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Converging Signs in Biblical Prophecy

James T. Jeremiah
Cedarville University

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Converging Signs in Biblical Prophecy

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CONVERGING SIGNS IN BIBLICAL PROPHECY

DR. JAMES T. JEREMIAH
President, Cedarville College





About the Author

Dr. James T. Jeremiah, President of Cedarville College, is a man noted and loved for his unselfish commitment to the service of the Lord. Throughout his 22 years as administrative head of Cedarville College, Dr. Jeremiah has in all things upheld the College motto, "for the Word of God and the Testimony of Jesus Christ."

In 1953, at a time when Cedarville College faced the challenge of rebuilding the school or closing its doors, Dr. Jeremiah assumed the position of acting President. At that time he was also pastor of Dayton's Emmanuel Baptist Church.

Dr. Jeremiah's administration was so effective that one year later the Board of Trustees asked him to serve permanently as President. He was officially inaugurated as President of the College with 105 students and 10 faculty members. In the years he has been at Cedarville, Dr. Jeremiah has promoted growth in all areas of the College. His success is evidenced by the current enrollment of over 1100 with more than 60 faculty members. Buildings once numbering 9 over 15 acres now total 22 on 105 acres of property. Majors available have increased from 4 to 19.

In addition to all of his administrative duties, Dr. Jeremiah speaks throughout the year at rallies and banquets on a nationwide basis and daily hosts "Campus Challenge," a radio ministry aired over 23 radio stations. Quite frequently he travels to churches to speak in Sunday services. Dr. Jeremiah has served periodically on the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches (GARBC) Council of Eighteen.

Dr. Jeremiah is a graduate of Baptist Bible Seminary, Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania, and Central State University of Ohio. He received his Master's Degree from Winona Lake School of Theology, Winona Lake, Indiana, and was conferred an honorary doctorate degree from Central State University in 1961.

Upon graduating from Baptist Bible Seminary he pastored a church in Panama, New York, for two years before traveling to Ohio to fill the pulpit of a Toledo church for the next 11 years. In 1950 he accepted the pastorate of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Dayton.

CONVERGING SIGNS
IN
BIBLICAL PROPHECY
2nd EDITION

By
Dr. James T. Jeremiah

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To my “Campus Challenge” listeners

PREFACE

The following chapters consist of twelve five-minute radio messages given over several stations on "Campus Challenge," a radio ministry of Cedarville College.

Many more pages of commentary could have been written on each topic, but each chapter is being presented almost as it was given over the air. Additional Bible references and a bibliography have been added as an aid to anyone who wishes to pursue further study of the signs of the times.

Books, magazines, and newspapers have furnished the factual and illustrative materials used by the writer. Whenever possible, credit is given at the place where a quotation is made. Appreciation is due all who aided in the understanding of this interesting and important theme.

For many years all of the signs of the times seem to converge and say, "Maranatha! Our Lord cometh."

Chapter 1

MARANATHA!

The personal, visible, bodily Second Coming of Christ into the world is a biblical fact that cannot be ignored or given a place of little importance in the study of Scripture. This great truth is dealt with some 1,845 times in the Bible, 318 of these being in the New Testament. The return of the Lord is emphasized in 17 Old Testaments books, and 7 out of every 10 chapters in the New Testament refer to this prophetic event.

The prophets predicted that He would return the second time. Zachariah wrote, "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, . . . and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof . . ." (Zech. 14:4). Christ himself announced He would return. He said, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, . . ." (John 14:3). Angelic messengers appearing at His ascension said, ". . . this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). The apostles declared Christ would come the second time. Paul wrote, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, . . ." (1 Thess. 4:16). Almost the last words in the New Testament are, ". . . Surely I come quickly . . ." (Rev. 22:20).

There are two facts about the Second Coming that at first seem to be contradictory. First, He indicates there are signs of His coming, and second, we are not to set dates for His coming. The disciples asked, ". . . what shall be the sign of thy coming . . ." (Matt. 24:3)? In answer to this question, He identified several signs that will appear prior to His coming to earth. Then He rebuked the Pharisees because they could not "discern the signs of the times" (Matt. 24:3). It is apparent that certain specific things must come to pass before the Lord's return, but we are warned against identifying the time when He shall come. "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angles of heaven, but my Father only" (Matt. 24:36). Thus we are to discern the signs of the times but *never* attempt to *set a date for His return*.

In each one of the following brief chapters dealing with “the signs of the times” or the converging trends of our day, let us be very sure to understand that there are no prophecies to be fulfilled before Christ can appear to take His own unto Himself (John 14:1-6, 1 Thess. 4:13-18). He *can* come and *may* come at any time. All of the “signs” point not to the Rapture of the Church, but to His literal coming to the earth to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev. 19:11-15).

At the same time it should be said that never in all of history have there been so many signs that seemingly converge at one particular time. This would indicate that the coming of Christ is very near, and since the signs refer to His coming to reign on earth, the Rapture is nearer than we may think since it will take place seven years prior to the time when His feet will touch the Mount of Olives.

“Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of” (Matt. 24:42-46, 48, 50).

You will probably read your newspaper today. May I suggest that you also read your Bible. You will discover that the newspaper and the Bible both testify that Jesus is coming soon. Christian, look up, for your redemption draws near.

Chapter 2

WARFARE

The late H. G. Wells, who always wrote in glowing terms of the future of the human race, found it necessary because of existing conditions, to write in his last book a view contrary to the philosophy of his lifetime. "This world is at the end of its tether. The end of everything we call life is close at hand and cannot be evaded . . . There is no way out or around or through the impasse. It is the end. We may be spinning more and more swiftly into the vortex of extinction. Our world . . . is like a convoy lost in darkness on an unknown rocky coast, with quarreling pirates in the chartroom and savages clambering up the sides of the ships to plunder and do evil as the whim may take them . . . The door closes upon us forever." This is not a message of hope penned by Mr. Wells, but one of despair.

Jesus predicted that there would be international unrest in the world in the end time. "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: . . . For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: . . ." (Matt. 24:6, 7). No person or organization will have the power to permanently terminate the unrest predicted by Christ in this Scripture.

Luke refers to this same time by saying there will be ". . . upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; . . . men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: . . ." (Luke 21:25, 26). The October 1961 *Newsweek* magazine suggested the possibility of great destruction in one of our cities: "If round zero is downtown Manhattan, a 50 megaton bomb would dig a crater one mile wide and 300 feet deep, killing everyone sheltered or unsheltered within a distance of 3½ miles." That possibility alone should make men's hearts fail them for fear.

In spite of the prediction of Scripture and the evidences all around us, we go on whistling in the dark as though nothing tragic can ever happen. This attitude has prevailed prior to each of our two world wars. We are witnessing a return to the same outlook on life now. One of the main groups believing that no world war could be possible prior to the outbreak of World War

I was the liberal theologians. They believed then and still believe in the inherent goodness of man. This, coupled with the evolutionary idea of inevitable progress, would eliminate any idea of a conflict as that represented by World Wars I and II. Why did the wars come? Because of the terrible sinfulness of the human heart; because of man's inherent cruelty, ambition, pride, and greed. War is the product of the sinfulness of man. During the last half century the intensity of wars has increased. According to the 1974 World Almanac, there were 26,441 more battle deaths in World War II than in all the wars preceding in American history.

I have lived a few years longer than half a century, and I cannot remember any time in my life when this world has been without some warfare or international struggle. It has been estimated by Geoffry Kemp of the Arms Control Project at M.I.T. that "about one-quarter of the sovereign states on planet Earth were engaged in inter-states or intra-state conflict involving the use of regular armed forces as the 1970's began."

The Word of God indicates that in the last days wars will increase and predicts that one great world war will come to pass finally ending all wars. The following Scriptures have great meaning in this light: "Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles (nations); prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong . . . come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen (nations) round about . . . Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision" (Joel 3:9-14).

The increase in international unrest and military struggles points assuredly to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (Joel 2:11, Rev. 16:13, 14; 19:15-17). Every Christian, because he is a new creature in Christ, wants peace. He rejoices in the prospect of a warless world brought about by the personal appearance of the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter 3

FAMINE

The story is told of a man who rushed into a suburban railroad station one morning and almost breathlessly asked the ticket agent: "When does the 8:01 train leave?" "At 8:01," was the answer. "Well," the man replied, "it's 7:59 by my watch, 7:57 by the town clock, and 8:04 by the station clock. Which am I to go by?" "You can go by any clock you wish," said the agent, "but you can't go by the 8:01 train, for it has already left."

God's time is moving forward hour by hour, minute by minute. There are multitudes who seem to think that they can live by any schedule they choose and that in their own time they can turn to God. But His time is the right time. One of these days it will be too late.

The Word of God indicates that there will be many catastrophes in the end time. Jesus said that preceding His return to the earth "famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes will be prevalent" (Matt. 24:7). Present-day events would seem to indicate that it is much later than most people think. It is one thing to miss a train that will come by again the next morning at the same time, and another to misread or ignore God's time clock that never runs this way again.

Because of limited space we shall discuss only one of the natural catastrophes facing our generation. Christ predicts great famines will come upon the earth in the end time.

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* of June 16, 1974, has this report on the prospect of famine: "The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization Director, A. H. Boerman, said, 'More than ever since the Second World War, the world will be dependent on this year's production for its basic food supplies, bearing in mind the fact that a continuation of recent trends would mean that reserve stocks of wheat will be gradually approaching the vanishing point. We find ourselves, for the second year in succession, facing the threat of a worldwide food shortage.'"

No one really knows the figures, but FAO officials estimate at least 100,000 persons have starved since last summer in the West African Sahelian belt nations. Another 100,000 are estimated to have died in Ethiopia, but again there is no way of checking for lack of reliable population records. You say this is famine in Africa, but this condition will never take place in America. But listen to this.

One of the paradoxes of our bountiful nation is shown in a report of the Citizens Crusade Against Poverty. It said that 10,764,000 Americans are suffering from hunger and 20,000,000 are inadequately fed. A team of physicians visiting Mississippi the spring of 1968 reported, "We saw homes with children who are lucky to eat one meal a day, and that one inadequate so far as vitamins, minerals, or protein are concerned. We saw children fed communally, that is, by neighbors who give scraps of food to children whose own parents have nothing to give."

In an AP article dated September 6, 1968, Dr. John D. McElroy, a biologist from Johns Hopkins University, cited evolution, the population explosion, and precedents from nature today in predicting worldwide famines and millions of dead from starvation by 1985. "Some feel that the battle to feed the world population is now lost," said McElroy, "and that it is a foregone conclusion that by 1985 we will have worldwide famines in which hundreds of millions of people will starve to death. I must admit that I see no major crash program presently existing which would lead me to disagree with this conclusion."

According to a report in the May 27, 1974, issue of *U.S. News and World Report*, there was enough grain available to feed the world's population for 66 days, but in mid-1974 only enough grain to feed the world 27 days. The article in the *U.S. News and World Report* is entitled "In the End, Even U.S. May Not be Able to Feed the World."

Bible-believing Christians should not be surprised when the daily news reports are telling us of the increase of famine. These famines will come to pass as Christ predicted. Worldwide family planning, better agricultural methods, and an increase of acreage for food production will not change the trend nor solve the problem.

Chapter 4

INDIFFERENCE

On the inside of the capitol dome in Washington are inscribed the lines: "One God, one law, one element, one supreme event toward which the whole creation moves." Without question, thousands of people, including senators and congressmen, have been ignorant of this motto or indifferent to what it says and means. Most politicians are concerned about making the government operate now and are indifferent to the future "supreme event toward which the whole creation moves." This reminds us of the indifference to the Second Coming of Christ as we see it among Christians today. The New Testament refers more to the Second Coming than almost any other subject. In spite of the clear teaching on what some of us believe to be "the one supreme event toward which the whole creation moves," there is an unbelievable indifference to those predictions. What is even more astounding is that this indifference itself is an indication that His coming is not far away. This spiritual indifference is one of the signs of the times.

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (I Peter 3:3, 4). These "scoffers" who walk after their "lusts" are morally blind teachers or religionists whose intellectual arrogance turns them away from a possible supernatural intervention in the future. Therefore, they say, the Second Coming of Christ can never happen. They are willfully ignorant.

This same spirit of indifference prevailed in the days of Noah and Lot preceding times of predicted judgment. "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; . . . they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it

rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:26-30). Jesus did not refer to the days of violence in Noah's world, nor the immoral society of Lot's Sodom. He mentions spiritual indifference on the part of people who were doing legitimate things with God left out of their plans. How many people—and too often professing Christian people—marry, eat, do business, plant their fields, and build their homes without talking to God about it or thanking Him for His provision.

Paul describes this indifference of the end time by saying, ". . . men shall be . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:2, 4). An unquenchable love for pleasure occupies the lives of more people, and some of them professing Christians, than does a desire to love and serve God. Hollywood, parties, weekend sports excursions, and the major athletic contests have a higher priority rating than does God and His Word. This is so because of the prevailing spiritual indifference of our time, a sign that the Lord's return is not far away. The reason why sports has a higher place on many priority lists than that of the Savior is the formal but powerless church of our day. Paul mentioned this as a sign of the "difficult times" when he wrote, "Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof . . ." (2 Tim. 3:5). How can Jesus be more important than pleasure when He is not given the preeminence by so-called religious people? When one has not experienced the power of Christ in his life, fishing for fish will be more thrilling than fishing for men.

A study of the seven churches of Revelation will show that the seventh and last one had a spirit of indifference which is characteristic of the last days. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. . . . So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth . . . thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; . . . thou are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3-15-17).

If you are indifferent to spiritual matters, then you are not only witnessing a "sign", you *are* a sign that we are living in the last days. Turn to God for spiritual revival.

Chapter 5

APOSTASY

Perhaps now, as in no other period in church history, we are facing apostasy in the professing Christian church. Peter predicted this apostasy and defines what an apostate is. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (2 Peter 2:1, 2).

Dr. Leon Wood in *The Bible and Future Events*, p. 19, says, "This apostasy does not concern merely peripheral issues either, but the most central of all: the very supernaturalism of Christ and the Bible. Christ has been declared merely a man, . . . and the Bible merely a human product, . . ."

Here are some quotations from the writings of a contemporary theologian that show apostates deny "the Lord that bought them." Consider a few statements from the book *The Christian Understanding of God* by Nels F. S. Ferre.

"We have no way of knowing, even, that Jesus was sinless, but such a claim is irrelevant to the reality of the incarnation. Such a proposition would, for that matter, depend mostly on some literal claim in the Bible. Such claims there are, but the Bible used in this external manner becomes a distinct danger to living faith. Such letters kill while the Spirit gives life. Even though Jesus' life was peculiarly subject to myth, behind the myth is the reality which gave rise to it" (p. 186).

"Strange, however, is the hold which this doctrine (the Virgin Birth) in its literal form has on countless people. Reference to the Virgin Birth is not found in Paul's letters, the earliest writings we have. It is not found in Mark, the original Gospel. It is not found in the various epistles of the New Testament . . .

"Mary, we remember, was found pregnant before her engagement to mild Joseph. Nazareth was hard by a Roman garrison where the soldiers were German mercenaries. Jesus is also re-

ported throughout a continuous part of the history of art, it is claimed, to have been blonde. This is supposedly unnatural for the Mediterranean countries where this same tradition started and was continued. Hence Jesus must have been the child of a German soldier" (p. 191)!

In his book *The Sun and the Umbrella*, Ferre has the following to say about Christ: "The historic Jesus, at best, is a vague figure" (p. 115). "Jesus never was or became God" (p. 112). "It seems appropriate that he (Jesus) . . . was allowed to return to earthly life . . . But we know neither that this event actually happened nor exactly what took place" (pp. 115, 116).

The Bible clearly teaches that the only cure for apostasy is the judgment of God. It will never be cured or removed by revival or persuasive argument by Bible-believing preachers and teachers. Paul teaches that God's judgment will fall on apostasy. "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. 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: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:7-12).

Apostasy is one of the converging signs of the times, but it is also an opportunity for God's people to know the truth and stand for God in days when He is being blasphemed. When sin abounds, God's grace much more abounds. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). Apostasy in the professing church is no excuse for God's people to minimize the importance of winning the lost to Christ. The darker the apostasy is, the more men need the light of the gospel.

Chapter 6

ECUMENISM

There is a trend today toward a one-world church. This is obvious to anyone who only casually reads the religious news releases.

The only visible-church idea in Protestantism is of rather late origin, though there were evidences of the view before it began organizationally in 1948 when the World Council of Churches was formed. One of the supporters of this world-church program said in stating its purpose, "By powers of gathered members, the mighty organized church will move irresistibly to overcome the world by application of gospel principles."

That the aim of the World Council of Churches is a one-church concept is evident when one observes that everything else is pushed into insignificance in an attempt to be worldwide. Any organization seems to be welcome within the framework of the World Council with few, if any, doctrinal requirements. In 1961 the Russian Orthodox Churches of the U.S.S.R., along with other churches in lands controlled by the communists, were accepted by this one-church organization.

The key Bible verse used to support the ecumenical one-world-church view is John 17:11, "That they all may be one; as we are." Here Christ referred to the oneness of the Father and the Son. From the writings of its leaders and the actions of its organization, it would appear that this oneness in the world church is achieved, not on the basis of biblical conviction, but upon the expediency of compromise. Can anyone conceive compromise on the part of either the Father or the Son in order that there may be unity in the Godhead? Such a system of interpretation, according to the Anglican pastor John R. W. Scott, uses the Bible as a drunk uses a lamp post—for support, not for illumination (*The Church of England Newspaper*, August 23, 1968, p. 6). The "oneness" of which the ecumenicists speak is not that of the Spirit of God.

It is sincerely believed by many one-church advocates that a worldwide oneness of the World Council of Churches' variety will make Christianity a stronger influence in the world, but such

does not seem to be the case. According to Leslie Stefford, the word "Christian" has become a vague word in the English language. It is reported that in 1830 active Protestants in the world numbered 200 million of the 800 million people in the world. Now today the population is 4½ times greater, but there are still only 200 million Protestants among them. We are told that there are a million towns in the free world without an evangelical church. Billy Sunday said that there wouldn't be so many non-going church members if there weren't so many non-going churches. Churches without a sound Bible message cannot grow spiritually because they are without power or motivation.

When the Lord comes for His own at the Rapture described in 1 Thess. 4:13-18, a false "church" will remain. Man must worship. Dostoevski said, "So long as man remains, he strives for nothing so incessantly and so painfully as to find someone to worship." The trend today toward a world church seems to many of us to be the preparation for the church described in Revelation 13 where worship is prominent. "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him . . ." (v. 8; cf. vs. 4, 8, 12, 15). In Revelation 17 there is further comment on this religious monstrosity that will culminate as the world church of the end time. It will be "great" (v. 1), that is, powerful, prominent, and prestigious. It will sit "upon many waters" (17:1, 15), that is, it will influence "peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues." It will be "ecumenical."

It would seem that the so-called false world church that will remain after the Rapture has already had its beginning. The question is, "What should a Christian do today if he finds himself by church membership a part of a religious system that denies the authority of Scripture and the supernatural Christ?" The answer is obvious. Cease to be a part of it. This was the message given to the apostle John in Rev. 18:4, "Come out of her my people, that you may not participate in her sins." This is a command of Scripture and not to be taken lightly. This message to John out of heaven comes to every Christian through the written Word of God (cf. 2 Cor. 6:14-18). It is imperative that God's people become separate from apostasy and the false church that harbors apostates and promotes their evil doctrines. It is time to stand for the truth now.

Chapter 7

DEMONISM

The Bible predicts that in the last days there will be an increase in the activity of demons.

“But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and *doctrines of demons*, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, . . . ” (1 Tim. 4:1, 2. NASB).

“But you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, *demonic*” (James 3:14, 15, NASB).

The Gospels record many victorious encounters Jesus had with demons. For example, “And when He had come to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs; they were so exceedingly violent that no one could pass by that road. And behold, they cried out, saying, ‘What do we have to do with You, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?’ ” (Matt. 8:28, 29, NASB). It is of interest to note that demon activity seems to be greater at the first Advent of Christ and predicted to be so prior to His Second Coming.

In our time there appears to be demon activity in a number of areas. One very obvious form of demonic power is seen in the increase of lawlessness and crime evident in this day. “And because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold” (Matt. 24:12, NASB). It has been reported that crime in the United States has gone up 119 percent during the last ten years. This means it has increased 9 percent faster than the population growth. Since Satan is the author of rebellion (Gen. 3:4, 5; Isa. 14:12-15), it is to be expected that his ambassadors will practice lawlessness.

Can it be that demonic influence has been responsible for the origin and promotion of situation ethics, the philosophy that says it is right to do whatever *seems* to be right under a given set of circumstances? Accordingly, if it seems right to steal, commit adultery, lie, commit murder under certain conditions, then it

becomes right by doing it. To those who hold to the situation ethics philosophy, there is no standard of right or wrong. "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! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!" (Isa. 5:20-23). It could be that an increase in demon activity has been responsible for this anti-God teaching. Satan began his program with, "Hath God said?" (Gen. 3:1) and uses the same philosophy today in promoting situation ethics.

During the past few years our world has been plagued with what seems to be an incurable problem of drugs. There have been evidences of religious overtones in some areas of this drug practice. In this light it is of interest to note that there is at least an inference to such practices in the prediction concerning the false church, ecclesiastical Babylon: ". . . by thy sorceries were all nations deceived" (Rev. 18:23).

The word "sorceries" comes from a word transliterated into English as "pharmacy." Vine says it "primarily signified the use of medicine, drugs, spells, then poisoning." Does this imply that the false religion of the last days will be related to the drug culture? For example, there is a significant increase in the number of drug addicts and the membership of the Church of Satan. In 1972 it was estimated that there were 200,000 Church of Satan members and as many as 600,000 habitual drug users.

Bob Larson, before his conversion to Christ, was a rock and roll singer. He suggests another area of present demon activity: "Rock and roll is the agency which Satan is using to demon-possess this generation *en masse*. I have seen with my own eyes, teen agers become demon-possessed while dancing to rock and roll music" (*Rock and Roll*, p. 85).

God has provided a way of victory for the Christian in his battle against Satan. He is to "put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11). The living Christ in whom we trust is the answer made available to us in this day of battle.

Chapter 8

MATERIALISM

The dictionary defines materialism as "a preoccupation with or stress upon material rather than intellectual or spiritual things." The Bible predicts that this spirit and philosophy of life will prevail at the end of the age. In describing the perilous or difficult times that shall come in the last days, Paul wrote to Timothy (2 Tim. 3:2, 4), ". . . men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters (arrogant), proud, . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."

Statistics that are taken from reports that cover the last three or four years support the statement that our society is preoccupied with material things. During 1972, \$47,826,000,000 was spent in recreation. Liquor sales totaled \$9,215,000,000 during the same year. In 1970, 43.2 percent of the men and 30.9 percent of the women were habitual smokers, and in 1971 the tobacco manufacturers profited \$1,217,000,000 before taxes. In 1973, 9,915,803 new cars were purchased at a cost of approximately \$30,000,000,000. In 1972 there was a total of 111,826,000 T.V. sets in the United States.

The apostle James adds understanding to the prevailing conditions of the last days as he describes how some of these material things are acquired. All of this is done "for the last days." The Christian is to "be patient . . . unto the coming of the Lord." Now let me quote James' prophetic description of a materialistic age: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth

not resist you. Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain" (James 5:1-7).

This materialistic philosophy has been encouraged by the technological advancements now evident in our society. It is reported Walter Ruther said that it will be possible in a single year to produce "one hundred times as much steel by one-hundredth the manpower." When this happens, it will be necessary to work only two days a week. What will workers do with the rest of their time? They will probably spend it in pleasure of some kind. The unfortunate part of it is that this pleasure-seeking, on the part of those who profess to have everything, leaves them with no peace but with a sense of spiritual emptiness.

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou are wretched, and mirerable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17).

Lost in the Funhouse, a novel by John Barth, expresses the hopelessness of a materialistic, fun-loving society. Commenting on this novel and the lesson it teaches, Dr. John Wesley White said, "People are trying to crowd into a syndrome of joytoys a sort of funhouse to escape the stark realities of life, only to find themselves lost."

Morton Shulman's book, *Anyone Can Make a Million*, not only appeals to those who have such ambitions, but it, along with other bestsellers, exalts the glories of being rich. In such a time as this, when so many think wealth answers all of life's problems, it should be observed that 100 millionaires commit suicide each year in the United States. Earthly riches do not guarantee happiness on this earth.

Advice from the Book of Proverbs is well taken at this point as materialism increasingly becomes a sign of the times. "Do not weary yourselves to gain riches, . . . When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings, like an eagle that flies toward the heavens" (Prov. 23:4, 5, NASB). Wealth is laboriously won, easily lost, and eternally worthless when sought for man's glory.

Chapter 9

IMMORALITY

Sociologists, educators, as well as many who serve as leaders in the professing church, testify that marriage and the home have been facing difficult problems in recent years. Conditions seem to be worsening. The Christian home is needed in our society now more than ever. It is unlikely that the situation can be improved by mere human effort.

In 1870 there were 10,000 divorces in the United States. One hundred years later in 1970 there were 600,000. Two years beyond that, in 1972, it is reported there were 2,669,000 marriages in our country and 839,000 divorces. "Many secular sociologists point to divorce as an adaptation to a changing culture rather than an example of deterioration of the family group. Those who are concerned about the biblical point of view, however, will surely all agree that widespread divorce and separation is a negative crucial factor in Western family life" (*The Family First*, Kenneth Gangel, p. 12). From some years of pastoral experience, I am of the opinion that more divorces are caused by depraved human nature than by "changing culture."

Moral depravity is popular and increasing at a rapid rate today. The past president of the American Association of Marriage and Family Counselors in 1971 saw group sex and wife swapping "surging to the fore as a phenomenon all over the country." This would appear to be a sin similar to that of Sodom and Gomorrah before the judgment of God came on these cities. Jude indicates this immoral practice was then, and in the future will be, great: "Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example, in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire" (Jude 7, NASB).

The *National Enquirer* printed an article entitled "The New People, Desexualization in American Life." The fad in clothes at the present time is "unisex." No wonder someone wrote a Country Western song entitled "I Can't Tell the Boys from the Girls."

One should not be amazed when he learns that a physician estimated in an article in the *Toronto Star* that there are 90,000 homosexuals in Metro-Toronto. It has been estimated that 5 percent of Europeans and North Americans are homosexuals.

Men, and women too, increasingly seem to be rebelling against God's order in marriage. One feminist stated: "Marriage is the chief vehicle for the oppression of women. We reject it in both theory and practice." Another charged, "Women are forced to trivialize their lives, living vicariously through husbands and children."

All of this is in opposition to marriage which is ordained of God and taught in His Word. This godless philosophy and practice is predicted in Scripture as one of the signs of the time. "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, . . . men who forbid marriage . . ." (1 Tim. 4:1-3, NASB).

There are many other related sinful practices carried on in society that remind us that the days are not only evil but few before the coming of the Lord. In 2 Tim. 3:1-4, 6, Paul predicts and describes some of these sins. Please note some of the phrases he uses descriptive of the moral depravity particularly related to home life as it will be in the last days. ". . . lovers of self, lovers of money . . . disobedient to parents . . . ungrateful . . . unloving . . . lovers of pleasure . . . weak women weighed down with sins, . . ."

Thus we can see reasons why society is as it is with sin in the hearts of men and women, and self as the theme of their lives, what else can we expect? We are witnessing a repetition of the first century society described in Romans 1:21-32.

God's Word has been given to us to be believed and obeyed. To reject it is to be a part of one sign of the times.

Chapter 10

KNOWLEDGE

It has been repeatedly stated that of all the scientists who have ever lived in the history of the world, between eighty and ninety percent are alive today! Over 8 million Americans between 18 and 21 years of age are students in colleges or universities today.

We have all been amazed at the performance of the computer. Sometimes it has confused our checking accounts or refused to answer when it is charged with sending us a statement for a bill already paid, but it is a remarkable invention nevertheless. It really is taking over the thinking process for many Americans. There is now a computer that can perform 55 billion transactions in one second. In 84 minutes scientists corrected the flight pattern of Apollo XIII when it was in trouble. That becomes more remarkable when we realize that it would have taken one man 1,040,256 years to do the same thing by the pencil and paper method.

The writer of Ecclesiastes said “. . . the writing of many books is endless . . .” (Ecc. 12:12). At no time in history has that been more true than now. Apart from or in addition to the flood of paperback books and magazines, over 365,000 new titles in hardback books come off the press each year. More than 15,000 science journals are being published, many of them having a worldwide circulation.

Herman Kahn and Anthony Wiener in 1967 published a book entitled *The Year 2000*. In that volume they report some of the fantastic things scientists are able to do because of the present knowledge explosion. Here are only a few.

IBM has already developed (1) a memory-storage system that uses an eight-colored laser beam to store as many as one hundred million bits of information on a single square inch of photographic film. The system involves a wavelength selector that singles out colors at the rate of 125,000 color choices a second; (2) a beam deflector which is so accurate that it can single out more than 130,000 separate spaces in an area the size of a match head.

Even more impressive is the "Data Device" reported by an Air Force scientist, John F. Dove, at Griffiss Air Force Base, Rome, New York. He reports that by using a laser beam to reduce the size of the data signals submitted, an entire library of 20,000 volumes can be stored on an 8-inch by 10-inch piece of nickel foil, thus storing in one inch what would now be put on ten miles of magnetic tape.

Present technology permits the manufacture of one hundred to five hundred integrated circuits on a silicone wafer an inch in diameter and less than one-hundredth of an inch thick, or complete computer and communications subsystems containing more than 1,000 circuits, each with more than four hundred transistors, on half-dollar-size silicone chips less than one-eighth inch thick.

Among many more amazing things, scientists predict that in the future there will be automated libraries and central encyclopedias that will make possible the procurement of almost any information by using the telephone. Doctors and lawyers will be able to call data clearing houses for advice on any medical or legal problem they may encounter. Improved weather forecasting and control of weather fronts will be common practices. The President of the United States will be able to view any trouble spot in the world by means of a television control center. Sophisticated teaching machines which allow children to attend school in their own homes will aid in the education process.

Hundreds of years before the coming of Christ, God said, "O Daniel, seal the book to the time of the end . . . knowledge shall be increased" (Dan. 12:4). Knowledge will proliferate. There will be a sudden knowledge explosion.

The increase of human knowledge may not lead man to know anything about a personal relation with God, but it will give the Christian one more reason to know the coming of the Lord is drawing nigh.

Chapter 11

ISRAEL

God promised the land to Abraham and his seed. "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God" (Gen. 17:7, 8, NASB).

"The land" promised was Palestine from the Sinai Desert north and east to the Euphrates River. It is important to note that the fulfillment of that promise was not conditioned on obedience. It was and is an everlasting covenant. Abraham never possessed the land.

After the Exodus Joshua's conquering army never fully occupied the territory described in the promise. The Assyrians took Israel captive in 722 B.C., and the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and took Judah captive in 586 B.C. The Jews came back to the land and rebuilt the temple in 515 B.C. and the City of Jerusalem in 445 B.C., but they never occupied the land as described in the everlasting covenant.

Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 A.D. The Jews were scattered, as it was predicted they would be. "And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone" (Deut. 28:64). Until recent years Israel has remained scattered "from one end of the earth to the other."

In Isaiah 11:11, 12 are two of many verses in the Bible assuring the reader that the Jews will return to the land promised to them through Abraham. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, . . . and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." Please note two phrases: "the second time" and "from the four corners of the

earth.” There is no way this “return” of Israel can refer to the Exodus or the restoration after the Babylonian captivity. Until recent days there has never been a return to the land as predicted in Isaiah (cf. Amos 9:14, 15).

This century has seen the only movement of the Jews back to Palestine since their dispersion by the Romans. Until comparatively recent days, the Jewish people had given up, so far as a return to the land and the establishment of the nation was concerned. Under the direction of Theodore Herzl, the first Zionist Congress was held in 1897. Until then the Jews of the time had a hopeless and forgotten future. The goal of this congress was “to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law.”

Though the purpose was clear, progress was slow. By 1914 there were only 80,000 Jews in Palestine. By 1939 when World War II began, there were 400,000 who had arrived in the land in spite of severe restrictions. The return of Israel during this period of time was undoubtedly hastened by the persecution of the Jews in Germany and Russia. On May 14, 1948, Israel became an independent nation for the first time in hundreds of years. The population of the new state included thousands of Arabs and 650,000 Jews. It was estimated in 1973 that there were 2,659,000 Jews in Israel out of a total population of 3,200,000. It would seem that God, in some measure at least, is gathering “together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”

This modern-day miracle is not only a sign of the Lord’s soon return but one of the outstanding proofs of the inspiration and authority of the Bible.

Chapter 12

EXPECTATION

Hundreds of predictions given by God through His prophets many years before their fulfillment have literally come to pass. Fulfilled prophecy is an irrefutable argument for the complete future fulfillment of all the biblical predictions yet awaiting a place in the divine schedule. The Bible says Jesus will come to this earth the second time. He will return precisely as promised in God's Word.

The preceding topics in this series have called our attention to some of the signs that unitedly point to the fact that Christ will come" . . . in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" (Matt. 25:31). Mention has been made of the current international unrest, unprecedented famine, spiritual indifference, religious apostasy, immorality, materialism, increased demon activity, ecumenism, Israel and the knowledge explosion. There are several other signs or trends in our time that give us the same message—Jesus is coming again. In the time remaining, let us briefly consider a few of them.

1. *False Christs*. "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many" (Matt. 24:4, 5, 11). Homer Duncan (*The King is Coming*, p. 29) says, "There have been no less than 1100 religious leaders in different parts of the world in the last fifty years who have claimed to be Christ."

2. *Celestial Signs*. "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring" (Luke 21:25). One writer (Duncan, p. 77) stated that the Palomar Observatory in California photographed an explosion that took place in a galaxy of stars. A constellation of stars observed on February 3, 1962, caused many people to fear that a world catastrophe was about to happen.

3. *World Government.* Rev. 13:7, 8 refers to a world ruler, “. . . and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him . . .” This false world government will be destroyed by the King of Kings who “. . . shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” (Dan. 2:44, Rev. 19:15, 16).

4. *Attitude of Expectancy.* “And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28).

Many frustrated people in our world do not understand the prophetic message of the Bible, they do not know what will happen, but they sense and talk about a judgment they fear is not far away. One popular song is called “Doom’s Day.” Another one suggests a meeting in the air with the Lord. The Bible-taught Christian is “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13, cf. 2 Peter 1:19, 2 Tim. 4:8, 1 Thess. 1:10, 1 John 3:3).

Never in all church history have so many things said unitedly that the coming of Christ is at hand. One thing for sure, we all must stand before God. That fact alone should turn us to Christ for salvation. Without Him we are eternally lost without hope.

Let no one assume that the Christian should wait for the fulfillment of predicted signs of the Lord’s return before he begins to live for God. This is his responsibility whether Christ comes today or ten years from now. We are to serve the living God daily and wait for His Son from heaven.

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