

## Signs of the End (Part 2)

### Matthew 24: 3-14

In our last study we began to consider what is commonly known as the Olivet Discourse. Just prior to His crucifixion, Jesus spoke at length concerning the events that will lead up to His second coming. Some who hold to an Amillennialist theology believe the Olivet Discourse and much of the book of Revelation speak of events that have either already transpired, or are merely symbolic, and not to be taken literally. As a premillennialist, I am convinced Jesus spoke of real, literal events that must transpire, and that these events are yet to come in our future.

As we continue to examine the [aspects](#) of time revealed in the text, I want to quickly review our last study concerning: [Signs of the End](#).

#### **I. A Time of Social Discord** (4-7a)

- **Deception** (4-7a)
- **Threat of War** (6-7a)

#### **II. A Time of Natural Disasters** (7b-8)

- **Despair** (7b)
- **Disease** (7b)
- **Devastation** (8)

**III. A Time of Spiritual Division** (9-13) – Here Jesus warns of coming spiritual division and deception. The end times will be a time of great adversity and persecution for those who follow Christ and are committed to proclaiming the Gospel. Jesus warns of:

**A. Affliction** (9) – *Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.* Jesus speaks of the days leading up to the appearance of anti-Christ. In those days, nearing the end times, believers will be afflicted and some of them will even be killed. These will be apprehended and detained for their faith in Christ. While being incarcerated, many of them will suffer intense persecution, and even death. Such persecution will not be reserved for isolated pockets, controlled by extremists. Jesus declared the whole world will be united in their hatred of believers.

- One can sense the closeness of the Lord's return as we consider the great affliction Christians suffer around the world. According to a Fox News report, dated April 17, 2017, nearly 215 million Christians face persecution somewhere in the world, with 100 million of those living in

Asia. They report that between 2005 and 2015 there were an estimated 900,000 Christians martyred for their faith. These estimates are believed to be conservative since statistics are unavailable from North Korea, and large portions of Iraq and Syria. The Christian advocacy group, *Open Doors* website [www.opendoorsusa.org](http://www.opendoorsusa.org) reports that on average monthly, 322 Christians are killed; 214 churches or Christian properties are destroyed, and 772 acts of violence occur toward those of Christian faith. Clearly we are seeing the warnings of Jesus fulfilled.

**B. Betrayal (10)** – *And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.* As we draw near to the end times, Jesus warned of intense betrayal of Christians by those who know them. Many will be offended because of their faith in Christ. These will be betrayed to local authorities or extremists groups because of their faith. Believers will be hated simply because they have received Christ as their Savior.

- Such betrayal and offense is common today. In many parts of the world, believers fear to make their newfound faith in Christ public. They can't even trust their families and friends. Persecution and death are a reality, so many of these are forced to serve the Lord in silence and in underground churches. Honor killings are common and accepted in many parts of the world, and family members are reported to authorities if found to be a professing Christian.
- Such intense persecution is not being experienced in America like it is in many other countries, but even here Christians are being marginalized and attacked for our faith. We see the real hatred of Christianity among many, even in places of leadership and authority. Some who have been appointed to serve in judicial roles or cabinet positions have been deemed unfit to serve by their peers and those charged with approving their appointment simply because of their faith in Christ. Such opposition and hatred will only continue to increase as we near the Lord's return.

**C. False Doctrine (11)** – *And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.* Jesus had already warned of this in [V.5](#) of this discourse. In the end times, along with the anti-Christ, there will arise many false prophets who will deceive many. These will preach a message of deception, and yet many will believe their doctrine and follow them. We do know that God will preserve 144,000 to preach the true Gospel during the Great Tribulation, but sadly many will follow the false teaches of false prophets into deception.

- Such deception is on the rise around the world today and will continue to increase as time goes on. Satan knows he cannot defeat the church and the truth of the Gospel, but he is a master of creating counterfeits of deception. Many today preach a false gospel under the banner of Christianity. There is no call for repentance or faith, just a universal acceptance. There is no

mention of sanctified living or complete transformation in Christ. They preach a shallow, cheap gospel, void of the atoning sacrifice for sin or God's righteous indignation toward sin. These typically preach a gospel centered on human effort and social affluence. The true Gospel has become so watered-down by many well-known "preachers" today that I can see how easily deceived many will be when confronted with persecution for genuine faith. Those deceived will accept any form of religion or theology that promotes and satisfies the flesh. I know we don't like it, but the Lord is much more concerned with our holiness than our happiness.

**D. Iniquity (12)** – **And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.** Jesus warned of the abundance of iniquity in the last days. This speaks of sin and unrighteousness. It often refers to not an absence of the Law, but a total disregard for the Law. Because of the moral decline in those days, the love of many will become virtually nonexistent. It is interesting that Jesus also refers to the highest form of love becoming scarce in those days, *Agape* love: love as God loves.

- Surely we are not surprised at these words in our modern day. One cannot deny that iniquity abounds today. The majority have one goal in life – please the flesh whatever the cost. We have completely lost our moral compass in America. There is a total disregard for the supreme Law of God. There seems to be no differentiation in what is right or wrong. Sin and iniquity have become so common place in America that few are even troubled by the actions and behaviors of society. Right is now viewed as wrong and bigoted, and wrong is celebrated and embraced as progress.

- Really we cannot expect anything different in our modern society. Morality and decency have been abandoned for pleasure and indulgence. Innocent babies have been aborted by the millions, mostly because America has decided that people can behave as they please without dealing with the consequences of their behavior. Abortion, as barbaric as it is, is considered nothing more than a choice and avenue for birth control. Murder and violence are on the increase and there seems to be no value for human life. As bad as it is today, it will get much worse!

- Let's take a moment to consider **V.13. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.** Many would view this as Jesus' affirmation of a works based salvation. However, that is certainly not the case. **Eph.2:8-9 – For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: [9] Not of works, lest any man should boast.** Jesus speaks of those who are genuinely saved enduring the afflictions and adversity of this time, remaining steadfast in their faith. He doesn't refer to actually being delivered from adversity, but persevering in the faith. Their endurance will bear witness of their salvation and their faith will endure whatever the opposition.

**IV. A Time of Biblical Declaration (14) – And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.** Jesus declared that before His second coming, the Gospel must be preached for a witness to all the nations. The Gospel must be taken to the ends of the earth, reaching the unreached regions before the end will come.

- No doubt this seemed a daunting task to the disciples present that day. They could not imagine being able to literally take the Gospel to the entire world. In fact, until recently this statement seemed almost impossible. However, our Lord continues to work and the Gospel continues to be proclaimed in the unreached corners of the world. Even today, the Gospel is being shared with people groups who are hearing it for the first time. Technological advancements have helped make this task a reality. Through use of the internet and radio transmission, the Gospel is reaching areas that preachers and missionaries have yet been unable to go. The Lord is fulfilling His plan to reach the world with the Gospel. We are getting closer to having a Gospel witness throughout the world. As we consider all that Jesus has said up to this point, I don't see how anyone could argue against His soon return.

**Conclusion:** These are enlightening and challenging verses. For those who belong to Christ, being saved by His grace, they reveal the urgency of the moment. His return is quickly approaching. Are we doing all we can to share the Gospel and faithfully represent our Lord in this dark and desperate hour? Come to Him for the strength and wisdom you need to be an effective witness. If you are unsaved, I urge you to respond to the call for salvation. I have never tried to scare anyone into making a profession, but if you aren't saved, you need to respond today. None are guaranteed tomorrow. Jesus is the only means of salvation. Come to Him in this day of grace and receive the glorious gift of salvation!