

More Signs of the Times
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We are in a sermon series called Signs of the Times. We've been teaching from Matthew 24 and 25 where Jesus taught about the signs of the end times and about what events will take place.

By the way – remember that Jesus spoke these things not to scare us – but to prepare us! Because of His great love – Jesus told us exactly what to look for in the last days.

By the way – you can compare these signs to road signs when you travel.
 Signs show you the direction you are traveling in.
 Signs show you how far you have left to get to your destination.
 Signs warn you of things like narrow bridges or sharp turns or falling rocks.

Likewise – the signs that Jesus taught us show us the right direction to travel in life – they show us how far we are on our journey – and they give us warnings to keep us safe until the end.

After speaking on the signs of the times and the last days events – Jesus spoke 5 parables in a row to teach believers how to stay ready for His second coming. Those parables tell us 4 things we should do until the second coming of Jesus Christ: worship, watch, work and witness.

Our plan is to teach on 2 other W's: warfare and the word. Last week I finished up our teaching on Matthew, but as I was studying the week, I saw that the other Gospels give a few more signs than Matthew. So, I felt led to preach on those this week in a sermon called More Signs of the Times.

As a refresher – Here's the signs of the times Jesus mentioned in Matthew: Wars, rumors of wars, ethnic conflict, earthquakes, pestilence, disasters, famines, an increase in wickedness, deception which causes many to turn away from the faith, hatred, betrayal and persecution of Christians, and the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom to the whole world.

Mark and Luke list many of the same signs as Matthew. I'm not going to read all of that they said today – I'm just going to concentrate on the things that Mark and Luke added.

First of all, Mark and Luke amplify what Jesus said about betrayal. Mark 13:9-23 says:

You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of Me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.

Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. All men will hate you because of Me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Matthew said one of the signs of the times would be betrayal. But Mark adds that this will include betrayal by family members. Luke 21:16-18 says:

You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. All men will hate you because of me. But not a hair of your head will perish. By standing firm you will gain life.

Luke says Christians will be betrayed by family and friends. Betrayal is painful – but betrayal by family and friends is particularly painful. The betrayal that Jesus is speaking about is betraying Christians because they are Christians!

You might not see how this can happen – but it is already happening in Muslim nations. If someone converts to Christianity – their own family and friends can turn on them and turn them in. In many places, Christians are told to renounce Jesus or be killed. Don't think it can't happen in America!

In my lifetime, America has moved from being a nation based on Christian principles to being a post-Christian culture. When I was in elementary school, not only did we say the Pledge of Allegiance every day, but we had daily Bible reading and prayer! Now, we are post-Christian, which means our nation has lost the primacy of the Christian worldview and has replaced it with a secular worldview. The word secular means worldly and disconnected from religion.

And we are quickly moving from a post-Christian culture to an anti-Christian culture. In that culture – Christianity will not be tolerated. We will be considered outdated, irrelevant, hateful and mean because of our biblical stance about sin.

People will begin to hate Christians and Jesus said there will come a time when Christians will be hunted down, imprisoned and put to death. And their own friends and family will be involved in this betrayal.

This is what Jesus meant when He said in Matthew 10:34-35

Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. Your enemies will be right in your own household!

Why will family members turn on believers? When it comes to children – it will be because of rebellion. Jesus said in Mark 13:12
Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.

An increase in the rebellion of children is a sign of the end times. They will rebel against parents because they first rebel against God! This will go beyond a normal adolescent of rebellion against authority. This rebellion will be demonically driven!

The Bible says that in the last days a world leader – called the Antichrist - will be used by Satan to achieve his evil purposes. We read about him in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-10 where he is called the man of lawlessness.

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come.

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

For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the One who now holds it back will continue to do so till He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of His mouth and destroy by the splendor of His coming.

The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

I'm not going to teach on the Antichrist today – but what I want you to understand is that the antichrist spirit is already at work in the world.

1 John 2:18-23 says:

Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

1 John 4:1-3 says:

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

The antichrist spirit is already at work in the world. What is it doing? 2 John 7-8 says:

Many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

antichrist spirit is a spirit of deception that keeps people from faith in Jesus Christ. It leads people astray one of the ways it does that is through False Signs and Wonders. Mark 13:21-23 says:

At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect — if that were possible. So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.

So – we need to be on guard! Jesus warned us what to look for.

Here's another big sign of the times that we're seeing right now. Matthew talked about an end-time increase in lawlessness (remember that the Antichrist is called the man of lawlessness!) and he spoke of wars and rumors of war. However, Luke 21:9 says:

When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be terrified. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away.

The word revolution here means rebellion, insurrection and anarchy that leads to a state of disorder, confusion and instability. Notice that this can result in terror in people's lives. This speaks of 2 things to me:

- 1- Terrorism has been on the increase in recent years.
It didn't happen much when I was younger, but now it's a common occurrence.
- 2- This also speaks to me of the anarchy that is happening right now in major cities in the United States.

Please listen closely. Listen to what I'm about to say with a kingdom mindset – not an ethnic or political mindset or any other mindset. Yes – we have major racial issues and political divisions that desperately need to be repaired. But there is something happening beyond all that.

The spirit of anarchy is at work in the US. The word anarchy means: lawlessness, lack of obedience to authority, a desire for society without government or laws.

Some synonyms of anarchy are chaos, hostility, riot and mob rule.

I want you to understand that I'm all for peaceful protest. But what we see on the streets of places like Portland are not people peacefully protesting the death of George Floyd. In fact – they have hijacked that issue and have turned it into something totally different.

What we see are people – the vast majority of which are young, white people – who travel from around the country to form mobs to cause destruction. They are not content to bring down police stations and court houses – they want an end to all government and laws.

But what they really want is mob rule. For instance, anarchists took over 6 city blocks in downtown Seattle. They called it the Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone. The police moved out to try to deescalate the situation.

But roving bands of armed men smashed windows and looted and burned businesses. There were sexual assaults, 6 people were shot and 2 African American men were killed. You don't hear much about those deaths!

All of this is shocking and could be terrifying. But Jesus warned us it would happen and He specifically said, "Do not be terrified!" God has not given us a spirit of fear and we cannot let a spirit of fear get control of our minds. Instead, we must set our minds on Christ and allow His people to rule and reign in our hearts and minds!

Another sign of the times is uncivil politics. In Matthew 24:7 Jesus said,

Kingdom will rise against kingdom.

We can look at kingdoms as nations, but also as political parties. The word kingdom means "a dominion or realm of authority and influence." When Jesus said, kingdom will rise against kingdom, he was prophesying about a time when there could be a constant struggle for power and a desire to take a dominant position over others.

We are definitely in that age now! That happens between nations but we are currently witnessing the most uncivil politics in modern history! No longer are Democrats and Republicans trying to work together for the good of the country! They are working for their party to have control. Not only that - they are working to totally annihilate each other! They want power and their fight for superiority at any cost is really costing us as the citizens of the US. Jesus prophesied that this would happen!

Another sign that Luke adds is found in Luke 21:11

There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.

Jesus did not specify what the fearful events will be or what the great signs from heaven will be.

What we do know is that Jesus already listed natural disasters, so these fearful events could refer to horrific scientific or technological advancements. We've already seen things like nuclear bombs and chemical weapons.

The great signs from heaven could include things like solar flares or meteors that collide with earth.

Luke's version of the signs of the times is found in Luke 21:8-28. Verses 25-28 say:

There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.

This gives more detail about signs in the heaven. However, some commentators believe these great signs from heaven will be miraculous signs. In fact, the New Living Translation says:

There will be terrifying things and great miraculous signs from heaven.

So – it could mean the end times include both fearful and miraculous signs. I like that because Isaiah 60:1-2 says:

Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you.

The end times will be a time of great darkness for people in the world, but the light of God's glory will be our portion.

Isaiah 60 ends with verse 22, which says:

The least of you will become a thousand, the smallest a mighty nation. I am the Lord; in its time I will do this swiftly.

As we go into the last days, there may be times when it looks like we're being defeated. There will be times when we are outnumbered.

But remember, earlier I read 1 John 4:3 which says:

This the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

Verse 4 goes on to say:

You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Notice the context of greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world!
It's in a passage speaking about the end times and the Antichrist!

And it tells us not to fear – because greater is He who is in us – Christ – than he who is in the world – the Antichrist.

Greater is He who is in us – the Holy Spirit – than he who is in the world – the unholy spirit – Satan and all of his demons.

Since we have the greater One in us – we have nothing to fear.
The One in us has not given us a spirit of fear, but power, love and a sound mind!

We also have the power of God's Word, God's Spirit, and God's armor!
The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God to the pulling down of strongholds!

We have the power of the cross and the blood of Jesus!
We overcome by the blood of the Lamb!

We have the power of the name of Jesus!
Demons tremble at the sound of that name!

We have the power of God's grace! Grace is not just unmerited favor, but also unconditional love and God's unlimited power! He pours out grace so that even when we are weak, He is strong!

We have the power of prayer and intercession!

We have the exponential power of unity in the body of Christ.
One of us puts a thousand to flight – but 2 of us put 10,000 to flight!

And we have the supernatural power of praise and worship!
God is looking for those who will worship in spirit and in truth!
He shows Himself strong to those whose heart is set on Him.
Our praise Glorifies God - Edifies the believer - Evangelizes unbelievers
And our praise Terrorizes the enemy!
That's because he knows that greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world! He knows that God inhabits the praises of His people.
And God and Satan cannot inhabit the same territory at the same time!

So, praise is one of the ways we submit to God and resist Satan.
And when we do – Satan must flee!