

Session 6 Negative Spiritual Sign Trends in the Church and Society

I. REVIEW

- A. As the darkness increases in society, so the light of God’s glory will be manifested more and more. Most of the positive and negative trends that will *come in fullness* at the time of Jesus’ return are *occurring now* and will *continue to increase* until He comes.
- ²***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)***
- B. Eight times Jesus exhorted God’s people to watch and pray related to the end times (Mt. 24:42; 25:13; Mk. 13:9, 33, 34, 35, 37; Lk. 21:36; Rev. 16:15; cf. 1 Thes. 5:6; 2 Tim. 4:5). He gave this exhortation so that His people would grow in understanding and strength to stand and not fall to compromise (Lk. 21:34-36). We increase our understanding of what is happening by *watching* what the prophetic scriptures say will happen in the end times and seeing them progressively unfold. Watching speaks of focused attentiveness, which is far more intentional than an occasional, curious glance at what the Bible says will happen in that hour.
- ³³***“Take heed, watch and pray...³⁵ Watch...for you do not know when the master...is coming...³⁶lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. ³⁷And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”***
(Mk. 13:33-37)

II. JESUS IDENTIFIED 12 NEGATIVE SIGN TRENDS

- A. Jesus gave 12 negative sign trends that will bring distress to the nations and indicate the generation of His return (Mt. 24:4-14; Lk. 21:11, 25). Matthew described nine trends; Luke added three more. They include ***deception*** by false christs/prophets (Mt. 24:4-5, 11, 24), ***ethnic conflict*** (Mt. 24:7), ***economic warfare*** (Mt. 24:7), ***famines, pestilences, earthquakes*** (Mt. 24:8), ***hatred of believers*** (Mt. 24:9), ***relational breakdown*** in society (Mt. 24:10), ***lawlessness***, or a great increase in sinful behavior, rebellion, and anarchy in all spheres of society (Mt. 24:12), ***fearful sights*** (Lk. 21:11), ***great signs in the sky*** (the sun, moon, and stars) and ***disturbances in the sea*** (Lk. 21:11, 25).
- ⁵***“Many will come...saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many...⁷For 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...⁹and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake.¹⁰And then many will...hate one another...¹²And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.”*** (Mt. 24:4-12)
- ¹¹***“There will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven...²⁵in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring;²⁶men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things...”*** (Lk. 21:11, 25-26)
- B. Some of these trends have always existed, but in the end times they will have a distinct intensity that will make headlines to such a degree that they will constitute a prophetic sign with a message from the Lord that can be discerned by the Body of Christ worldwide. Now, for the first time, most of these trends and the developments leading to sign events are happening on a global basis.

III. LAWLESSNESS WILL ABOUND (MT. 24:12)

- A. The increase of evil is a prophetic sign of the end times. Humans will reach the highest potential for evil as sin reaches its fullest expression (Mt. 24:12; Rev. 9:21; 14:18; 17:5; 18:5; cf. Dan. 8:23).

¹²*“Because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.” (Mt. 24:12)*

²³*“In the latter time...when the transgressors have reached their fullness...” (Dan. 8:23)*

- B. In Psalm 2, David prophesied that the nations would rise up in rage against Jesus’ leadership (v. 2).

²*The kings of the earth...and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD...saying, ³“Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.” (Ps. 2:2-3)*

- C. The hostility of the rulers will be focused on seeking to remove the influence of God’s Word (v. 3) from society. They will see God’s Word in a negative light, as though it were “bonds” that enslave them and “cords” that bind them to His morality and His righteous ways. We see an acceleration of attack against God’s commands, seeking to remove all moral boundaries from society.

- D. The chief sins embraced in that hour will be murder, sorcery, immorality, and theft (Rev. 9:21).

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

1. **Murder:** Will be a primary sin on earth (Rev. 6:9-11; 7:13-14; 9:21; 13:7, 10; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 9:2; cf. Dan. 7:21, 25; 8:24; 11:33-35; 12:7, 10; Mk. 13:12-13; 2 Tim. 3:3 [brutal])

2. **Sorceries:** Occult and demon worship will abound (Rev. 13:4, 8, 12-15; 14:11; 16:13-14; 18:23).

3. **Immorality:** Sexual perversion will increase greatly (Rev. 9:20-21; 16:13; 17:2; 18:3; 19:2).

4. **Theft:** Legislation and persecution motivated by theft (Nazis used laws to steal property).

- E. Paul prophesied a great increase of wickedness and selfishness in the end times (2 Tim. 3:1-5). Self-centered narcissism will dominate the culture. People will lack self-control and be brutal. The distinguishing characteristic is being “lovers of pleasure, not lovers of God” (3:4).

¹*But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. (2 Tim. 3:1-4)*

- F. Sound doctrine teaches obedience and allegiance to Jesus; thus, it requires endurance. To *turn the ear away* means that people will no longer desire to hear what God intended in various passages.

³*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; ⁴and they will turn their ears away from the truth...⁵But you be watchful in all things. (2 Tim. 4:3-5)*

IV. THE DAYS OF NOAH (VIOLENCE) AND THE DAYS OF LOT (IMMORALITY)

- A. Jesus compared the generation of His return to the days of Noah and the days of Lot (Lk. 17:26, 28). Violence and immorality often occur together.

²⁶“*As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man...*”²⁸*Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold.*” (Lk. 17:26-28)

- B. **The days of Noah:** Those days were characterized by great violence (Gen. 6:11-13).

¹²*God looked upon the earth...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.”* (Gen. 6:12-13)

1. The last hundred years or so has been the most violent time in history—42 million deaths as a result of combat, plus 83 million deaths associated with genocide (ethnic cleansing) and tyranny (44 million died related to government-induced starvation). Violence includes terrorism, wars, genocide, civil disorder, abortion, domestic violence, and human trafficking.
2. **Ethnic conflict:** The ethnic wars in Cambodia, Albania, Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Sudan, along with Stalin’s purges and China’s Cultural Revolution exceeded 150 million deaths.
3. **War:** An unprecedented escalation of war in the 20th century made it the bloodiest time in history (with well over 100 million people killed). Since World War II, over 150 major wars have occurred, with a death toll of over 25 million people.
4. **Terrorism:** The militant Islamic leaders have targeted Israel, the USA, and Western Europe.
5. **Abortion:** There are 50 million abortions worldwide each year (over 100,000 per day). The abortion pill will cause this number to increase. In the USA, over 60 million babies have been aborted since 1973. Over 1.5 million babies are aborted per year (4,000 per day) in the US. Estimates of the total number of abortions worldwide (1920-2000) are well over 500 million.¹
6. **Human Trafficking:** Biblical prophecy describes slavery, which includes human trafficking, as a predominant sin in the end times (Rev. 18:13; cf. Joel 3:3). There are currently 35 million slaves on the earth. It is growing at a rate of nearly 5 million per year. Over 80% of human trafficking victims are female and children, forced into the rapidly growing sex trade that generates over \$40 billion per year.

¹¹“*And the merchants of the earth will weep...for no one buys their merchandise anymore: merchandise of gold...*”¹³*cattle and sheep...and bodies and souls of men.*” (Rev. 18:11-13)

³“*They have...given a boy as payment for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine.*” (Joel 3:3)

¹ “Deaths by Mass Unpleasantness: Estimated Totals for the Entire 20th Century.” Historical Atlas of the Twentieth Century Website

- C. **The days of Lot:** Those days were characterized by great immorality (Gen. 19).
1. Biblical prophecy describes immorality greatly increasing 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.
 2. **Pornography:** Over \$100 billion is spent annually on pornography worldwide—with 5 million pornographic websites that consist of over 500 million pages. The pornography industry is larger than the revenues of the top technology companies combined, including Microsoft, Google, Amazon, Ebay, Yahoo!, Apple, Netflix, and Earthlink.
 - a. Every second of every day, over 30,000 Internet users view pornography. These numbers are rapidly increasing worldwide.
 - b. Every 39 minutes a new pornographic movie is being created in the United States. There are 68 million daily pornographic search engine requests and nearly 3 billion pornographic emails sent daily.
 - c. The average age of first Internet exposure to pornography is 11 years old; over 80% of all 15–17-year-olds have had multiple exposures to it; over 90% of all 8–16-year-olds have viewed some pornography online—most often while doing homework.
 - d. Holograms and virtual reality will enable people to experience far more sexual perversion.
 3. **Forbidding marriage:** Paul prophesied that the institution of marriage would be outlawed in various places in the end times (1 Tim. 4:3). There is currently an assault on the definition and institution of marriage itself from activist homosexuals seeking to redefine marriage legally.
¹Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, ²speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, ³forbidding to marry... (1 Tim. 4:1-3)
 4. **Breakdown of the family:** The divorce rate is exploding worldwide (in the US it is 50%). Jesus prophesied that family members would betray one another (Mt. 24:10).
¹⁰“Then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.” (Mt. 24:10)
 5. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention website reported in 2006 that there were almost 20 million new sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and infections occurring each year. Cases of three nationally notifiable STDs—chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis—have increased for the first time since 2006, according to data published by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in the 2014 STD Surveillance Report, one by as much as 15%.
 6. Tony Perkins spoke about Obama's “cultural time bombs” as destroying America morally and culturally (Feb. 2016). He warned about the imminent cultural and moral demise of the USA.

V. PERSECUTION AGAINST BELIEVERS

- A. Jesus prophesied that true believers will be hated in all nations of the earth (Mt. 24:9).
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.” (Mt. 24:9)***
- B. **Martyrdom:** The amount of persecution will be unique in the generation in which 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; cf. Mt. 10:21-22, 28; 24:9; Lk. 12:4-7; 21:16-19). According to the *World Christian Encyclopedia* (2001), the number of martyrs recorded over 1,900 years of church history was nearly 25 million. In the 20th century alone, there were over 45 million martyrs.
⁹***When He opened the fifth seal, I saw...those who had been slain for the word of God...***
¹⁰***They cried...saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood...?”***¹¹***...it was said to them that they should rest...until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed. (Rev. 6:9-11)***
- C. I do not believe the majority of believers will be martyred, but each will face the possibility and have to decide if they will stand for Jesus. This will have a sanctifying effect on many believers.
³³***“They shall fall by sword...”***³⁵***Some of those of understanding shall fall [martyrdom], to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end.” (Dan. 11:33-35)***
- D. **Anti-Semitism:** The Hebrew prophets foretold that Jerusalem would be persecuted by all the nations and be at the center of world controversy (Zech. 12:3, 9; 14:1-3; cf. Joel 3:2, 12; Zeph. 3:8). They also prophesied a significant increase of Arab hostility against Israel (Ezek. 35:1-15; Joel 3:1-7).
²***I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken...Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant...shall not be cut off from the city. (Zech. 14:2)***

VI. FALLING AWAY FROM THE FAITH

- A. Jesus and Paul prophesied about a falling away from the faith in the end times. This prophetic word is one of the greatest challenges facing the Church at this hour (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 demons” is a teaching inspired by a demon.
¹***Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons. (1 Tim. 4:1)***
- B. Paul highlighted two prophetic signs to indicate the time of Jesus’ coming—a falling away from the faith combined with the revealing of the Antichrist on the world stage.
³***Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [Jesus’ coming] will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin [Antichrist] is revealed. (2 Thes. 2:3)***

- C. Jesus prophesied about an increased deception in the end times (Mt. 24:9-13). There is a trend in every denomination related to an increase of doctrine and practice that contradicts the Scripture. Many ministries are currently denying the Scripture as the final authority of doctrine and practice. There is a significant increase of ministries denying the deity of Christ, His death as the only means of salvation, and the reality of hell, as well as ordaining homosexuals and supporting gay marriage.
- ⁴“Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁵For many will come in My name...and will deceive many...¹¹Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many... (Mt. 24:4-5, 11)***
- D. Allegiance to Jesus and loving the truth are primary issues in the end times (2 Thes. 2:10). The body of Christ is to greatly value the dignity of all people and honor their religious liberties. Yet we are not willing to let them go to hell by refusing to love them in telling them the truth about Jesus.

VII. THE MOVE TOWARD A ONE-WORLD RELIGION

- A. One part of Satan’s end-time plan is for him and the Antichrist to be worshiped by all nations.
- ⁴They worshiped the Dragon [Satan]...and the Beast [Antichrist], saying, “Who is like the Beast?”...⁸All who dwell on the earth will worship him [Antichrist]. (Rev. 13:4-8)***
- B. There are two stages in Satan’s plan to be worshiped by all. He knows that it is too big a step for those with a religious heritage (Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, etc.) to suddenly become Satan worshipers. Thus he will first deceive them into joining a worldwide religion of tolerance, without absolutes, that teaches that all religions lead to salvation. This is often referred to as the *harlot Babylon one-world religion*. The growing movement toward a one-world religion will lead to this.
- ¹“Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, ²with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication”...⁴The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold...having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. ⁵On her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, the mother of harlots...⁶ I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints. (Rev. 17:1-6)***
- C. Spiritual harlotry is synonymous with idolatry and false religion (1 Cor. 10:20-21; cf. 1 Chr. 5:25; Ezek. 23:37; Hos. 4:12-13). Idolatry was usually combined with immorality (orgies), drugs, demonic rituals, and the sacrifice of animals or humans. In order to be guilty of harlotry, the harlot’s followers must claim to have once had a relationship with the true God.
- D. The voluntary harlot religion will be replaced by a mandatory Antichrist religion. At first, people will voluntarily join the *harlot Babylon* one-world religion of tolerance (Rev. 17). Then, all will be forced to be Satan worshipers in the *Antichrist religion* (Rev. 13:4, 8, 15).