

## ***Session 8 The Birth Pains: 15 Trends (Mt. 24:1-14)***

### **I. REVIEW**

- A. Scripture describes three prophetic time frames in the end times. This can be seen by comparing Matthew 24 with 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 and Daniel 9:27. The first time frame is the *beginning of birth pains*, occurring over a generation, leading up to the final seven years of this age which is made up of two periods each lasting 3½ years—*counterfeit world peace* and the *Great Tribulation*.
1. ***Beginning of birth pains*** (Mt. 24:4-8; Mk. 13:5-8; Lk 21:8-11)—leading to the final 7 years
  2. ***Counterfeit world peace*** (increased labor pains)—the first 3½ years of the final 7 years
  3. ***The Great Tribulation*** (hard labor pains)—the last 3½ years of the final 7 years
- B. The “baby” that is birthed includes the end-time harvest of souls, the purifying of the Church, and the return of Jesus to rule and fill the earth with God’s glory in the millennial kingdom. The pressure of the birth pains also creates the context for the Antichrist to come forth with “solutions.”
- C. The second time frame in the end times will be a time of *counterfeit worldwide peace and safety*. It will come just before the third and final time frame (Great Tribulation) and will continue through the first 3½ years of the final 7 years of this age. This period begins with the Antichrist appearing as a “man of peace” solving many international conflicts and establishing world peace (1 Thes. 5:3).
- <sup>3</sup>***When they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction [Great Tribulation] comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. (1 Thes. 5:3)***
- <sup>27</sup>***Then he [Antichrist] shall confirm a covenant with many [nations and Israel] for one week [7 years]; but in the middle of the week [3½ years] he shall bring an end to sacrifice [in the temple]... (Dan. 9:27)***
- D. Haggai prophesied five areas that the Lord will shake in a way that will destroy the strength of Gentile kingdoms (2:22): heaven (sky), earth, sea, dry land (vegetation), and all nations (2:6).
- <sup>6</sup>***“...I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; <sup>7</sup>and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations [Jesus], and I will fill this temple with glory,” says the Lord of hosts...<sup>22</sup>I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms. (Hag. 2:6-7, 22)***
- E. ***15 birth pains***: Jesus identified 10 trends as the beginning of birth pains (Mt. 24:4-8; Mk. 13:5-8, Lk. 21:8-11) and 5 trends that will escalate greatly during the final 7 years of this age. The 15 birth pains describe the increased turmoil in a sin-filled social order. Earthquakes, famines, and pestilence are mentioned as trends that will cause chaos in society to increase greatly.
- F. ***Premise***: 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.
- G. We resist the negative sign trends by praying *against* them and *for mercy* to those affected by them.

## II. OVERVIEW OF THE BIRTH PAINS: 15 TRENDS

- A. Believers are to recognize when these things *begin* in the generation Jesus returns (Lk. 21:28, 32).
- B. **You will hear of:** As many of these *trends*, and the *news about them*, accelerate at the same time, making global headline news, we are to understand that we are in a unique season in history. These signs make a greater impact as a prophetic sign as more people hear of them and are aware of them.
- <sup>6</sup>And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars...<sup>7</sup>For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes... (Mt. 24:6-8)**
1. The very knowledge of these trends and events will shift the response of people individually and corporately and will affect their reactions, decisions, and even governmental policies.
  2. The knowledge of all these negative trends will have an accumulated impact on society.
- C. Jesus identified *10 trends* as the *beginning of birth pains* (Mt. 24:4-8; Mk. 13:5-8, Lk. 21:8-11). Matthew mentioned seven trends and Luke added three more—“commotions” (21:9), “fearful sights” which includes great signs from heaven, and “perplexity at the roaring seas” (21:11, 25).
- <sup>5</sup>For many will come in My name, saying, “I am the Christ,” and will deceive many. <sup>6</sup>And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled...<sup>7</sup>For nation will rise against nation [ethnic conflict], and kingdom against kingdom [economic warfare]. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes...<sup>8</sup>All these are the beginning of sorrows. (Mt. 24:4-8)**
- <sup>9</sup>But when you hear of wars and commotions...<sup>11</sup>And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven...<sup>25</sup>And...earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring. (Lk 21:9-11, 25)**
1. *Deception and false christs:* Many will come in Jesus’ name and will deceive many (v 5).
  2. *Wars:* military and political conflict (Mt. 24:6; Mk. 13:7; Lk. 21:9)
  3. *Ethnic conflict:* civil disorder and racism as nation (ethnos) rises against nation (Mt. 24:7)
  4. *Economic warfare:* economic-related hostility, aggression, and conflict (Mt. 24:7)
  5. *Famines:* massive food shortages (Mt. 24:7)
  6. *Pestilences (disease):* The horrors of biological warfare will bring this to a new intensity.
  7. *Great earthquakes:* great in destruction and loss of life (Lk. 21:11)
  8. *Commotions:* chaotic events in society and creation (Lk. 21:9)
  9. *Fearful sights as great signs from heaven:* signs in the sky and related to the weather (Lk 21:11)
  10. *Perplexity at the roaring of the sea* (Lk 21:25)
- D. Jesus identified *five trends* that will increase in the final 7 years (after the beginning of pains). This includes the second time frame (counterfeit world peace) and the third time (Great Tribulation). The five trends in the final 7 years include a great increase of *persecution* (24:9), *social anarchy* (24:10), *false prophets* (24:11), *lawlessness abounding* (24:12), and *love growing cold* (24:12).
- <sup>9</sup>“They will...kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. <sup>10</sup>And then many will be offended, will betray... and will hate one another. <sup>11</sup>Then many false prophets will rise up...<sup>12</sup>And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold...” (Mt. 24:9-12)**

### III. THE BEGINNING OF BIRTH PAINS: 10 TRENDS

- A. **Deception and false christs:** Jesus warned more about deception than anything else related to the end times (Mt. 24:4-5, 11, 24). False christs are those who claim to be one of God's anointed (*christ* means *anointed*). "Many" includes so-called deliverers, political and military leaders, social reformers, warlords, and cult leaders, etc.

<sup>4</sup>**Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. <sup>5</sup>For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ' [God's anointed], and will deceive many. (Mt. 24:4-5)**

<sup>6</sup>**For many will come in My name, saying, "I am He," and will deceive many. (Mk. 13:6)**

1. The word *many* is used twice, but in different ways. Many people will see themselves as commissioned by God to bring change to their nation and to deliver people from oppression.
  2. "Many" will follow them: some will have a large following, as "many" are deceived by them.
- B. **Wars:** military and political conflicts (Mt. 24:6; Mk. 13:7; Lk. 21:9)

1. Since World War II, over 150 major wars have occurred with a death toll of over 25 million. Since the Berlin Wall came down (1989), conflicts have forced 50 million people from their homes worldwide. There were over 70 wars in 1995 (double from 1989). 1993 saw a record number of wars fought in one year (29).
2. There have always been wars, but now there are weapons capable of destroying all life.

- C. **Ethnic conflict:** civil disorder, racism, and genocide as nation rises against nation (Mt. 24:7)

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

1. The Greek word for *nation* in Mt. 24:7 is *ethnos* which translates ethnic or tribe. The ethnic wars in Cambodia, Albania, Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Sudan are examples of this.
2. Ethnic conflict and civil disorder, fueled by racism, are continually making world headlines. They are increasing in number and frequency.
3. Examples of significant death tolls—Sudan 2 million (1983-2005); Ethiopia 1 million (1983-85); Uganda 550,000 (1969-79); Nigeria 1 million (2010-); North Korea 2 million (1994-98); China 35 million (1958-62); Afghanistan 800,000 (1980-88); Indonesia 500,000 (1965-66); Tibet 1.6 million (1949-79); Bosnia-Herzegovina 200,000 (1992-95); Rwanda 800,000 (1994); Cambodia 2 million (1975-79); Syria 470,000 (2011-).

- D. **Economic warfare:** This is economic-related hostility, aggression, and conflict (Mt. 24:7), or making war in the arena of national resources. The greatest influence of a government or kingdom is often financial. Economic warfare can devastate a nation. For example, economic warfare was used in the sanctions against South Africa, North Korea, Iran, etc. resulted in much hardship.

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

- E. **Famines:** Massive food shortages (Mt. 24:7; Mk. 13:8; Lk. 21:11). Nearly one billion people suffer from malnutrition (2005). The numbers are projected to increase to 2 billion by 2025 (greatest famine in history). Over 25,000 people die every day from hunger-related causes. Nearly 5 million die of starvation every year. Famine in Ethiopia and Sudan are in the headlines regularly.

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

1. Over 500 million people do not have enough clean drinking water, leading to more disease. Water shortages have reduced the global food supply by 10 percent. The world's population is growing, yet its agricultural capabilities are now diminishing.
2. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, almost 900 million people were under-nourished between 2002-2004<sup>1</sup>. In 2007 in Sub-Saharan Africa, one in every three persons were undernourished, with famine also afflicting South Asia, who reported nearly 300 million underfed, followed by East Asia (225 million).<sup>2</sup>

- F. **Pestilences (disease):** This includes epidemic diseases and biological warfare (Mt. 24:7; Lk. 21:11).

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

1. The Center for Biosecurity: “Bio-terrorism is one of the most pressing problems on the planet today.” Experts warn that one of the greatest threats in the world today is biological warfare.
2. Nations are developing genetically engineered viruses and bacteria that cannot be stopped by antibiotics. According to intelligence reports, some terrorist groups plan to use smallpox, since many have not been vaccinated against it.
3. Deadly new strains of malaria, tuberculosis, and cholera are becoming resistant to all known antibiotics and are killing millions. Diseases are growing in an unprecedented way globally, especially viral killers like AIDS and ebola. Cancer was virtually unheard of hundreds of years ago; now over 100 different kinds of cancer kill over 5 million people per year.
4. Since the beginning of the AIDS pandemic (1981), almost 80 million people have contracted HIV, and almost 40 million have died of AIDS-related causes. Over 35 million are now living with HIV. In 2014, about 1 million people died from AIDS, and about 2 million were newly infected with HIV (this is down from 2 million deaths and 3 million new affected in 2005, but the number has increased by 50 percent among adolescents).

- G. **Earthquakes:** There is no evidence that earthquakes are increasing, but their destructive impact is, and they are making world headlines, thus being “heard about” (24:6) much more than in the past. Luke added the word “great” to qualify the earthquakes—great in power, destruction of property, and in loss of life (Lk. 21:11). Earthquakes can shift the global mood drastically and create a desperation in a greater number of people for governmental and societal change.

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

<sup>1</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations food security statistics, 2006

<sup>2</sup> World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development, p. 94

- H. **Commotions:** Chaotic events in society (Lk. 21:9); it is uncertain what this trend includes, but many different activities could fit into this trend. The Greek word *akatastasia* means instability, or a state of disorder and disturbance. It is translated as *commotions* (KJV, NKJV, Berean Literal Bible), *uprisings* (NIV, Young’s Literal Translation), *rebellions* (NET, Berean Study Bible), *tumults* (ESV, ASV), *disturbances* (NASB), *revolutions* (Intl. Standard), and *insurrections* (New Living Trans.).
1. It speaks of trends or events that cause pressure in society other than wars and ethnic conflict, and includes communal violence involving militias, paramilitary organizations, and more.
  2. Escalation of border disputes, social and religious conflicts, and international strife.
  3. Islamic terrorist leaders have especially targeted Israel, the USA, and the European Union.
- I. **Fearful sights as great signs from heaven:** Includes terrifying weather (Lk 21:11, 25).  
<sup>11</sup>*There will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven...<sup>25</sup>And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars... (Lk. 21:11, 25)*
1. The Greek word *phobetron* is where we get the English word *phobia*, or *fear*.
  2. Fearful sights are terrorizing happenings, something that causes one to be struck with fear.
  3. Fearful sights will cause hearts to faint for fear (Lk. 21:26)—such as expressions of cruelty, violence, and perversion, etc. And demons appearing to people to torment them.
  4. Biological or chemical warfare released on masses.
  5. The airplanes hitting the World Trade Center and crushing of people that followed.
  6. In the Great Tribulation, the sea and fresh water will turn to blood, the sun will scorch people, darkness will come, and people will gnaw their tongues in pain (Rev. 16).
- J. **Perplexity at the roaring of the sea** (Lk 21:25): English translations vary and include *perplexity* at the roaring of the sea (NAS, NIV, ESV, American Standard, New Living Translation), *bewildered* by the roaring sea (Holman Christian), *confused* by the roaring of the sea (Intl. Standard), *anxious* over the roaring of the sea (NET) and *with perplexity*, sea roaring... (NKJV, Young’s).  
<sup>25</sup>*There will be...distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring (Lk. 21:25)*

#### IV. THE FINAL SEVEN YEARS: 5 TRENDS

- A. **Persecution and hatred of believers** (Mt. 24:9). This speaks of a whole new level of intensity when all nations hate and kill Christians—nothing like this has ever happened in history.  
<sup>9</sup>*They will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. (Mt. 24:9)*

1. **Deliver you up to be killed:** This speaks of legislation. Laws will be hostile to the Church. Death sentences for Christians will part of the legal code, because God’s people will resist the man (Antichrist) who seemingly brought “peace” to society and to many nations.
  2. The number of martyrs over 1,900 years was nearly 25 million. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were almost 50 million martyrs. Persecution of believers continues to increase in parts of China, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Russia, North Korea, Sudan, the Middle East, etc.
  3. The pressures against believers will result in many falling away from the faith at the end of the age (Mt. 24:9-13; 2 Thes. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:1-7; 4:3-5; 2 Pet. 2:1-3).
- B. **Social anarchy:** The social order will be filled with offense, betrayal; hate will dominate society (Mt. 24:10). Relational breakdown in society is even now making world headlines. Imagine how the KGB and Gestapo seduced their informants to betray family members. This does not refer specifically to hatred of believers, but to people in general being offended, and betraying and hating one another. After people begin to hate their family because of their faith, they lose their bearings.
- <sup>10</sup> **Then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. (Mt. 24:10)**
- C. **False prophets** (Mt. 24:11): False prophets will be demonically empowered ambassadors of the Antichrist. False christs are not emphasized here since the Antichrist will be the premier leader. Many will be given over to a spirit of delusion (2 Thes. 2:10).
- <sup>11</sup> **Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. (Mt. 24:11)**
- D. **Lawlessness abounding** Sin will reach its fullest expression (Mt. 24:12). The increase of evil is a sign, as humans reach the highest potential for evil (Rev. 9:21; 14:18; 18:5; cf. Dan. 8:23; 12:10). Paul spoke of people with a seared conscience (1 Tim. 4:1-2). This includes people being “given over” to sin (Rom. 1:24-28). Global blasphemy of Spirit will occur at the sixth bowl (Rev. 16).
- E. **Encouragements:** Jesus injected two strong encouragements: first (v. 13), those who endure or who refuse to quit will be saved or delivered (24:13); second a witness of the gospel of the kingdom that declares the coming of the glorious King will be given in every nation (24:14).
- <sup>13</sup> **But he who endures to the end shall be saved. <sup>14</sup> And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.**  
(Mt. 24:13-14)
- F. **Gospel preached to all nations:** Jesus connected the timing of His return to the preaching of the gospel to all nations (12,000 people groups). Leading mission leaders project that the gospel will be preached to every people group by 2020. The greatest harvest of souls in history is occurring now. The Bible has been translated into 2,000+ languages (used by 98% of the world’s population).