complete in Thee.”

I believe that many churches are full of people who believe their salvation is attached to how often they read the Bible, pray and go to church. Or their

confidence in their salvation is attached to the fact that they don't do certain things and they don't go to certain places. Sadly, these people are NOT really trusting in the all-sufficient Christ. Instead, they are trusting in their religious activities.

Colossians 2:10

“And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.”

Paul writes to the Colossians because they were being intimidated. They were being intimidated by people who were telling them that Christ was not sufficient, Christ was not adequate, Christ was not enough to save them. Many people today need to have Christ plus intellectualism, Christ plus philosophy, Christ plus ceremonies (rules and rituals), Christ plus mystical experiences, or Christ plus self-denial or self-affliction. These Christians in Colossae were very intimidated by all of these teachings which sought to demote Christ's finished work on Calvary and degrade His victorious work accomplished for us. As a result, Paul writes this epistle to tell them that it's Christ plus nothing and to show the lie of all these heresies. We will deal with heresies later.

Several years ago a newspaper in Biloxi, Mississippi ran an article about an attempted suicide. A young woman apparently thought her life held no meaning so she jumped off a bridge into the waters of the Mississippi River. A man nearby saw her jump, and without thinking, jumped in after her. It didn't occur to him until after he was in the water that he couldn't swim! His screams for help and flailing limbs caught the attention of the young woman who pulled the drowning man to safety.

The writer of the newspaper article finished with this thought: "It wasn't the gentleman who saved that woman's life that night, it was the woman who saved the man because she had a new purpose in life." What this man provided for the woman was a purpose to live and gave her an opportunity to do something with her life.

This is what Christ does for the believer. He gives us the great opportunity to live a life that has meaning, purpose, and stability.

Jesus said in John 4:14:

“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

This is completeness. It speaks of sufficiency in relationship to every aspect of our lives. In salvation and receiving Christ’s life, we are given an eternal drink that satisfies us forever. We are complete in Him! We have been blessed with all spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus – salvation, justification, redemption, regeneration, eternal life, sanctification, victory, peace, joy, satisfaction (Eph. 1:3). Don’t forget about your riches in Christ! Jesus is enough! His sufficiency should be a living reality in your life.

Ephesians 1:3 declares:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”

Our blessings and provision are found in Christ (our union or spiritual relationship with Him). Our experience is with Christ. If you want an experience; then experience Christ. Experience His person, sufficiency, and His blessing upon your life. The phrase “all spiritual blessings” refer to our spiritual riches and blessings that we have in Christ – salvation, sanctification, spirituality, satisfaction, serenity, stability). One man said to me that I will never be blessed unless I speak in tongues and have the experience of being baptized in the Spirit. But the Bible says I am already rich in Jesus Christ! I have been already blessed beyond measure!

“I found something that money can't buy
I found a goldmine beyond the blue sky
I found the land where I'll look when I die
I found the Lord rich man am I.”

The failure of many Christians today is that they do not understand and appropriate the riches of Christ to their lives. As a result, they open the door to all kinds of strange influences. Pseudo-experiences, and secularization of all kinds are eroding

the foundations of the believer's sufficiency in Christ. They are looking everywhere when they should only be looking unto Christ (Heb. 12:2).

A true story is told about William and Randolph Hearst, the late newspaper publisher. Hearst invested a fortune in collecting great works of art. One day he read about some valuable pieces of art and decided that he must add them to his collection. He sent his agent abroad to locate and purchase them. Months went by before the agent returned and reported to Hearst that the items had at last been found—they were already stored in his own warehouse. Hearst had purchased them years before! He never knew that he possessed the rich paintings!

Many Christians are like this as well. They don't know about their spiritual riches in Christ – that Christ is sufficient to meet all of their needs in life through His saving work and their sanctifying and loving relationship with Him. Instead of experiencing Christ, they try and experience and invest in other things to satisfy them and give them meaning in life. Of course, outside of Christ, there is no completeness and true satisfaction.

Homer and Langley Collyer were sons of a respected New York doctor. Both had earned college degrees. In fact, Homer had studied at Columbia University to become an attorney. When old Dr. Collyer died in the early part of this century, his sons inherited the family home and estate. The two men—both bachelors—were now financially secure.

But the Collyer brothers chose a peculiar lifestyle not at all consistent with the material status their inheritance gave them. They lived in almost total seclusion. They boarded up the windows of their house and padlocked the doors. All their utilities—including water—were shut off. No one was ever seen coming or going from the house. From the outside it appeared empty.

Though the Collyer family had been quite prominent, almost no one in New York society remembered Homer and Langley Collyer by the time World War II ended. On March 21, 1947, police received an anonymous telephone tip that a man had died inside the boarded-up house. Unable to force their way in through the front door, they entered the house through a second-story window. Inside they found

Homer Collyer's corpse on a bed. This scene was set against an equally grotesque backdrop.

It seems the brothers were collectors. They collected everything—especially junk. Their house was crammed full of broken machinery, auto parts, boxes, appliances, folding chairs, musical instruments, rags, assorted odds and ends, and bundles of old newspapers. Virtually all of it was worthless. An enormous mountain of debris blocked the front door; investigators were forced to continue using the upstairs window for weeks while excavators worked to clear a path to the door.

Nearly three weeks later, as workmen were still hauling heaps of refuse away, someone made a grisly discovery. Langley Collyer's body was buried beneath a pile of rubbish some six feet away from where Homer had died. Langley had been crushed to death in a crude booby trap he had built to protect his precious collection of junk from intruders.

The garbage eventually removed from the Collyer house totaled more than 140 tons. No one ever learned why the brothers were stockpiling their pathetic treasure. Homer and Langley Collyer make a sad but fitting parable of the way many people in the church live. Although the Collyers' inheritance was sufficient for all their needs, they lived their lives in unnecessary, self-imposed poverty. Neglecting abundant resources that were rightfully theirs to enjoy, Homer and Langley instead turned their home into a dump.

Many Christians today are like these men in that they live out their lives with spiritual junk and miss out on their true riches in Christ. They don't realize that Christ has given them everything they need for salvation and sanctification. Have you been enjoying your heavenly riches in Christ (Eph. 1:3)? Have you been enjoying the abundant resources that you have in Christ? Have you been enjoying your great inheritance? Or have you been living with worldly junk and worthless things which take you away from your rich inheritance in Christ?

So, to be complete in Christ (Eph. 2:10) speaks of our sufficiency in Christ! However, as a result of the Fall, an unsaved person is in a sad state of incompleteness. He is spiritually incomplete because He is totally disconnected and out of fellowship with

God. He is morally incomplete because he lives outside of God's will. He is mentally incomplete because he does not know truth (1 Cor. 2:14). However, at the time of salvation we are placed in union with Christ and become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4) with the result of being made "complete in him" (sharing in Christ's finished work and resurrection life). Believers are spiritually, morally, and mentally complete, which means they are filled up and receive of Christ's total sufficiency and adequacy. This is because they now have fellowship with God and know and experience the ultimate purpose and reality in life.

The Greek word behind "complete" (pleroo) is in the perfect tense which indicates a past completed action with present ongoing effect or result. So actually, the verse can be more literally translated "you are in Him, having been filled full, with the present result that you are in a state of fulness." In other words, the results of our having been filled is perpetual. All of this means we don't need mysticism, human wisdom, and manmade secular theories. Paul said in Philippians 1:21, "For to me to live is Christ." His personal fellowship, power and transforming virtues are sufficient to change our lives, fulfill our lives, and satisfy us.

The word "complete" (Col. 2:10) is actually a nautical term and conveys that we are ready for the voyage of life in Christ (our living union and relationship with Him). This means that whatever you need for the voyage of life you will find in Him. You will not find it outside the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Pastor Steven Cole explains our completeness in Christ like this:

"When you're born into this world, you're born complete. You don't grow arms and legs later, like a tadpole. You've got everything you'll ever need. You can't use it all until you grow in age and strength, but you've got the whole package right from the start. It's the same spiritually. You get everything in Christ the instant you're born again. You're joined to Him in such an intimate way that Paul often refers to it as being 'in Him.' As Peter puts it (2 Pet. 1:3), 'His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness.' We may not understand it all or be able to use it all until we grow in the Lord. But we have it all!"

Colossians 2:7 says:

“Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”

When we are “rooted” in Christ it means that we are well-established from a spiritual perspective and stable in our Christian life. When we are “built up” in Christ it speaks of possessing spiritual edification and growth through our dependence and relationship with Him.

Ephesians 3:19

“And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”

Paul is teaching that we have everything when we have Christ, and we are filled with God through your union with Christ.” In other words, through our spiritual union and relationship with Christ, we can experience the “fulness” (pleroo) of God” in our lives. Paul is talking here about experiencing the fulness of God person, power, and all of His spiritual resources within our daily living. This word “fulness” reminds us once again that God fills us to the brim with His person, power, His own character and virtues, and all of His spiritual resources and provisions. We lack nothing. We are complete in Christ, fully furnished and find our sufficiency in Him.

A poor man had wanted to go on a cruise all his life. As a youngster he had seen an advertisement for a luxury cruise, and ever since, he had dreamed of spending a week on a large ocean liner enjoying fresh sea air and relaxing in a luxurious environment. He saved money for years, carefully counting his pennies, often sacrificing personal needs so he could stretch his resources a little further.

Finally, he had enough to purchase a cruise ticket. He went to a travel agent, looked over the cruise brochures, picked out one that was especially attractive, and bought a ticket with the money he had saved so long. He was hardly able to believe he was about to realize his childhood dream.

Knowing he could not afford the kind of elegant food pictured in the brochure, the man planned to bring his own provisions for the week. Accustomed to moderation

after years of frugal living, and with his entire savings going to pay for the cruise ticket, the man decided to bring along a week's supply of bread and peanut butter. That was all he could afford.

The first few days of the cruise were thrilling. The man ate peanut-butter sandwiches alone in his room each morning and spent the rest of his time relaxing in the sunlight and fresh air, delighted to be aboard ship. By midweek, however, the man was beginning to notice that he was the only person on board who was not eating luxurious meals. It seemed that every time he sat on the deck or rested in the lounge or stepped outside his cabin, a porter would walk by with a huge meal for someone who had ordered room service.

By the fifth day of the cruise the man could take it no longer. The peanut-butter sandwiches seemed stale and tasteless. He was desperately hungry, and even the fresh air and sunshine had lost their appeal. Finally, he stopped a porter and exclaimed, "Tell me how I might get one of those meals! I'm dying for some decent food, and I'll do anything you say to earn it!"

"Why, sir, don't you have a ticket for this cruise?" the porter asked. "Certainly," said the man. "But I spent everything I had for that ticket. I have nothing left with which to buy food." "But sir," said the porter, "didn't you realize? Meals are included with your passage. You may eat as much as you like!"

There are many Christians who live like this man. They do not realize the unlimited provisions that are theirs in Christ, so they munch on stale peanut butter crackers. Beloved, there's no need to live like this! Everything we could ever want or need is included in the cost of admission in entering the Christian life and Jesus Christ has already paid it for us when He died on the cross and granted to us all the spiritual riches we need for salvation and sanctification.

John 1:16

"Of His fulness we have all received, and grace upon grace."

The word "fulness" (pleroma) is basically the same word and concept of "complete" (pleroo) for it speaks of Christ's abundance and sufficiency. The complete provision

and sufficiency of Christ for daily living is evidenced as he supplies “grace upon grace” upon our lives, accumulated grace, which means He gives one expression of sustaining and life-changing grace after another to maintain our spiritual life and stability.

“He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase
To added affliction He addeth His mercy
To multiplied trials His multiplied peace.
His love has no limit, His grace has no measure
His pow'r has no boundary known unto men
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.”

So, every Christian is what someone termed as “a self-contained treasury” of divinely bestowed spiritual blessings. There is nothing more, no great secret, no ecstatic experience, no entertainment, no hidden spiritual wisdom, or no mystical experience that can take Christians to some higher plane within their spiritual life. It is Christ and Christ alone (His power, virtues, character and life being transferred to us) that allows us to live a life of fulfillment and victory. We lack nothing in Christ! Nothing! We have a complete and final salvation, complete victory, complete power, and total spiritual provision for daily living.

Are you resting and trusting in the sufficiency of Christ? Is Christ everything to you? If so, thank Him for His fullness. If not, perhaps you’ve been trusting in human wisdom, meaningless religious rituals, religious entertainment, or some kind of mystical experience formed in your own mind and unrelated to reality. Maybe you’ve been thinking that your own self-denial or self-imposed pain will somehow gain favor with God. The wonderful thing is this. When we understand our completeness in Christ, we will not need anything but Christ and His spiritual provision. We will trust in His sufficiency and find our completeness in Him and His provision of salvation and sanctification.

I remember going in to my first-grade classroom. The first think I remember seeing was the letters at the top of the blackboard. They were the letters from A-Z. I saw all of those letters and I was scared stiff. I knew I was in for trouble. As I think of

those letters, I can relate them to this blessed truth. In Christ, we have everything that we need, everything from A-Z! Nothing is missing. Nothing is lacking. Nothing needs improvement. We are complete in Christ (Col. 2:10).

Christ is sufficient to meet all of our needs. He is enough for our salvation, sanctification and our suffering - our trials, our hurts, and all of our needs!

“Hide me O my Savior,
Hide, till the storm of life is past...
Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee...
Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
More than all in Thee I find...
Plenteous grace with Thee is found.”

This brings us to our next verse on the Christ’s sufficiency and how this relates to our daily struggles in life.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 also speaks of Christ’s sufficiency:

“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”

Paul was content with God’s decision because he knew that God would supply sufficient grace for his trial. Here we read about the sufficiency of God’s grace to strengthen us and enable us to pass through life’s trials and temptations. “My grace is sufficient for you.” The Grace of God’s sufficiency shines in our times of weakness by empowering us and sustaining us in life. Grace is like the sunshine beaming through the storm clouds! The so-called prosperity gospel, which is actually the philosophical offspring of our self-centered, humanistic, and godless society is a major contributor to the error that teaches grace is what shelters believers from all difficulties. No, grace allows us to pass through our trials and difficulties triumphantly and contently as Paul teaches here.

I would like to share Spurgeon's own words on this verse:

"The other evening I was riding home after a heavy day's work. I felt very wearied and sore depressed, when swiftly and suddenly as a lightning flash that text came to me, 'my grace is sufficient for you.'

"I reached home and looked it up in the original, and at last it came to me in this way: 'MY grace is sufficient for you.' And I said, 'I should think it is, Lord,' and burst out laughing.

"I never fully understood what the holy laughter of Abraham was until then. It seemed to make unbelief so absurd. It was as though a mouse feared it might die of famine, and Joseph might say, 'Cheer up, little mouse, my granaries are sufficient for you.'

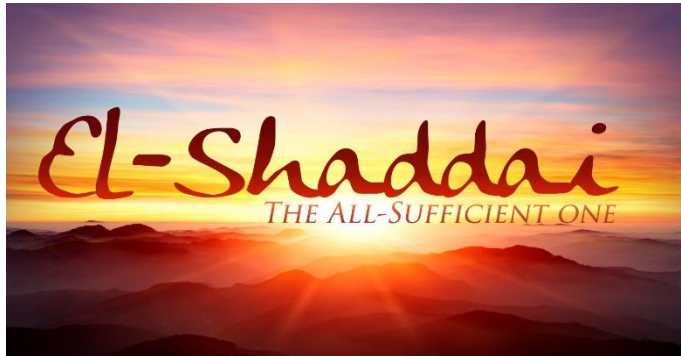
"Again, I imagined a man way up yonder in a lofty mountain, saying to himself, 'I breathe so many cubic feet of air every year, I fear I shall exhaust the oxygen in the atmosphere.' But the earth might say, 'Breathe away, O man, and fill your lungs ever, my atmosphere is sufficient for you!' Be great believers! Little faith will bring your souls to heaven, but great faith will bring heaven to your souls."

"Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." This is the kind of grace that we need to live above our trials – empowering grace. God's grace is sufficient for you! This is a hallmark Christian truth for Christian living. However, the average Christian in our culture cynically views this kind of counsel and advice as too simplistic, unsophisticated, and even naive. Can you imagine one of today's professional radio counselors simply telling a hurting caller that God's grace is enough to meet their need?

Many Christians have turned away from the rich resource of God's all-sufficient grace and are totally engrossed in a fruitless search for secular help and they are trying to find some kind of false contentment and help in the hollow humanistic teachings of this world.

Jeremiah 2:13

“For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, *and* hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”



Many Christians are re looking for blessings and fulfillment through broken pots when they already have the fountain of living waters in the sufficiency of Christ (Eph. 1:3). One of the Old Testament names of God is El Shaddai, which means “the All-Sufficient One.” It is a name rich

with meaning. Those who are close to God find Him adequate for every necessity of life. They do not need any supplementary experience, an emotional high, or some other to help them through life.

MacArthur once again states:

“God has given to every believer abundant grace that is utterly sufficient to fulfill our deepest longings, our most intense cravings, our most profound needs—every human requirement.”

2 Corinthians 9:8 also mentions God’s sufficiency:

“God is able to make all grace abound to you (*His financial supply and resources*), that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed” (*in sharing financially with the church ministry and sharing with others financially*).

This is placed in the context of giving and suggests that Here we have a promise that, if a Christian really wants to be generous, God will see that he is given the opportunity to be generous. Grace is here used as a synonym for resources – God graciously supplying our financial needs so we can continue to give to God’s work and people in a generous way.

Of course, the sufficiency of God applies to every area of our lives (not just financial). By extension and application, God is more than adequate to meet all of our needs!

Philippians 4:19

“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

This is the sufficiency of God! Do we really believe this and act upon this truth and promise by faith? Do we believe that God is always sufficient to meet our emotional, physical, and spiritual needs? Do we rely on Him, go to Him, and fellowship with Him on a daily basis to find His spiritual power, nourishment, and sufficiency?

2 Peter 1:3 also reminds of God’s sufficiency:

“His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us.”

Satan has always tried to beguile Christians away from the purity and simplicity of an all-sufficient Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:3

“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

The Greek word translated simplicity is also translated as sincerity (2 Cor. 1:12) and singleness of heart (Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22). Our “simplicity in Christ” speaks of being sincere and without hypocrisy – unmixed in our devotion and desire to please Christ. It points to an absence of pretense, openness of heart, a mind and heart that is free from all hypocrisy and deceit. It connotes mental honesty without any hint of deceitfulness. So, the phrase “simplicity that is in Christ” can be understood as wholehearted and sincere devotion or commitment to Jesus Christ. This would include being committed to His sufficiency, the adequacy of His personal presence, power, and promises to meet all of our needs in life. But Satan has always found people willing to forsake the truth for almost anything that is new and unusual.

Don't allow Satan to lead you away from your sufficiency in Christ. What you need in life is Christ.

Philippians 3:10

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."

This too speaks of Christ's sufficiency for our daily living.

Hebrews 12:2 gives us this timely advice:

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

We should be looking unto Jesus today! Why? It's because Jesus is sufficient to meet our needs, inspires us, motivate us, and keeps us stable up to the end of our days on earth. Our relationship with Christ will keep our lives in check, victorious, balanced, and fulfilled.

There is something that used to be popular which is called the "Gold Dust Revival. Some Christians claim that their gold dust is a sign from God.

One Gold Dust testimony goes like this:

"She (Emma) glided into the room, emitting brilliant light and colors. Emma carried these bags and began pulling gold out of them. Then, as she walked up and down the aisles of the church, she began putting gold dust on people. "God, what is happening?" I asked. The Lord answered: "She is releasing the gold, which is both the revelation and the financial breakthrough that I am bringing into this church. I want you to prophecy that Emma showed up in this service-the same angel that appeared in Kansas City-as a sign that I am endorsing and releasing a prophetic spirit in the church."

How do you react to such outlandish statements like this? We are complete in Christ!

Another lady wrote

Dear Steve, we are told that in one of the meetings a "holy woman" who is a Brazilian woman in residence there is experiencing gold dust. She claims that gold oozes from her pores and that she as a "holy woman" has seen visions of Benny Hinn with the gold dust appearing on him.

While gold dust keeps appearing in charismatic meetings in the United States and abroad, tests on this alleged gold dust puzzle those who say the substance is falling from heaven.

A Brazilian evangelist at the center of the "gold dust" phenomenon being reported at charismatic churches across the United States and Europe says she is unfazed by scientific reports suggesting that all that glitters is not what it seems. Two independent tests on samples of the gold-colored dust that falls from Sylvania Machado's head during services have found the substance to be more like plastic glitter, with no gold content.

Machado concludes: "To me, it doesn't matter what it is as long as it's from God."

People who claim to be Christians continue to be swept away by these carnal distractions and pseudo experiences of playing around with Tinker Bell gold dust! As a result, they miss out on the absolute sufficiency that they can have in Christ.

Let me tell you what gold is!

Colossians 1:27

"Christ in you the hope of glory."

Philippians 1:21

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

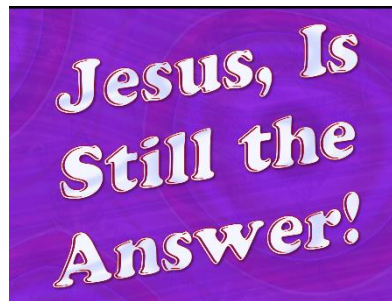
Colossians 2:10

"We are complete in him."

John MacArthur once again remarks:

“Human reason adds nothing to this. Human sociology, psychology, philosophy add nothing to this. And we must realize that whereas man may teach us some things helpful about life in this world, they offer nothing to make up some lack of Christ.”

We are complete in Christ. Jesus can meet all of our physical, spiritual, and emotional needs in life. We can believe and practice this new way of life or we will eventually find ourselves clawing after the world’s resources and fraudulent experiences which can never satisfy us, change us for God’s glory, and make us spiritual. Jesus is still the answer!



“Some men try so hard to prove
That God's not really real
While others say they know for sure
His love you cannot feel
But I know He is real within my soul
For one day He cleansed and He made me whole
And Jesus is still the answer
For that longing deep in your soul

Some men pretend that things of this world
Have brought them peace of mind
But with the dawn of each new day
New thrills they try to find
Not until they meet the Prince of Peace
Can they ever hope to find relief
For Jesus is still the answer
For a world that seeking for peace

Jesus is still the answer
And though time and ages roll
Jesus is still the answer
He's the answer for your soul
And though some may say
That He doesn't fit with their philosophy
I know Jesus is still the answer
Yes, Jesus is still the answer
I know Jesus is still the answer
He's always been and always will be.”

Many today have downplayed the internal sanctifying work of Christ’s life within us which is the essence of His ministry. Psychological and psychotherapy sanctification has become a substitute for Christ’s sufficiency which is experienced through the Spirit-filled life (Eph. 5:18). No therapist can accomplish what the Holy Spirit can do in transforming our soul into the likeness of Christ (2 Pet. 3:18). In fact, no therapy devised by men can possibly bring someone to repentance or repair their lives which have been broken by sin. Those who believe therapy is the best means to cure the sick or wounded soul of a person are trying to substitute fleshly devices for the sufficiency of God.

Here is something to contemplate. What point is there in seeking the Holy Spirit’s comfort (John 14:26; 15:26) if all of our deep-seated emotional problems can be addressed only by trained psychologist (behavior scientists), or if people can come to grips with their lives only by getting in touch with their childhood, or if the answers to our deepest hurts are buried deep within us? If these things are true, we need a therapist and not the sufficiency of God. Sadly, this is precisely the direction that many have chosen in the church. We must beware of not only adding legalism to salvation but also legalistic humanism to sanctification. The legalistic ideas of humanism continue to raise its ugly head when Christians depend upon psychotherapy (or psychobabble) to treat the effects of their disobedience, depression, and lack of spiritual living. We must beware of the false teachings of the pseudo sciences.

Let's reiterate Paul's emotional touch and charge to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:20: "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane *and* vain babblings (idle babble), and oppositions of science falsely so called" (contradictions of what is falsely called or labeled as knowledge).

Rick Renner said this of false teaching:

"What these leaders (false teachers) were promoting was a twisted version of truth. It was error packaged with elements of truth and then stealthily posed to believers in the guise of authenticity to make it more appealing."

Don't fall for the esoteric and mystical or sensational experiences of today. Don't follow novel teachings which take you away from Christ's sufficiency. Don't ever fall into the trap of replacing Christ's sufficiency with human wisdom. Finally, don't be attracted to the religious world of entertainment thinking that somehow it will fill a void that only God can fill with His sufficiency (His life, presence, strength, and abiding ministry in your life).

Galatians 2:20 also presents the sufficiency of Christ:

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Living by faith in Christ's presence and power speaks of His sufficiency that is to be experienced in our lives today. We died with Christ to the old person we used to be, we were raised with Christ which means we share His risen life and power on a daily basis. Therefore, we can walk by faith in complete power and provision for our lives. This is sufficiency or adequacy.

Psalm 46:1-2 reminds us of this unchanging promise:

"God *is* our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

We will not fear though catastrophes continue to occur all around us. We will not fear even though we are at war with an ideology (communism) we simply cannot

fathom. Why shouldn't we fear? It's because God is our spiritual strength, and He is always with us! He is our sufficiency for daily living. Just trust in Him!

Jesus Christ is enough! Do we really believe this? Are we aware of this? Can we really rely on Christ for everything? Why do we become so scared and worried about life's demands and during life's changes? Cannot we trust in Christ to meet our daily needs and all the pressing needs that we face in life? Is our relationship with Jesus Christ enough? Do we have this kind of trusting, growing, and loving relationship with Him?

- ✓ Is Christ enough when we are stricken with illness and are not sure about the future?
- ✓ Is Christ enough when we are standing alone for what is right and nobody else around us seems to care?
- ✓ Is Christ enough when the bottom drops out of our life?
- ✓ Is Christ enough when someone dear to us dies and leaves us all alone?

1 Peter 5:7 says: "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

"Does Jesus care when my heart is pained
Too deeply for mirth or song,
As the burdens press, and the cares distress,
And the way grows weary and long?

Does Jesus care when I've said "goodbye"
To the dearest on earth to me,
And my sad heart aches till it nearly breaks—
Is it aught to Him? Does He see?

Oh, yes, He cares, I know He cares,
His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,
I know my Savior cares."

Beloved, Jesus is enough!

Another preacher shared this story:

“A pastor I know of was conducting a series of meetings in several churches in North and South Carolina. He was staying in the home of some close friends in Asheville and traveling each night to wherever he was speaking that evening. One night he was scheduled to speak at a church in Greenville, South Carolina, which is several hours from Asheville. Because he didn’t have a car, some friends from Greenville offered to transport him to and from the meeting. When they arrived to pick him up, he bid farewell to his hosts and told them he hoped to be back by midnight or soon afterward.

“After ministering at the Greenville church, he stayed awhile to enjoy some fellowship and then rode back to Asheville. Approaching the house, he saw the porch light on and assumed his hosts would be prepared for his arrival because he had discussed the time of his return with them. As he got out of the car, he sent his driver on his way, saying, “You must hurry. You have a long drive back. I’m sure they’re prepared for me; I’ll have no problem.”

“He felt the bitter cold of the winter night as he walked the long distance to the house. By the time he reached the porch, his nose and ears were already numb. He tapped gently on the door but no one answered. He tapped a little harder, and then even harder—but still no reply. Finally, concerned about the intense cold, he beat on the kitchen door and on a side window. But there was still no response.

“Frustrated and becoming colder by the moment, he decided to walk to a neighboring house so he could call and awaken his hosts. On the way he realized that knocking on someone’s door after midnight wasn’t a safe thing to do, so he decided to find a public telephone. It was as dark as it was cold, and the pastor wasn’t familiar with the area.

“Consequently, he walked for several miles. At one point he slipped in the wet grass growing beside the road and slid down a bank into two feet of water. Soaked and nearly frozen, he crawled back up to the road and walked farther until he finally saw a blinking motel light. He awakened the manager, who was gracious enough to let him use the telephone.

“The frozen pastor made the call and said to his sleepy host, ‘I hate to disturb you, but I couldn’t get anyone in the house to wake up. I’m several miles down the road at the motel. Could you come get me?’ To which his host replied, ‘My dear friend, you have a key in your overcoat pocket. Don’t you remember? I gave it to you before you left.’ The pastor reached into his pocket. Sure enough, there was the key. He had the key the entire time without realizing it.

This true story illustrates how many Christians are trying to live life without using the key to the Christian life which is the sufficiency of God. God is the key to every true, spiritual blessing. We must plug Him into our lives on a daily basis.

Ephesians 1:3 once again reminds us:

“Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ.”



God alone fulfills the deepest longings of our hearts and supplies every spiritual resource we need. Believers have in Christ everything they will ever need to meet any trial, any craving, any difficulty they might ever encounter in this life. Even the newest convert possesses sufficient resources for every spiritual need (2 Cor. 5:17).

Yes, we can experience His sufficiency in our lives, moment by moment, day by day, year after year.

“Never a trial that He is not there,
Never a burden that He doth not bear,
Never a sorrow that He doth not share,
Moment by moment, I’m under His care.
Moment by moment I’m kept in His love;
Moment by moment I’ve life from above;
Looking to Jesus till glory doth shine;
Moment by moment, O Lord, I am Thine.”