

Twelve Signs of the End Times, part 2

In our last study we discovered five signs that indicated the next event in God's plan for the future is near. The first sign was that Christ would die before His second coming would occur. The second sign was that all of the apostles would die before Christ's second coming. Both of these signs were obviously fulfilled by A.D. 95 when the book of Revelation was written. The third sign was that the "birth pangs" described by Jesus in Matthew 24:4-8 would occur next. We are witnessing these signs already. The birth pangs include war, famine, and earthquakes. The fourth sign was given to us by the prophet Daniel in Daniel 12:10. He prophesied that the wicked will act wickedly in the last days. The fifth sign was found in Daniel 12:4. This sign reveals that knowledge will explode in the last days. I think we know that we are already experiencing or have already experienced all five of these signs.

We also discovered that the rapture, the tribulation, the second coming of Christ and the start of the millennial kingdom will all occur within about a seven year period. This means that any one of these five signs points to the arrival of all four events. Therefore, any sign that points to the arrival of the second coming, is also a sign that points to the rapture, the tribulation, and the kingdom.

That was a summary of our last study. In this study we are going to learn about seven more signs. They are the sixth through twelfth signs. These signs will also help us know when the rapture, the tribulation, the second coming of Christ and

the kingdom are approaching. So I hope you are ready for an exciting journey!

6) PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL WILL BE WORLDWIDE. We will begin with the sixth sign of the Lord's coming which is given to us by Jesus in Matthew 24:14. He said,

This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.
Matthew 24:14 (NASB)

In this verse, Jesus tells us that the end will come when the gospel is preached to all nations. Someone recently asked if the rapture would arrive earlier if we just shared the gospel more. Theoretically, the answer is yes. But then maybe God has already

taken that into account.

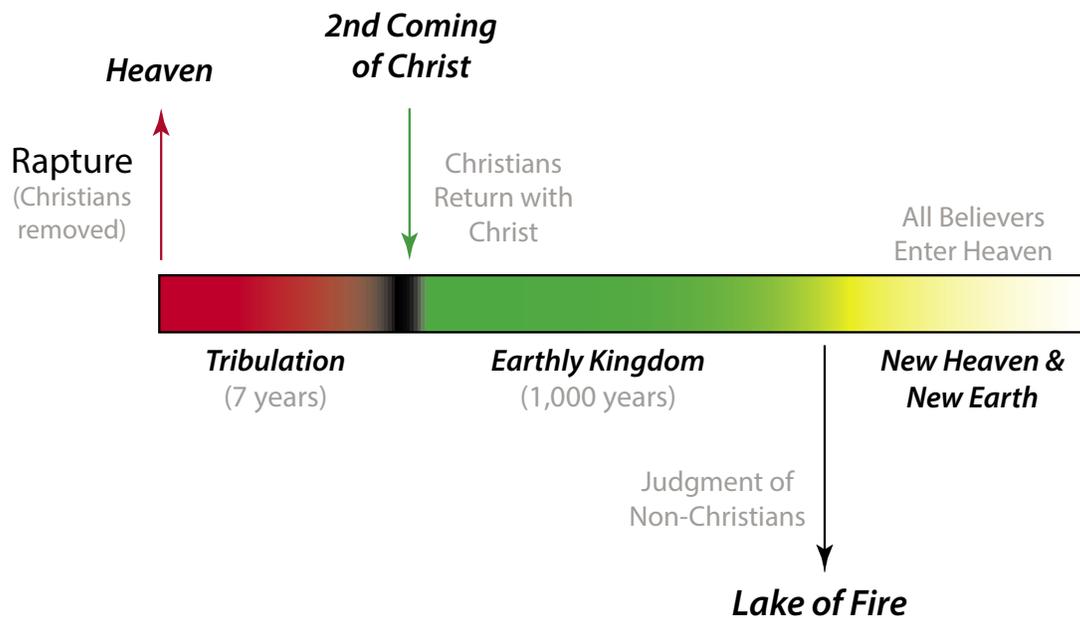
Whatever the answer, the Wycliffe Bible Translators told us recently that significant progress is being made in translating the Bible into the different languages of the world. For those unfamiliar with this ministry,

Wycliffe Bible Translators is a Christian ministry that translates the Bible into the different languages that are spoken around the world. In a recent report, Heather Sells stated,

Wycliffe is currently working on 2,700 language projects in 167 countries, with 2,000 more languages that need a Bible transla-



Timeline of The Future



tion.¹

This is wonderful news because it is reported by Ethnologue that there are 7,139 languages in the world.² This means the Bible has been translated into 72% of the languages of the world.

Now that percentage may be disappointing, but consider that today the internet is reaching into every one of the 195 countries around the world. This means the Lord is not only moving men and women to translate the Bible into every language, but He is also moving men and women to share the gospel by the Internet. Therefore, I believe this sign is close to being fulfilled when we consider the impact of the Internet.

Imagine the great commission may almost be fulfilled - maybe in our lifetime. Remember that Jesus told His disciples,

... you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea

and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. Acts 1:8 (NASB)

Here we learn that Jesus commanded the disciples to start sharing the gospel and now we have almost completed it. But we must not become lazy. Instead we must press on. Even though the gospel about Jesus Christ is available on the Internet and is being made available through the printed page, that does not mean every person has actually heard the gospel. We must not forget that children are being born every day. We still have a great responsibility. We need to preach the gospel. We need to pray daily!

7) APOSTASY WILL INCREASE WORLDWIDE. The next sign is a disappointing one. Even though the gospel is spreading to the remotest part of the earth, both Jesus and the apostle Paul said that apostasy will occur worldwide. Here are Jesus' words from Matthew 24:11.

Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Matthew 24:11 (NASB)

1. Heather Sells. "2,000 More to Go: Wycliffe Bible Translators Keeps On Task During the Pandemic." CBN News. 03-04-2021.

2. How many languages are there in the world? Ethnologue. Languages of the World.

Now did you notice that Jesus said many will be misled by false prophets? We could say false teachers. You might be thinking about some false teachers on the television, radio or Internet. Paul echoed Jesus' prophecy this way in 1 Timothy 4:1,

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 . . . 1 Timothy 4:1 (NASB)

Notice that Paul also referred to the later times. Then he said the "Spirit explicitly says." That is, the Spirit was being precise or very accurate. The Spirit is warning believers there will be a great falling away from the faith in the last days. Now why did the Spirit tell us this sad news? The answer is so that we will not be discouraged, and so we can know the signs of the times. The Spirit was not referring to people losing their salvation. The Greek word Jesus used for "falling away" is the word from

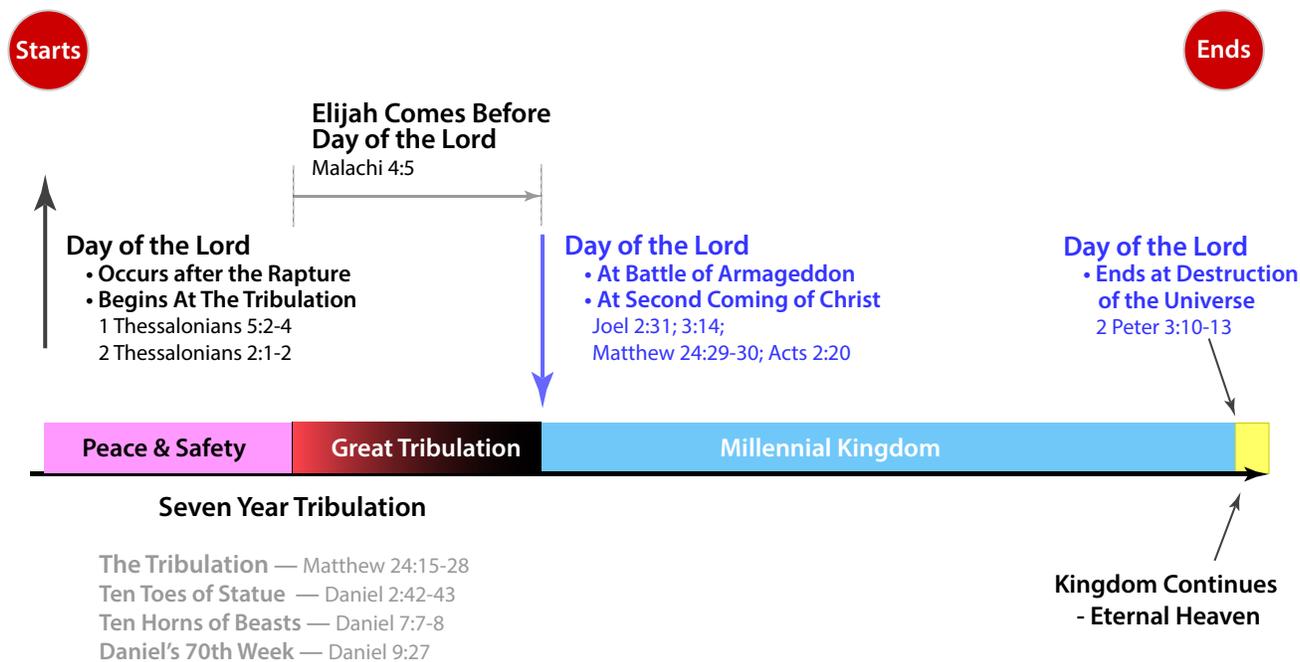
which we get the English word apostatize. Notice the definite article. Paul was not referring to the act of believing. He was referring to The Faith. Paul was referring to people falling away from The Faith or abandoning the Christian faith. Paul was not referring to people who will stop believing in Jesus. Remember that 1 John 2:19 reminds us that those who seemingly fall away were never Christians. The verse states,

They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. 1 John 2:19 (NASB)

This means those who once attended church and seemingly made a profession and then left the church were never Christians.

The message is that increasingly the world will become more intolerant of the Faith or we could say the gospel. Some people

The Day of the Lord



will stop attending church because of false teaching, deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. Sadly, false teaching is already on the increase even in churches that were once doctrinally sound and loved Christ. History demonstrates that this is a cycle. It is just a matter of time for a church to drift into error. Today, many pastors are rapidly abandoning the truth of the Word to attract a crowd. In Malachi 2:9, the priests of Israel were rebuked for being partial in their teaching. If we read the Minor Prophets, it appears they avoided teaching Scriptures that warned about sin and God's judgment. Frankly, those are not very popular topics today. It is disappointing that some teachers and pastors today now focus primarily on delivering moral platitudes and counseling tips from the pulpit. They ignore the negative passages about sin and tell people that God wants to make them wealthy and happy. The mantra is to keep everything positive and uplifting. It appears they are not students of the Major and Minor prophets. Maybe they have not read Moses' warnings to Israel that sin brings God's punishment. The point is that fewer pastors and teachers are teaching what God has actually said from His mouth. They redesign Scripture to please the ears. So, people do not really know what God has said! Instead, Scripture is used as a steppingstone to please people.

In our study in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, the apostle Paul referred to this sign too! Listen to what Paul wrote. He said,

... that you are not quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 2 Thessalonians 2:2-3 (NASB)

Paul says that the Day of the Lord will not come until two things happen. The first is that the apostasy must come first. We will discuss the other sign in this verse later. But for now, remember the Day of the Lord and the tribulation start at the same time.

Next, notice that Paul used the word "apostasy" near the end of verse 3. The Greek word for apostasy is *apostasia*. The basic meaning is "defection," "rebellion" or "a falling away."

That is, the meaning of *apostasia* is a rebellion against God. In the Greek, there is a definite article, "the," before *apostasia*. This means the apostasy in verse 3 is "The Apostasy." Paul is referring to "The Rebellion." It is a unique event that will occur in the future. Paul's point is that there will be tremendous rebellion against God just before the Day of the Lord or before the tribulation. This rebellion will occur both inside and outside the church.

Remember in Matthew 24:11, Jesus said "many" will be misled. The point is simple. People inside the church and unbelievers outside the church will be misled. This is already happening today. We tend to think false prophets are in the church and not outside the church. We know there are false teachers in the mainline churches that once held to biblical truth. But now they do not believe the Bible is without error. They do not believe Jesus is our God and Savior. They are only social clubs filled mainly with unbelievers.

Our media contain many false teachers. They are teaching error about the Bible and Jesus Christ. They distort historical facts about Christianity. The Discovery Channel has been caught making many false statements about the Bible and Christ. They quote other false teachers as authorities and ignore those who believe the Bible is the Word of God and without error. Their reporting is deceptive. They could choose Bible believing authorities, but they do not. Our museums distort the truth about the book of Genesis. Archaeologists routinely falsify findings about the evolutionary processes and archaeological evidence related to the Bible. Those who teach or write such lies are Satan's tools. In summary, the doctrines of demons are everywhere. Their teachings are deception.

The point is that the world is quickly rebelling in mass. The Pew Research Center reported on October 17, 2020 that there is a rapid decline in Christianity in the United States. They report that in the last ten years the number of people who identify themselves as Christians has dropped from 78% down to 65%. That does not seem too bad. But the truth is only 45% actually attend church at least once a year, and only 22% or less attend weekly.³

In Europe and Great Britain, where the Reformation once

3. "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace." Pew Research Center. October 19, 2020.

blossomed, just 7 percent of the population attends church.⁴ We are told the percentage of Christians is higher in Africa. That is great news, yet the sad truth is that the number of Christians is dropping worldwide.

The point is that as the gospel is spreading so is “The Rebellion.” What is worse is that fewer Christians are interested in sharing the gospel. Some Christians are more interested in being a leader in a church or serving God in the church than in sharing the gospel. They give so much time ministering inside the church that they do not have time to share the gospel outside the church. One would think that with all of the Bible studies that many Christians would be fired-up to share the gospel, but that is not true. The root problem is found in our pulpits. They are often shallow and focused on making attendees happy and comfortable. We are creating the illusion that God wants Christians to experience heaven now and not later. Believers are so comfortable they are disconnecting from unbelievers. Our churches are more interested in how many attend than in reaching the lost. Christians are not encouraged to share the gospel. Instead, we are encouraged to invite people to church or a Bible study so they can hear the gospel from the pastor. But this is not the root problem. The root problem is disobedience to God’s command. In summary, this sign is already happening.

8) UNITED STATES WILL TURN AGAINST ISRAEL. The eighth sign of the Lord’s coming is hinted at in many verses in the major and minor prophets and in the book of Revelation. Therefore, I will read just three passages. The first passage is Joel 3:2.

I will gather all the nations

And bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat.

Then I will enter into judgment with them there

On behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel,

Whom they have scattered among the nations;

And they have divided up My land.

Joel 3:2 (NASB)

Notice that Joel wrote “I will gather all the nations.” Now

notice the next passage. It is Zechariah 14:2.

For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. Zechariah 14:2 (NASB)

Once again, we are told that God said, “I will gather all the nations.” The third passage is Revelation 19:19. It is about the battle of Armageddon.

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Revelation 19:19 (NASB)

Now we are told the armies of the kings will be at the battle of Armageddon. This means that all three prophecies tell us that all the nations of the world will turn against Israel and eventually gather together at the Battle of Armageddon to annihilate the nation of Israel. So, watch for the nations of the world to increasingly unite against Israel. It is going to happen, but we do not know when this will occur.

Maybe the greatest indication this sign is being filled will occur when the United States turns against Israel. Why? This sign says the entire world will someday turn against Israel. So, watch what the United States does. Then the world’s hatred against Christians and Jews will greatly increase.

9) TEMPLE MAY EXIST IN JERUSALEM BEFORE THE TRIBULATION. The ninth sign of the second coming of Christ is described in Matthew 24:15. Jesus said,

Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand) . . . Matthew 24:15 (NASB)

In this verse Jesus said that in the middle of the tribulation, the Abomination of Desolation will occur in the holy place. In order for this sign to be fulfilled, Israel must control the temple mount and a temple must exist in Jerusalem before the middle of the tribulation. This means the temple may exist before the

4. Neha Sahgal. “500 years after the Reformation, 5 facts about Protestants around the world.” Pew Research Center. October 27, 2017.

rapture. It is also possible the temple may be built quickly in Jerusalem during the first 3.5 years of the tribulation. But if the temple exists before the rapture, then we will have a sign that the rapture is quickly approaching.

10) WORLDWIDE ECONOMIC CONTROL WILL OCCUR. The tenth sign of the Lord's coming is found in Revelation 13:16-18. Here is the passage,

And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six. Revelation 13:16-18 (NASB)

This passage reveals that at the middle of the tribulation, the antichrist will control everything that is bought and sold. Now you may wonder about the meaning of the number 666. I know some people think they know. But I do not know because the Bible does not tell us.

But as we watch the development of technology, we know this sign is quickly approaching. They will be able to embed something beneath or on top of the skin on either the forehead or on the hand. It will not be on some other part of your body. That part of the prophecy is clear. It will not be in our blood stream or in the mind. Somehow the mark on the hand or forehead will be used to control all financial transactions. What is the sign? Just watch! I believe it will become obvious soon.

11) PEACE WILL OCCUR IN THE MIDDLE EAST WITH ISRAEL. The eleventh sign of the Lord's coming is given to us in Daniel 9:27. The verse says,

And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate . . . Daniel 9:27 (NASB)

In a previous study we learned that the "he" in this verse is

the antichrist. We also learned that the covenant in this verse refers to a peace treaty that the antichrist will sign with Israel. When he does sign the peace treaty, the tribulation will start. That also begins the Day of the Lord. But this event has not yet happened. We are still waiting for this one.

In order for this peace treaty to occur, it appears that Israel must be given significant control of the city of Jerusalem or at least the temple mount. I think everyone knows that the nation of Israel did not occupy their land from the year A.D. 70 until 1948. Israel was not in the land for about 1900 years. Then the nation of Israel returned after World War II. This alone is a major sign that we are closer to the return of Christ. How could anyone have imagined that Israel would return to the land, except a student of the Old Testament prophecies?

In the year 2020, President Donald Trump successfully negotiated four peace treaties in the Middle East. He was working on some others during the last year he was president of the United States. It may be that if God had allowed him to remain in office, he would have achieved the peace treaty described in Daniel 9:27. Did God prevent him from being reelected in order to stop him from making additional peace treaties until the correct time? I do not have the answer, but prophecy tells us that at some point, someone will negotiate a peace treaty with Israel that will start the tribulation and the Day of the Lord. So, the eleventh sign of the Lord's coming is that a peace treaty will be made with Israel that will finally give the nation peace and safety from their enemies.

12) THE ANTICHRIST IS REVEALED. The twelfth sign of the Lord's coming is that the antichrist will be revealed. This sign is closely connected with the last sign since the one who makes the peace treaty will be the antichrist. That means we should be watching for someone to make a peace treaty with Israel. Now it is possible there could be a peace treaty with Israel that is not the peace treaty of Daniel 9:27. But at some point, someone will make the peace treaty that fulfills the prophecy of Daniel 9:27.

When that peace treaty with Israel is signed, the one who signs it will be the antichrist and Paul's statement in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 will be fulfilled. Now, before I read 2 Thessalonians 2:3, remember that Paul had just said the Day of the Lord had not started yet. Then he said,

Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction . . . 2 Thessalonians 2:3 (NASB)

That is, the day of the Lord will occur after the apostasy or after “The Rebellion” has occurred and after the man of lawlessness is revealed. But how will we know when the man of lawlessness has arrived? The answer is it will become obvious when the man of lawlessness signs the peace treaty with Israel. This verse also helps us understand that this man will be very wicked since he is described as lawless. This reveals two things about him. First, his character is wicked. But there is a deeper meaning. That gives us the second point. His behavior will be lawless. He will ignore the laws of his country. He will not honor treaties and agreements. He will deceive and lie. He will be a power hungry person. He wants power and control. We also know from Daniel 7 and Revelation 17 that the antichrist will initially lead a ten nation alliance that will control the world. Daniel 7 and Revelation 17 also reveal he will seize con-

trol over three other nations then rule the world. Therefore, I think believers will be able to identify him when they see a ten nation alliance become a reality, a national leader act wickedly and one who also makes a peace treaty with Israel. When this occurs, the tribulation will have started if the rapture has already occurred.

CONCLUSION. I want to conclude by reminding everyone that some of the Old Testament prophets prophesied that the Messiah, Jesus Christ, would be born, die for our sins, and be resurrected. History tells He did come, and those things did happen. The Old and New Testaments prophets also foretold that He would come again. Someday, history will record that He did come! Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

So, let us share the good news that Jesus died for our sins and rose again so that we can have eternal life! Let us tell people that He is coming again. He will rescue Christians from this evil world and judge unbelievers. Ultimately, His eternal kingdom will be established in righteousness!