

## ***Session 4 Negative Sign Trends in the Nations***

### **I. THE THREE PROPHETIC TIME FRAMES IN THE END TIMES**

- A. There are **three prophetic time frames** related to the final seven years of this age. These final seven years are made up of two time frames, each lasting 3½ years.
1. **Distress in the nations:** beginning of birth pains starts before the 7 years (Lk. 21:25)
  2. **Counterfeit world peace:** increased labor pains (first 3½-year period; 1 Thes. 5:3)
  3. **The Great Tribulation:** hard labor pains (final 3½-year period; Mt. 24:21)
- B. A counterfeit world peace will occur in the first 3½ years of the final seven years, when the Antichrist is revealed on the world stage as a man of peace. He will solve many of the problems that bring distress in the nations as he seemingly establishes world peace and safety.
- <sup>3</sup> **When they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction [Great Tribulation] comes upon them, as [heavy] labor pains upon a pregnant woman. They shall not escape. (1 Thes. 5:2-3)**
- C. The final seven years begin when the Antichrist makes a covenant with many nations to bring world peace that lasts 3½ years. When he breaks this covenant, the Great Tribulation starts.
- <sup>27</sup> **He [Antichrist] shall confirm a covenant with many [nations] for one week [7 years]; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice [thus breaking covenant]. (Dan. 9:27)**
- D. The Antichrist will break this covenant with Israel after only 3½ years by bringing an end to the sacrifices in Jerusalem. The ability to offer sacrifice in the rebuilt Jewish temple in Jerusalem will be key to this covenant. By stopping the sacrifices, the Antichrist will violate and end the covenant. At that time, he will be unveiled as a man of sin, thus starting the Great Tribulation.
- E. The distress of the nations, or the “beginning of birth pains,” will occur just before the seven-year period starts. Jesus compares this time to the increasing trauma a woman experiences during childbirth. This will result in a new world order being birthed at the Millennium (Rom. 8:22). *Birth pains* in the NIV is translated as *sorrows* in the NKJV.
- <sup>8</sup> **All these are the beginning of birth pains. (Mt. 24:8; NIV)**
- <sup>22</sup> **The whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. (Rom. 8:22)**
- F. The Scripture is not clear about the starting point of the birth pains. Jerusalem is the reference point, or the primary timing indicator, in God’s prophetic timetable for the end times. God’s prophetic calendar is “Jerusalem-centric.” In my opinion, the birth pangs started either in 1967 when Jerusalem came under Israel’s authority, or in 1948 when Israel became a nation.
- G. Peter’s first priority was to warn the saints to beware of the dangers of a scoffing, or mocking, spirit. He wanted the saints to know what they would be up against (Jude 17-18; Isa. 28:22).
- <sup>3</sup> **Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days...4 saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? All things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." (2 Pet. 3:3-4)**

## II. SIGN TRENDS: BIRTH PAINS ANNOUNCING THE ARRIVAL OF THE AGE TO COME

- A. Jesus connected the timing of His return to negative sign trends in society that are all occurring, even in this hour. They are social conflicts, and ecological and cosmic disturbances. Most of these trends are escalating at a speed and pose a threat to the stability and peace of the nations.
- B. These negative sign trends causing distress in the nations are referred to as the birth pains. As we discern these negative sign trends, we understand what to resist and what to expose. As many of these trends accelerate at the same time on a global level, making headline news, we are to understand that we are in a unique season in history. The light and darkness will both increase.
- <sup>2</sup> *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. (Isa. 60:2)*
- <sup>30</sup> *Let both [the wheat and tares] grow together until the harvest... (Mt. 13:30)*
- C. Jesus gave 12 negative sign trends that bring distress to the nations and indicate the generation of His return (Mt. 24:4-14; Lk. 21:11, 25). Matthew described nine and Luke added three more (fearful sights, signs in the sky affecting the sun, moon and stars, and disturbances in the sea).
- <sup>4</sup> *Take heed that no one deceives you...7 For nation will rise against nation [Gk. ethnos or ethnic conflict], and kingdom against kingdom [economic warfare]. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows [birth pains, NIV]. 9 Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. 10 And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. 11 Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. 12 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. (Mt. 24:4-12)*
- <sup>11</sup> *There will be great earthquakes in various places...there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven...25 Signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring... (Lk. 21:11, 25)*
- D. The 12 negative sign trends that bring distress to the nations are deception and false prophets (Mt. 24:4-5, 11, 24), ethnic conflict (Mt. 24:7), economic warfare (Mt. 24:7), famines, pestilences, and earthquakes (Mt. 24:8), hatred of believers (Mt. 24:9), relational breakdown in society (Mt. 24:10), lawlessness causing love to grow cold (Mt. 24:12), fearful sights (Lk. 21:11), signs in the sky and disturbances in the sea (Lk. 21:11, 25).
- E. In the same way that we must embrace the positive sign trends in our lives in this hour, so we must resist and expose these negative sign trends at this time, before they escalate.
- F. These trends have always existed in society, but in the end times they will have a distinct intensity that will make global headline news. In them, God has a message to a generation. Jesus gave these signs to answer the question of what would be the sign of His coming (Mt. 24:3). These are prophetic signs that are meant to give believers confidence that the Lord is near.

- G. These birth pangs will create a many-faceted crisis, unparalleled in history. They must be discernable to be prophetic signs to help the Church. Birth pains are measured by **frequency** (how far apart the contractions are) and **intensity** (amount of pain they cause). As the frequency and intensity of the contractions increase, it signals the soon arrival of a baby.
- H. We can expect a continual increase in the intensity and frequency of these sign trends. Birth pangs are intense enough to interrupt a woman in her routines in life. Some say that these trends have been happening for 2,000 years in the routine of normal life. A woman experiencing birth pains notices that something is different. These signs will get the attention of the planet. Jesus didn't give us a way to measure them. They have a discernable message in them from God that makes people cry out to God. As we stay in the Scripture and close to Jesus, we will understand.

### III. SIGN TREND #1: DECEPTION AND FALSE PROPHETS (MT. 24:4-5, 11, 24)

- A. Widespread deception will lead many to embrace the harlot Babylon religion (Rev. 17:2-6) and cause many to fall away from Jesus (Mt. 24:11; 2 Thes. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:1-7; 4:3-5).  
*<sup>11</sup> Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. (Mt. 24:11)*
- B. Two signs that Paul gave to indicate the time of Jesus' coming are a falling away from the faith, combined with the revealing of the Antichrist on the world stage to establish peace (1 Thes. 5:3).  
*<sup>3</sup> Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [Jesus' second coming] will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin [Antichrist] is revealed... (2 Thes. 2:3)*
- C. There will be a falling away from the faith at the end of the age (Mt. 24:9-13; 2 Thes. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:1-7; 4:3-5; 2 Pet. 2:1-3). A doctrine of a demon is a teaching inspired by demons.  
*<sup>1</sup> Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 3 forbidding to marry... (1 Tim. 4:1-3)*
- D. Sound doctrine teaches obedience and allegiance to Jesus. It requires endurance. To turn the ear away means that the people will no longer hear what God intended in various Bible passages.  
*<sup>3</sup> For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables... (2 Tim. 4:3-4)*
- E. False signs and wonders arise (Mt. 24:24; Mk. 13:22; 2 Thes. 2:9; Rev. 13:13-14; 16:14; 19:20).  
*<sup>24</sup> False christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. (Mt. 24:24)*
- F. Babylon will deceive the nations with sorcery, which is a combination of drugs and demonic power (Rev. 9:21; 18:23; Isa. 47:9, 12). Her dark supernatural power will fascinate people.  
*<sup>23</sup> For by your [Babylon] sorcery all the nations were deceived. (Rev. 18:23)*

**IV. SIGN TREND #2: ETHNIC CONFLICT (MT. 24:7)**

- A. Ethnic conflict or civil disorder based on racism is making world headlines (Mt. 24:7). The Greek word for nation is *ethnos* from which we get the word ethnic. Thus, nation against nation is "ethnic group against ethnic group."

<sup>7</sup> *For nation will rise against nation [ethnos], and kingdom against kingdom. (Mt. 24:7)*

- B. The ethnic wars in Cambodia, Albania, Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo and Sudan along with China's Cultural Revolution (1966) have caused the number of people who have been murdered by their own people to exceed 150 million. The militant Islamic leaders have especially targeted Israel, the USA, and the European Union. Since 1945, over 150 major wars have occurred, killing over 25 million. Since the Berlin Wall fell (Nov. 1989), conflicts have forced 50 million people from their homes worldwide. There were over 70 wars in 1995, which is double the number in 1989.

**V. SIGN TREND #3: ECONOMIC WARFARE (MT. 24:7)**

- A. Economic warfare can devastate a nation (Mt. 24:7). Kingdom against kingdom refers to making war in the arena of national resources.

<sup>7</sup> *For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. (Mt. 24:7)*

**VI. SIGN TREND #4: FAMINES (MT. 24:8)**

- A. Nearly a billion people worldwide suffer from malnutrition. Over 25,000 people die every day worldwide from hunger-related causes. Nearly 5 million die of starvation every year.

<sup>7</sup> *There will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. (Mt. 24:7)*

- B. Water shortages have reduced the global food supply by 10 percent. The population is growing, yet its agricultural capabilities are diminishing. Over 500 million people do not have enough drinking water. The numbers will increase to 2 billion by 2025 (greatest famine in history).

**VII. SIGN TREND #5: PESTILENCES (MT. 24:8)**

- A. Pestilence or diseases such as tuberculosis, Avian bird flu, pneumonia, and meningitis, are becoming unstoppable since some are becoming more resistant to vaccines.

<sup>7</sup> *There will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. (Mt. 24:7)*

- B. The nations of the former Soviet Union are developing genetically engineered viruses and bacteria that cannot be stopped by antibiotics. Terrorists threaten to use smallpox because many today (even in the USA) do not have a vaccination against it. Epidemics of typhoid and diphtheria have afflicted areas of India and Russia. Deadly new strains of malaria, tuberculosis, and cholera are becoming resistant to all known antibiotics and are killing millions. Diseases are growing in an unprecedented way globally, especially viral killers like AIDS and Ebola. Over 35 million people are living with AIDS. More than 25 million have died from AIDS since 1981. Africa has over 11 million AIDS orphans. Six million people a year are getting infected.

VIII. SIGN TREND #6: GREAT EARTHQUAKES (LK. 21:11)

A. Great earthquakes are making world headlines (Mt. 24:8; Lk. 21:11).

<sup>11</sup> *There will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences (Lk. 21:11)*

IX. SIGN TREND #7: HATRED OF BELIEVERS (MT. 24:9)

A. Hatred toward believers is on the rise (Mt. 24:9). Jesus prophesied that believers would be hated, delivered up to tribulation, and killed by all nations because of their loyalty to Him.

<sup>9</sup> *They will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. (Mt. 24:9)*

B. The number of martyrs over 1900 years was nearly 25 million. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there have been almost 50 million martyrs. Persecution of believers continues to increase in parts of China, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Russia, North Korea, and Sudan, etc. It will reach an all-time high in the generation Jesus returns (Dan. 7:21, 25; 8:24; 11:33-35; 12:7, 10; Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9, 14; 9:21; 11:7; 13:7, 15; 16:5-7; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2; Mt. 10:21-22, 28; 24:9; Lk. 12:4-7; 21:16-19). Unrighteous legislation will permit the state to control and even kill believers (Rev. 13:15-17).

X. SIGN TREND #8: RELATIONAL BREAKDOWN IN SOCIETY (MT. 24:10)

A. Relational breakdown in society is making world headlines. This does not refer specifically to believers, but to people in general being offended and betraying and hating one another.

<sup>10</sup> *Then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. (Mt. 24:10)*

B. Currently, the breakdown of the family with the divorce rate is exploding worldwide. In the US, it is 50%. Social order will break down when family members and friends betray each other.

XI. SIGN TREND #9: LAWLESSNESS CAUSING LOVE TO GROW COLD (MT. 24:12)

A. Lawlessness is abounding in increased expressions of violence and immorality. It will cause the breakdown of the social order as love grows cold for God, as well as for family members.

<sup>12</sup> *Because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. (Mt. 24:12)*

B. Sin is now reaching greater expressions and will reach its fullness (Rev. 14:18; Dan. 8:23).

<sup>23</sup> *In the latter time...when the transgressors have reached their fullness... (Dan. 8:23)*

C. The four primary sins of society in the Tribulation will be murder, sorcery, immorality, and theft.

<sup>21</sup> *They did not repent of their murders...sorceries...sexual immorality or thefts. (Rev. 9:21)*

1. **Murder**: is the primary sin on earth (Rev. 6:9-11; 7:13-14; 9:21; 13:7, 10; 16:6; 17:6)

2. **Sorceries**: occult and demon worship will fill the earth (Rev. 13:3-4, 8, 12-15; 14:11)

3. **Immorality**: demon-energized perversion (Rev. 9:20-21; 16:13; 17:2; 18:3; 19:2)

4. **Theft**: legislation and persecution is motivated by theft (e.g., the Nazis' anti-Semitism)

- D. **The days of Noah: VIOLENCE** (Mt. 24:37; Gen. 6:11-13; 2 Tim. 3); great violence will be seen in terrorist acts, race riots, wars in the streets, and increasing murder rates worldwide. Nearly 50 million abortions occur each year worldwide—about 1 million per week. Over 1.5 million babies are aborted per year in the US (4,000/day).

<sup>12</sup> *God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. 13 God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them... (Gen. 6:12-13)*

- E. **The days of Lot: IMMORALITY** (Lk. 17:28-30; Gen. 19:1-28); immorality will greatly increase in the end times (Rev. 9:21; 14:8; 17:1-4; 18:2-4, 9-10; 19:2; 21:8). This is seen in many ways.

1. **Human trafficking:** Over 80% of the human trafficking victims are forced into the rapidly growing sex trade that generates over \$40 billion per year. Biblical prophecy declares that slavery will be a predominant sin in the end times (Rev. 18:13; Joel 3:3). There are currently 35 million slaves on the earth. It is growing by nearly 5 million/year.
2. **Pornography:** Nearly \$100 billion is spent each year on pornography worldwide. There are nearly 5 million pornographic websites on the internet with over 500 million pages containing pornography. In every second of every day, over 30,000 Internet users view pornography. These numbers are rapidly increasing worldwide.
3. **Homosexuality:** the nations are increasingly accepting homosexual marriage.

## **XII. SIGN TREND #10: GREAT SIGNS IN THE SKY (LK. 21:11, 25)**

- A. There will be great signs in the sky as seen in the sun, moon, and stars (Lk. 21:11, 25). The weather patterns are affected by what happens in the heavens. We are experiencing record levels of floods, fires, hurricanes, volcanoes, and other natural disasters.

<sup>11</sup> *There will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven...<sup>25</sup> And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars... (Lk. 21:25)*

- B. Meteorologists warn that changes in global weather patterns mean that we will have hotter and more turbulent weather for the next 100 years or so. Four out of five of the costliest natural disasters of the past 40 years have occurred since 1989, including hurricanes Andrew and Hugo. The most costly earthquakes, hurricanes, tornados, and floods are happening.

## **XIII. SIGN TREND #11: FEARFUL SIGHTS (LK. 21:11)**

<sup>11</sup> *There will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven. (Lk. 21:11)*

## **XIV. SIGN TREND #12: DISTURBANCES IN THE SEA (LK. 21:25)**

<sup>25</sup> *There will be...distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring (Lk. 21:25)*

<sup>6</sup> *I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land... (Hag. 2:6)*