

THE END TIMES

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SIGNS WE ARE LIVING IN THE END OF THE AGE

“...what shall be the sign of thy presence and of the end of the age?” — Matthew 24:3 (Greek)

When Jesus’ disciples asked the question, “*what shall be the sign of thy presence and of the end of the age,*” he proceeded to give them evidences that would enable them, and all those who would be watching, to recognize the *time period of his presence at the end of this present age.*

GREAT TRIBULATION

Jesus told his disciples that the *end of the age* would be marked by “*great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.*” (Matthew 24:21) The prophet Daniel also described this *sign* which would mark the time of the *end of the age*: “*there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation...*” Daniel 12:1

There has always been trouble somewhere in the world, so why is this time period described as one of *great tribulation*? The answer hinges on the unique time in which we live — the world is globally connected as never before in the history of mankind. What is more, man has never had the capability to totally destroy every living thing at the push of a button. There are currently about 31,000 nuclear warheads owned by eight countries. The combined explosive yield of these weapons is approximately 200,000 times greater than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

Although trouble is an unavoidable reality of the *end of the age*, Jesus’ prophecy assures us that the trouble will be *shortened*. (Matthew 24:22) Note also what Daniel describes as coming immediately after the trouble: “*at that time thy people shall be delivered... them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake...*” (Daniel 12:1,2) It is most reassuring to know that the purpose of the trouble is to prepare the earth for the incoming righteous government of God’s Kingdom.

TRAVEL AND KNOWLEDGE SHALL BE INCREASED

Daniel 12 goes on to describe two additional *signs* of the *end of the age*: “*many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.*” (verse 4) Think of the countless inventions that have taken place in little more than 100 years: the telephone,



electric light, sound recording, radio, television, modern appliances, computers, cell phones, wireless, satellites, all manner of modern appliances, and the global Internet. Mankind has gained access to information regarding virtually any subject or product within seconds.

The accumulated knowledge throughout history up to the year AD 1750 had doubled by the year 1900, a period of just 150 years. It doubled again in just 50 years by 1950, again in ten years by 1960, and again in eight years by 1968. Knowledge is increasing so fast that today the amount of information and statistics in the world is doubling every 18

months. IBM predicts that in the next few years, information will double every eleven hours!

The *increase of knowledge* has made possible the other *sign* given in Daniel 12:4: “*many shall run to and fro.*” For thousands of years man’s most common form of transportation was by foot or by horse. How dramatically that has changed in recent history. Sir Isaac Newton was scorned by his intellectual peers when he predicted that man would someday travel at speeds of 50 miles per hour. Little did he realize that man would fly across the ocean at supersonic speeds, exceeding 1,300 mph, and travel through space at 25,000 mph.

Yes, Daniel’s prophecy is certainly abounding in our day. These two *signs* alone are what generated the global connection of every nation on the planet, bringing about both blessings to those who use them wisely, and increased trouble from those who abuse them. All of these are indications that we are on the very brink of the establishment of God’s Kingdom!

THE LESSON OF THE FIG TREE

In Matthew 24:32-34, Jesus gave another very important *sign*. “*Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves ye know that summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily, I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.*” Throughout the Bible we learn that the *fig tree* represents the

Nation of Israel (Jeremiah 24:1-10; 29:17-23; Luke 13:6-9). *Leaves* sprouting on a *tree* are an evidence that the tree has sprung to life after a dormant winter. Jesus was actually telling us that when we see Israel come alive as a nation — after being without a homeland for nearly 2,000 years — then we will know that God’s Kingdom is right at the door.

Has Israel put forth leaves? Yes, most definitely. After the Roman conquest in the First Century B.C., Israelites as a people were dispersed among all nations, often persecuted bitterly, having to live in Ghettos, then hunted and exterminated as undesirables. Yet Jewish hopes remained strong in God’s promises of a return to their homeland. “*Next year in Jerusalem*” was their cry. This hope was fulfilled in one of the great miracles of our day. The *fig tree*, Israel, put forth *leaves* in May 1948 when once again it became a nation after thousands of years without a homeland. God has done no such thing with any other nation.

Luke adds something in his account of this prophecy that makes our faith even stronger: “*Behold the fig tree, and all the trees... when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand.*” (Luke 21:29-31) Notice that Luke adds “*and all the trees.*” If the *fig tree* pictures Israel, then *all the trees* would refer to other nations. Luke is telling us that, together with Israel springing to life, many other nations would *put forth leaves*, sprouting into existence. And what does history tell us? For centuries, up to 1945, the number of independent nations in the world had remained relatively constant at around 70. However, since 1945 the number of independent nations has grown dramatically to 196 nations! More than 126 new independent nations have sprung into being that were previously held as colonies. This ties in closely with the time that Israel became a nation in 1948.

Thus Israel, simultaneously with 126 other nations, has *put forth leaves*, sprouting into existence. What a thrill to our hearts to realize that we are on the very brink of the greatest event in all human history — the establishment of God’s Kingdom!

FOUR UNIVERSAL WORLD EMPIRES

If we are so near God’s Kingdom, why does trouble continue and intensify? This is again in fulfillment of prophecy. For just as a contractor must remove an old structure from a building site before he can build a new, more stable structure, so with God. He must first remove present corrupt systems, still influenced by pride, ambition and selfishness before they can be replaced with His Kingdom of blessings.

This feature of God’s plan was prophesied by Daniel when he interpreted a dream of the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar. His dream pictured four empires that have dominated the world, and in particular, which have dominated Israel. The dream also illustrated the removal of the dominion of these empires — Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. “*You saw, O*

*king, a great image... The head of this image was of fine gold [Babylon],... its breast and arms of silver [Medo-Persia]... its belly and thighs of bronze [Greece], and its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay [the Roman Empire merging into the Holy Roman Empire — the Church-State systems of Europe].” (Daniel 2:31-33) The prophecy continues: “...a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces... and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.” (Daniel 2:34,35) Nebuchadnezzar’s prophetic dream is another picture of the removal of present corrupt systems (the symbolic heavens and earth) and replacing them with God’s *new heavens* that will *fill the new earth* with blessings.*



THE SMITING OF THE IMAGE

Daniel continues his prophecy giving a clue as to when the image would be struck. “*In the days of these kings, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. And that kingdom shall not be left to other people but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it will stand forever.*” (Daniel 2:44) The *kings* referred to in the prophecy of

Nebuchadnezzar’s image were the crown heads of the Holy Roman Empire — the feet of iron mixed with clay.

The year 1914 is a recognized turning point in human history and corresponds to the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy when the old structure of corruption would begin to be over-turned. If ever there was a year that marked the end of an era and the beginning of another, it was 1914. It marked the ending of an old world, as World War One resulted in removing the monarchies of Europe and began the disintegration of their colonies.

Thus, the time when the image would be struck was prophesied to be while the kings were still on the scene (1914) — the powerful kings of Europe virtually passed away as a result of the WWI. This date, 1914, marks the smiting of the image in Daniel’s prophecy: “*In the days of these kings, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom...it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it will stand forever.*” The *stone cut out of the mountain*, God’s Kingdom power, struck in 1914 and will continue the process of breaking down all corrupt and oppressive systems to prepare for the incoming reign of righteousness.

“THAT DAY SHALL NOT COME, EXCEPT...”

Another important *sign* indicating when the corrupt systems are to be removed is found in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8: “*...that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that Man of Sin be revealed, the Son of Perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God... so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God... And then shall That Wicked be*

revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming..."

It was evident to all of the Protestant reformers that the Papal system fits this description found in 2 Thessalonians 2:4: "...who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God..." This boast of Papacy was a key factor to the Reformers in identifying the Papal system as that *Man of Sin*. Please note, however, that the Reformers were careful not to condemn any individual Catholic believer with these titles. Popes, bishops, priests and others of the laity have been only parts of, and, possibly, innocent members of the corrupt system.

John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church in the 17th century, defined the *Man of Sin* this way: "*He [Papacy] is in an emphatical sense, the Man of Sin, as he increases all manner of sin above measure. And he is, too, properly styled the Son of Perdition, as he has caused the death of numberless multitudes, both of his opposers and followers... He it is... that exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped... claiming the highest power, and highest honor... claiming the prerogatives which belong to God alone.*" *Antichrist and His Ten Kingdoms* by John Wesley, page 110

In identifying the Papal system as the *Man of Sin*, Wesley pointed out its persecuting power which oppressed the world. We live in a more civilized time where blatant physical persecution is not approved by society. However, the persecuting spirit had for centuries been the means by which Papacy forced conversion. This was another evidence to the Reformers that the Papal system was built upon an improper spirit — born of an impure doctrinal foundation. It was never taught by Christ that a Christian should use force by any means to gain converts or to compel allegiance to a church dictate. Matthew 10:16; 26:52; John 18:36

The Apostle Paul assures us that the ignoble history of the *Man of Sin* will finally be exposed: "*Then shall That Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth [truth], and shall destroy with the brightness of his [Christ's] coming [Greek, parousia, presence].*" (2 Thessalonians 2:8) There can be no doubt that the *Man of Sin* has been revealed to the true Christian Church as a necessary prerequisite to the second advent of Christ. Shortly, the rightful King will bless and bring life and will vindicate God's loving and merciful character.

ENVISION GOD'S KINGDOM!

Although these many *signs* indicate great trouble, there is also blessed peace which shall follow, "...when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord... whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Acts 3:19-26

Yes, the breaking down process in Nebuchadnezzar's dream is followed by God's Kingdom: "...the stone that

smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." (Daniel 2:35) All of this shaking and turmoil is because the new King is tearing down this old order and ushering in his Kingdom. This is the initial work of his reign before his peaceable Kingdom is set up: "*He shall judge the afflicted of the people, he shall give help to the children of the needy; but he shall crush the oppressor... In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace shall be so long as the moon endureth...*" Psalms 72:4-14

As we see God's prophecies being fulfilled before our very eyes it thrills our hearts to realize that we are on the very brink of the blessings promised in God's Kingdom. God's promises awaiting mankind are beautifully summarized in the closing two chapters of Revelation. They show us that these troubles are not the end. These are only the necessary prelude to *the new heavens and earth* — the most glorious time, awaiting everyone that has ever lived — God's Kingdom! "*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.*" Revelation 21:4, 5

"*Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay, not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realize the resurrection work complete.*" *Divine Plan of the Ages*, Page 191

OTHER ASSOCIATED SIGNS OF THE TIMES

- **Cries for liberty worldwide - Leviticus 25:10; Isaiah 61:1**
- **Evils exposed as never before - Luke 12:2; 1 Cor. 4:5**
- **Spiritism and the Occult increases - Matthew 24:26**
- **Wars and war preparations intensify - Joel 3:9-11; Matt. 24:6**
- **False Christs appear everywhere - Matthew 24:5**
- **Natural disasters, floods, hurricanes, earthquakes - Mark 13:8**
- **Infidelity from presidency to pulpit - Luke 18:8; 2 Timothy 4:1-4**
- **Faith replaced by philosophies—Luke 18:8; 1 Timothy 1:4-7**
- **Men seek pleasure rather than Godliness - 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 13**
- **Strife intensifies between capital and labor - James 5:1-4**
- **Delinquency and lack of respect for parents - 2 Timothy 3:2**
- **Men cry fearfully for peace - 1 Thessalonians 5:3; Luke 21:26**

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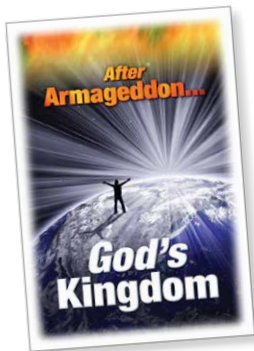
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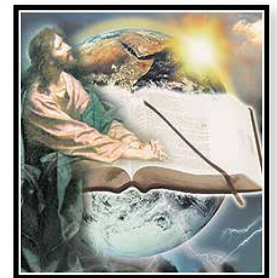
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Past Issue Related to This Topic

OVERCOMING FEAR IN THE END TIMES



There is an undercurrent of fear which runs through every element of society today, and rightly so, for Jesus said that *men's hearts will fail them for fear*. This issue teaches two primary keys in overcoming fear:

1. Dwelling with and abiding in the care of the Almighty
2. Knowing God's truth in the Scriptures and, through these, understanding His plans and purposes.

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