

Session 7 The Big Picture: Three Time Frames in the End Times

I. REVIEW

*Well, tonight we are teaching the **Biblical Signs of the Times** course; it is a twelve-session course. Here we are on session seven. I want to address the issue of Matthew 24 which is the teaching in which Jesus gave more details on the end times than any other teaching that He gave in the Bible. I wanted to have it here in context to the **Stand Conference**.*

We'll start with a little review for those who are just visiting with us. And those that are visiting—we never do all the notes, and so do not kind of figure out where we are and think, “Oh my goodness, we’ve got a long way to go!” No, no, the notes are for you to study later. By the way, tonight we will have a short Q&A right after the teaching. Stuart will come up, and we will put some open microphones out and do this for a short time. Then Jay and the team will come back after that, and they will lead worship and have ministry time up until ten o’clock. Then at 10:00 pm another team is coming on, and we will stay here until midnight. The prayer room will be here from ten o’clock until midnight, then we bring the prayer room back down to where it normally is down at the shopping mall.

- A. Many today neglect the subject of the biblical signs of the times despite Jesus emphasizing the need to recognize them and discern the times (Mt. 16:1-4; 24:32-44; Lk. 19:41-44; 21:34-36). Jesus, the apostles, and the Old Testament prophets prophesied both event and trend signs in the end times. Most of the trends that will *come in fullness* at the time of Jesus’ return are *occurring now*.

Okay, just a quick review. Many believers today neglect the subject of the biblical signs of the times, though Jesus emphasized their value and their importance. Jesus, the apostles, and the Old Testament prophets all foretold the events and the trends that would happen as indicators of the generation in which the Lord returns. I mean what a remarkable gift that Jesus gave us the information; the apostles by the Holy Spirit did as well and so did the Old Testament prophets.

These signs are to be signposts that create urgency, because our natural way as humans is to get stuck in the bubble of our own life, in our own concerns, our own goals, our own agendas, our own problems. That is normal for all of us. When we see there is a biblical storyline, a biblical narrative happening in the nations, it makes us pause and take a step back. It gives us urgency to be participating in that larger story that is bigger than our own individual life and bubble. That is what the signs of the times are meant to do. We need to understand them in order to be stirred up by them and to be activated by the truths that are associated with them.

- B. Jesus’ most complete teaching on the end times is in Matthew 24-25 (also Mk. 13; Lk. 17; 21). Jesus prophesied both the distress of Jerusalem in AD 70 and at the end of the age in one prophecy. Some emphasize one of these two time frames to the exclusion of the other. The distress of Jerusalem in AD 70 gives a prophetic picture of its future pressures in the generation Jesus returns.

Jesus’ most complete teaching on the end times is right here in Matthew 24-25. These two chapters comprise one message. Now some theologians say—and I am saying this because you will run into this argument—all the negative stuff in this message happened in AD 70. Because in AD 70 the city was conquered by Rome; the city was destroyed, and the temple was burned. It was a tremendously tragic thing that happened in Jerusalem. These theologians say that Jesus was only talking about AD 70.

Well, I believe the biblical answer and the right approach is that the tragedy of AD 70 is described by this prophecy, but that this prophecy was only partially fulfilled in AD 70. The crisis of AD 70 gives us a prophetic picture of the great distress at the end of the age. So we are to look at AD 70 to gain insight to see how intense things will be at the end of the age.

- C. We ask the Spirit for wisdom concerning what to do specifically to bring His power and blessing in context to each of the trends related to the birth pains as they impact the cities for which we pray. We expose and resist the negatives by intercession, proclamation, and actions in the opposite spirit.

So the practical response to Matthew 24 is that we are asking the Holy Spirit, “What are we supposed to do?” We are going to look at the birth pains. Some translations say the birth pangs, some say the birth pains. You can use any translation you want. There are fifteen of them that are described in Matthew 24 together with the parallel passages of Mark 13 and Luke 21. It is all the same message, different renditions of it that are ninety percent overlap but a little bit distinct, so you have to put all three chapters together. I have all that on the notes if you are interested in that.

We want to know if these trends are increasing and how we are supposed to resist and expose the negative. There are negative things we are to point out and expose by the Holy Spirit. We are to act in the opposite spirit of the negative things that the enemy is doing in society. Sometimes the Body of Christ does not realize there is a big narrative, a big storyline going on. The devil is sowing his seeds. Believers who get captured in the drama of their own life and forget there is a bigger story end up acting in the wrong spirit and according to the negative trends that Jesus described. This is disaster. Do not move in that direction, but rather understand that the enemy is moving and men are sinning like no other time in history. So expose it, stand against it, and act in the opposite spirit of it.

II. THREE PROPHETIC TIME FRAMES IN THE END TIMES

- A. We will better understand the birth pangs by understanding the three prophetic time frames in the end times. They gave us insight into the general sequence of what is coming.

This session tonight is to equip us. Next week will look at some of the fifteen birth pains. We will look at them in far more detail next week. So, if you want to track with us through the internet, you can participate with this. Here I want to give you the big picture, the flow of thought of what it is happening in Matthew 24. Because remember Matthew 24 is one of Jesus’ last messages that He gave His disciples. Here in Matthew 24 and then the upper room, those are His final two messages. So not only is it a very important message because it is one of His final ones, but it is the one in which He gave most detail about the end times.

So we want to understand this chapter. We want to understand the birth pangs, the birth pains, and how they operate. We want to identify the ones that Jesus highlighted so that we can pay attention to their intensity and understand what time they emerge in God’s end-time purpose and what relationship they have one to another.

- B. Scripture speaks of a time frame that is called the “beginning of birth pains” (Mt. 24:8, NIV). The Greek word is translated as *birth pain* (NIV) or *sorrows* (NKJV). It is to be compared with the increasing trauma a woman experiences in childbirth. There is great pain but the joy of bringing forth a new baby makes it worth the pain (Jn. 16:21). The Bible uses the metaphor of the birthing process to describe how the coming of the millennial kingdom arrives (Mt. 24:8; cf. Jer. 30:5-7). The trauma in the end times results in a new world order being birthed at the Millennium.

⁶You will hear of wars and rumors of wars...⁷Nation will rise against nation...There will be famines and earthquakes...⁸All these are the beginning of birth pains. (Mt. 24:8, NIV)

⁶Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor...? ⁷Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it. (Jer. 30:5-7)

Jesus spoke of a timeframe called the “beginning of birth pangs,” the beginning of birth pains, here in Matthew 24. You know the passage quite well; it is very familiar. Verse 6, He says, “You will hear of wars, and you will hear of rumors of wars. Nation will rise against nation, famines, earthquakes, pestilence,” etc.

Verse 8, here is the key phrase, “All of these are the beginning of birth pains.” Now if there is a beginning of birth pains, then there is an increase of birth pains. There is a generation, throughout an entire generation, where these fifteen birth pains are identifiable. They increase. There is a beginning, there is an intensity, and there is the hard labor, the very final three-and-a-half years of the Great Tribulation where things come to the most intense situation of all of human history. Not only is there the pain of the birth, there is the glory of the baby.

You know some people look at the birth, the birth pains, and they think, “How horrible!” There is a baby on the other end of this. Of course the baby is the new world order where Jesus is on the earth in His physical resurrected body governing all the nations of the earth, filling the earth with the glory of God. That is the child that is being born. There is a whole new order coming to the planet. When that order is established, it will never ever be disrupted. Never again will it be disrupted. There will be a new order on the planet, God's people. We will be with Jesus with physical resurrected bodies. Heaven is coming down to the earth, the book of Revelation says. Jesus rules from Jerusalem. For billions and billions of years the baby, the new world order, will be evident. There is a transition period for one generation called the birth process where human history and this earth as we know it and the populations of the earth go through this period of transition to the age to come. It is a very, very intense time.

Jeremiah 30 says it is not just the nations as collective whole, but individual people who will experience the intensity of that birth, that birthing process. Here in Jeremiah 30:6, Jeremiah said, “Ask now and see whether a man is ever in labor with a child.” He is seeing like an open vision, I assume. He says, “I see every man, and his hands on his loins. He is like a woman in labor.” It is not just the society in birth pains and the earth in birth pains. Human beings will experience this as many of them have a tremendous amount of pressure and intensity in these final hours of natural history.

Verse 7, Jeremiah says, “Alas! The day is great.” There is no time frame like this in all of history. It is called “the time of Jacob's trouble,” because Jacob means the nation of Israel. Israel will be at the forefront of the trouble, but all of the nations will be in the trouble and in the distress. However, God says, “Good news! My people Jacob, which means Israel, will be saved.”

There is a baby born, there is a nation saved, and there is a new world order. Salvation and redemption come to the whole earth, the Body of Christ, the believing community, and to the nation of Israel. There is salvation on the other end of this thing. So there is a glorious reason for the baby, but the intensity is real.

- C. Jesus spoke of three distinct time frames in the end times. We can see this clearly by comparing Matthew 24 with 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 and Daniel 9:27. The first time frame is related to the *beginning of birth pains* which occurs over a generation leading up the final seven years of this age, which in turn is made up of two distinct periods each lasting 3½ years.

Scripture describes three time frames. If you get these three time frames—and they are pretty simple—if you get these clear in your mind, you will be able to understand the flow of thought and where things are happening in Matthew 24. If you do not have these three distinct prophetic time frames clear when you read Matthew 24, you can kind of get lost and feel you do not know where we are or how it unfolds. You get these three things clear and I believe you will have a far greater appreciation and understanding of what is happening.

These three time frames can be clearly understood when you compare Matthew 24 with 1 Thessalonians 5 and Daniel 9. You put those three passages together. You do not have to remember those passages; that is why I put them in the notes. You can look at them later. Put the verses together and check it all out, and talk about it with some friends. Put the verses together and become familiar with it.

1. **Beginning of birth pains** (Mt. 24:4-8; Mk. 13:5-8; Lk 21:8-11)—leading to the final 7 years

Of the three prophetic time frames, number one is the beginning of the birth pains. This goes on and lasts for an entire generation. The beginning of the birth pangs precedes those final seven years. The beginning of the birth pangs is not the final seven years; that is the intensity of the birth pangs. The heavy labor is those final seven years. There is a generation in which it is building, it is building. It is not like the trouble and the pressure comes and then disappears; it keeps on building.

Now in my personal opinion—it is not a prophecy—I believe we are in the early days of that generation. If that is true, then these signs are very relevant to us because we know there is a glorious outcome, a baby that is born, a whole new world order, the salvation not just of Israel but of the nations, and the Body of Christ entering into the realm of the resurrection coming to fullness, all the promises of God.

One of the important parts about these birth pangs that Jesus is saying is that when these things begin to intensify, no matter what a politician says, they are going to continue to intensify. Politicians like to say that tomorrow is a new day and everything is going to get better. We are hearing a lot of that today. In all the nations, whenever there is an election, you are always hearing about how good it is going to be tomorrow. Well, Jesus said it is going to get far more intense tomorrow. I want to say this: we are never going back to how things were in the 1980s and 1990s. The pressure on the earth is in a progression of intensifying, intensifying. We need to adjust our expectation to it.

Though, in the midst of the intensity and the pressure, the greatest move of the Holy Spirit in all of history is happening as well. The great harvest is coming in, and the Church is going to be walking in maturity. Compromise is going to be completely out of the Church before the Lord returns. He is going to use the intensity in the nations, what is happening in the nations, along with the outpouring of the Spirit together to produce this purifying effect on the Church and this great harvest of all the nations.

Well, the beginning of birth pains, I believe we are in that generation right now. That is, I have that belief because of my observation of the signs of the times, not just the birth pains, but the whole course we are doing here on Friday nights, the whole twelve sessions. There are quite a few more signs we have not covered yet in this class.

2. **Counterfeit world peace** (increased labor pains)—the first 3½ years of the final 7 years

After the generation of the birth pains, there is a time period of world peace and safety. You may think, “Now wait a second, you just said that it is going to get worse and worse and worse.” There is going to be a very temporary reprieve that is being orchestrated under the leadership of the Antichrist. It will appear as though there is world peace for a minute. Well, it is three-and-a-half years, but I call it a minute.

Unbelievers will be rejoicing, and they will be saying that hostilities are over, nation between nation and terrorism, that the problems are solved in terms of those conflicts of violence. Things are established and, with war being laid aside, our economy will recover. There will be cooperation in the nations. But, it will be only a counterfeit peace and safety. It will not be real. It will be under the leadership of the Antichrist and energized by a demonic agenda of hell.

Believers will not buy it. A matter of fact, believers will expose it and that will cause a lot of pressure back on the Church, which actually purify the Church. because the Lord will require the Church to expose it as counterfeit. That is going to create tremendous pressure on the Church in that season.

3. **The Great Tribulation** (hard labor pains)—the last 3½ years of the final 7 years

After the counterfeit world peace and safety is over, then there will be the Great Tribulation which lasts for three-and-a-half years, which is the second half of that seven-year period that most of us are familiar with.

III. THE FIRST TIME FRAME: THE BEGINNING OF BIRTH PANGS (MT. 24:4-8)

- A. The beginning of birth pains occurs across a generation just before the final 7-year period starts. Israel is the timetable for God’s prophetic plans, the reference point for understanding redemptive history. Therefore, my opinion is that the beginning of birth pains may have started either in 1948 when Israel became a nation or in 1967 when Jerusalem came under Israel’s authority.

Let’s look at these three timeframes again. You want to get familiar with them because once you understand them—and they are pretty straightforward in Scripture if you put the scriptures together—then you read through the flow of thought of Matthew 24 and you will understand the logic that is unfolding and the plan that Jesus is speaking from. Because He only gives us bits of pieces of information in Matthew 24, it is like He is saying, “Search the Scripture; the rest of the plan is in the Scripture.” Put it together and you will find that Matthew 24 has a flow of logic. It has a flow, a progression to it, that will make a lot more sense.

- B. The transition of this earth to the age to come is in context to God shaking all nations (Hag. 2:6-8). This shaking is comparable to contractions in the birth process indicating that the labor has begun.
- 6“...I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; 7and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations [Jesus], ...I will fill this temple with glory.” (Hag. 2:6-7)***

Let’s look at the transition of the earth to the age to come; that is the baby. Haggai the prophet said that God is going to shake all nations. He is going to shake the heaven and the earth. The heavens mean the sky, the weather. You know he does not mean the heaven where God lives, but the sky in the atmosphere. It is going to be shaken; that is turbulent weather. The earth is going to be shaken, the sea is going to be shaken, and the dry land, of course that means earthquakes.

The Lord says through verse 6, “I am going to shake all the nations. Here is the fruit of it: the nations are going to come to My Son the Messiah, who in this passage is titled the Desire of All Nations. The nations do not understand His beauty and His glory. I will shake the nations, and the devil will be involved in it, though I the Lord will be using it for My larger purposes. I will reveal the glory of My Son, and multitudes of the nations will turn to My Son.”

Now many will not turn to Him as well. They will worship the Antichrist, but the greatest harvest in history is going to come out of this time of shaking. So here in Haggai 2 we can call it shaking. Jesus called it birth pangs. You can use either, as they are synonymous ideas here.

- C. Believers are to recognize when these things *begin* in the generation Jesus returns (Lk. 21:28, 32). The end-time distress of nations will have a recognizable beginning, increasing in intensity over a generation, and culminating at His return. A generation may last up to 100 years (Gen. 15:13-16).
- ²⁵***“There will be...on the earth distress of nations...²⁶men’s hearts failing them from fear...***
- ²⁸***When these things begin to happen...lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near...***
- ³²***this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place...” (Lk. 21:25-32)***
- ³³***When you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors!*** ³⁴***Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. (Mt. 24:33-34)***

Luke 21 is a parallel passage to Matthew 24. It is the same event, the same sermon. Luke 21 adds a few more details that Matthew 24 does not have. In this passage Jesus makes it clear, verse 25, there will be distress in the earth, as the shaking is going to happen. Society is going to be shaken. People are going to lose their confidence in society and in government and in social order. They are going to have to look somewhere to put their confidence.

He said here in Luke 21:26 that men will faint for fear. Here is the point I want to highlight. Jesus said that when these things begin to happen, be encouraged and understand the breakthrough is coming. Redemption is moments away. I mean it is some years away, but it is in the lifetime of the people of that generation. It is within their lifetime. He said that when you see these things begin in verse 28, be encouraged. Because, verse 32, this generation will not pass away. There will be people living at that time who see the beginning and the end of this whole dramatic generation. I think there are people alive today who will see the beginning and the end of this whole “beginning of birth pangs.”

Now a generation, according to Genesis 15, can be 100 years. It does not have to be that long, but the very first time God ever described a generation in the Bible, He spoke it out audibly to Abraham, and He described it as 100 years. It does not mean it has to be that long. I mean it can be anywhere between forty to 100 years. We do not know, and the Lord does not want us to know. It could go on a few more decades longer than you think or it could be a few decades shorter than you think.

There will be people who see the beginning and the fullness and the end of that generation. Again, I think some of those people are alive on the earth now. Maybe it is the two year olds. Maybe it is the twenty year olds. I do not know. Maybe it is the sixty year olds. I do not know. I do not think so, but it might be. It might be those that are younger than you. I do not know. You might see it or you might not. Maybe it is your children. Maybe it is their children. Maybe I might see it, and I am sixty; it might come sooner than we think. We may be further along than we know. So the first timeframe is the beginning of birth pangs. It will last a generation which could be anywhere between fifty to 100 years. That generation leads us to the second time frame.

IV. THE SECOND TIME FRAME: COUNTERFEIT WORLD PEACE

- A. 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 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 who solves many international conflicts, establishing world peace (1 Thes. 5:3).
- ³***When they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains [Great Tribulation] upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. (1 Thes. 5:3)***

1. Paul refers to “they” as those who rejoice in peace and as those who will not escape. “They” refers to unbelievers in the nations who wrongly think the time of world peace has arrived.
2. **Peace:** after a season of war, civil strife, and terrorism as seen in the beginning of birth pains. This will be a temporary season of peace, lasting for only 3½ years.
3. **Safety:** There will be some reprieve in wars, terrorism, famine, economic crisis, disease, etc.

The second time frame is the counterfeit world peace. I should say more accurately it is “peace and safety.” Both words are used by Paul. Let’s read it, 1 Thessalonians 5:3, Paul says, “When they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.”

Let’s read this again. What is he talking about? What is Paul talking about? Paul is not talking about the beginning of birth pains. He is talking about the heavy labor, the very end of it. At first read you might be perplexed. What is interesting is that when Paul says, “they,” he is not talking about believers. When Paul talks about “they,” he is talking about people outside of the household of faith. When they, the nations, are rejoicing, “Peace and safety at last! Finally!” Paul said not to believe it. Paul is speaking by the spirit of prophecy. He says that it is everything opposite of world peace. Sudden destruction will come upon them.

What is happening is that the Antichrist is presenting himself to the nations as a man of peace, but he is an utter deceiver: he is a man of war, he is a man of cruelty, brutality, darkness. He is the most demonized man that will ever walk the earth. He will present himself as a man of peace at first. He will establish a covenant between nations and bring war seemingly to an end. The nations will say, “Peace! Finally, peace in the Middle East.” He will bring the solution to the Islamic terrorism and Israel. He will bring a solution, but it is only a temporary solution and it is filled with lies. It will bring safety. Terrorism will take a step back. They will say, “Okay, okay. If we can all win here...” It is what the Antichrist will convince them of.

Then Paul says, “It is not real. Sudden destruction comes after this.” Now the sudden destruction is the heavy labor, using that analogy of the Great Tribulation, the final three-and-a-half years. It is the third period, the Great Tribulation.

He says, “and they.” He is using the word, they, again. He uses it twice—“they” will rejoice when peace and safety, and “they” will not escape—because the people who are pronouncing safety and peace are the people who are going to come under the judgment because they are unbelievers who are completely on the other side. They are rejoicing in the Antichrist’s work and what he is doing. They are utterly deceived by his presentation of himself.

- B. When the prophetic Church proclaims this period as being a *counterfeit* peace under the leadership of a demonized man (Antichrist), they will appear absurd and even dangerous.

Now when the Church proclaims this period as counterfeit peace, I mean the nations are just going to think, “How absurd! Here you guys have been praying for decades for peace, finally a dignified man of great political brilliance comes on the scene, and we finally get peace. Finally we get peace, and all you Christians have to say is that it is fake and he is a demonized man? What is it that you guys want?”

The Body of Christ must be true to the scriptures. At that time they will look like the enemies of peace. They will even look dangerous to the peace process. That will create a worldwide persecution against the Church which will go beyond any time in history for the Body of Christ.

- C. The global crisis resulting from the trends associated with the beginning of the birth pains will provide the Antichrist with an opportunity to take control of many governments as he appears to bring solutions. Terrorism causes people to see security as more important than personal privacy.

The global crisis from this first prophetic period, the beginning of birth pangs, is a generation-long purpose, a purpose that goes out over a generation. I believe we are in the early days of it right now: the global crisis of the trends, the wars, rumors of wars, nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom, all kinds of strife in society. This will create a context for a strong man to come with answers to the national and international strife and problems. So the trends of war and conflict in the “beginning of the birth pangs” season, which again I believe we are in that season now, will provide the Antichrist with the opportunity to provide the solutions to seize control because he looks like he has the answer.

I mean look at today, as terrorism increases, how people are willing to give up their personal liberties in order to get more security. I am not against that. I am saying, “Oh, how terrible!” I am saying that is just the trend of where the nations are going. When there is terrorism and war, and the government says, “We need to take away some of your liberties so we can stop the bad guys,” that logic will prevail. Governments will get more and more power, and the Antichrist will be at the epicenter of this whole ideology and logic. He will be gaining control over nations because he will provide answers to the problems that are created by the season of the beginning of the birth pangs.

- D. How will this temporary peace be established? Gabriel showed Daniel that the Antichrist will make a covenant with many nations (Dan 9:27). Establishing a political covenant with many, i.e. Israel and other nations, will “guarantee” political and economic prosperity with protection. It will involve peace treaties with many nations.

²⁷Then 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 Jerusalem temple]...and on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate... (Dan. 9:27)

Now how is the Antichrist going to bring world peace? It will not be world peace in the full sense, but it will be more peace than any other time in history. He will not make it completely full everywhere. Like his rule, he will not control all the nations. He is trying to, but he will come up short. The Bible is clear that he does not gain the dominance over all the nations. He has more control than any other man in history, but he comes up short of total dominance. He comes up short of destroying Israel. He comes up short of everybody worshipping him. He comes up short of complete world peace. He goes further than anybody else, but he comes up short in all of these from the biblical point of view.

How will this temporary peace be established? Well, we go back to Daniel. In Matthew 24, the passage we are looking at, Jesus points us back to the prophecy of Daniel. He says in Matthew 24:15—I have got it written here—to go back and study Daniel and the abomination of desolation. If you study the events related to Daniel and the abomination of desolation, you will understand the whole storyline. So we are going back to Daniel here. Daniel is the one whose prophetic words are deeply integrated with what Jesus said in Matthew 24. If you pick any prophet—of course all the prophets in the Bible are accurate—Daniel’s prophecies and Matthew 24 with Jesus are more connected than any other prophet. Jesus even identified Daniel in that way.

So we go back and see what Daniel says in Daniel 9. Now this is the angel Gabriel giving this information to Daniel 2,500 years ago. He is describing a man at the end of the age. He said that there is going to be this man, Daniel 9:27, who will confirm a covenant with many. The idea is with many nations, that is, with Israel and

many nations. How many nations we do not know, but many nations will buy into the covenant, into the peace treaty.

This covenant he will make for one week. Now most of you know a very simple piece of information, those of you who have studied Bible prophecy even a little bit, even Bible prophecy 101, that in the Old Testament a week could be seven days or seven years. It was a common term. It is a week of days or it is a week of years. In the Western world today we only use it as a week of days. So we think of a week always as seven days. In the ancient world when someone said, "I will be there in a week," you said, "Seven days or seven years?" You had to ask because it was a common term. Clearly when Gabriel says that this man will make a covenant that will last one week, he is talking about a week of years, for seven years.

He goes on, "But in the middle of the week"—here is the key phrase from Gabriel—"right in the middle of the week he is going to break the covenant."

Now you might read this passage and say, "What? It does not say break the covenant." Yeah, actually it does. In the middle of the week the Antichrist will put an end to the sacrifices in the Jerusalem temple. "On the wings of abomination this man will make desolate the nations," is what it is saying.

So what Gabriel is saying here is that there is going to be a man who is going to come to the Middle East, and he is going to make a covenant, a peace treaty, a political treaty, between Israel and many nations. The deal he is going to give Israel—I am sure there will be many facets to it—he is going to tell Israel that, if you will yield. I will give you your temple on the temple mount and you can offer your sacrifices like in the days of Moses. Because, for 2,000 years Israel has wanted that temple in Jerusalem, but the Islamic Dome of the Rock is in the place where the temple is going to be built, so the Jews cannot build the temple. The third holiest site in Islam is the holiest site to the Jews; it is the same place.

The Antichrist is going to say, "No, I got a way. It is a win-win." There is going to be a man who is going to come up with a way that gets Islam to say, "Oh, okay, we will let them build that temple, and they can have those sacrifices."

In the middle of the seven-year treaty, the Antichrist is going to pull off his mask, and the man of peace is actually going to be seen in his true colors as the man of war. He will stop the sacrifices in Israel. Meaning, he is going to tell the Jews, "I am betraying you. I did not really do this so you could establish Judaism and your religion." He will say, "I am against you." He is going to pull his mask off, and he is going to say, "You cannot do those sacrifices."

They will say, "But that was part of the treaty; that was our part of the peace treaty."

He is going to say, "It does not matter. I lied to you." The treaty will be broken. That is the most graphic way communicate to the Jewish people that that treaty will be signified as broken when he says, "Away with your temple and away with your sacrifices! It was all a lie, I brought you to the bargaining table. I brought peace. Now I am in control in Israel. Now I am in control in the Middle East, and I am going to do it my way now." He is going to break the covenant. The most dramatic facet of the covenant related to Israel is the sacrifices; he is going to stop them, which means he breaks the covenant. When he does that, that will begin the final three-and-a-half years. During that seven-day period, that final week of natural history, those seven years, the first part of it he will be a man of peace. In the middle of that seven years, in the middle of that week, he will pull his mask off, and he will show himself as a man of war, a man of darkness, a demonized man.

- E. The final 7 years of this age begins when the Antichrist makes a covenant with Israel and many nations bringing in world peace that will last for only 3½ years. The peace will be destroyed when the Antichrist breaks covenant with Israel and the nations by setting up the abomination of desolation (Mt. 24:15), indicating the start of the Great Tribulation that will continue for 3½ years.
- F. This peace treaty will end the first prophetic time frame, called the beginning of birth pangs, in which the nations of the world will be fighting each other (Mt. 24:7-8).
- G. The Antichrist will appear to answer very complex, unsolvable problems by his skillful leadership.

Daniel says later that this vile man will come in peaceably. The Antichrist will first show himself peaceable. Now this has a partial fulfillment in Antiochus Epiphanies in 175 BC, for those historians out there. It has its fuller fulfillment in the Antichrist; he comes in peaceably.

- H. Israel will have a season of peace until they are attacked by the Antichrist (Ezek. 38:8-12). The very man who seemingly brought them peace will be the one who will invade them. Israel's time of peace and safety is seen at this time in having no walls for military security in place.

⁸...in the latter years you [Antichrist] will come into the land [Israel] of those...gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely...¹⁰On that day...you will make an evil plan...

¹¹You will say, "I will go up against a land of unwalled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls...¹²to stretch out your hand against...people [Israel] gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods. (Ezek. 38:8-12)

Now this is really unsettling. Ezekiel the prophet is describing the Antichrist, and he is describing his betrayal of the nation of Israel. Look at Ezekiel 38 here on the notes. He says in verse 8, "In the latter days you"—talking to the Antichrist—"Gog"—which is a prophetic title for the Antichrist—"you will come into the land of Israel, you will come into the land that was gathered from many people who are regathered together on the mountains of Israel. You will come to the land that has been desolate for many years."

Now here is what I want you to notice at the end of verse 8: all of them will be dwelling safely. There is a time in the future, a very short time, when Israel will dwell safely. The terrorism threat will be over, but it will be the counterfeit safety; it is the falsehood, it is the lie. They will be dwelling safely. That season has not happened yet. They have been in the land since 1948, and there has not been any safety and peace. There has been continual warfare and resistance against them. A day is coming when Israel will have a temporary peace, but it will be established in the enemy's plans and in his conniving and in his schemes.

Verse 10, "On that day you"—Antichrist—the prophet Ezekiel says, "you will make an evil plan. You will betray Israel, an evil idea. You will give action to that evil idea, your evil plan." Verse 11 he gives this clearly, "You will say in your heart, 'I will go up against Israel, its unwalled villages.'" The reason its cities are unprotected and its villages are unwalled is because they do not have a military in place because they do not need it because peace has been made; it is an unwalled village. It is a peaceful people. They are dwelling safely without walls, without military protection, because they believe in the promises of this evil man, as will all the Gentile nations around. They will believe it too. As a matter of fact, the nations of earth will believe it. They will be rejoicing, "Peace and safety!" He says that it is all going to turn in one moment.

- I. The leaders in Jerusalem along with the leaders of Gentile nations will make a covenant with the Antichrist in the end times (Isa. 28:14-18; Dan. 9:27; Ezek. 38:8-14; 39:26; Jn. 5:43; 1 Thes. 5:3).

¹⁴Hear the word of the LORD, you scornful men (leaders of end-time Israel), who rule this people who are in Jerusalem, ¹⁵because you have said, “We have made a covenant with death...when the overflowing scourge [of the Antichrist] passes through, it will not come to us, for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood we have hidden ourselves”...¹⁸Your covenant with death will be annulled (Antichrist will betray his promises), and...when the overflowing scourge passes through, then you will be trampled down by it. (Isa. 28:14-18)

Isaiah talks about this covenant as well. He talks about the leaders of Jerusalem. He is talking about the end times situation in Israel. He says in verse 14, “You scornful men, you leaders who rule Jerusalem, you accepted the covenant.” Again so did the Gentile nations; many, many nations will accept it. He says, “It is a covenant of death.” It is not a covenant that will have lasting peace. There is only one Man can bring you lasting peace. It is the same message Isaiah could have said to all the Gentile nations around the Middle East or the earth. They are buying into the wrong covenant. It is a covenant of death, though it is presented as a covenant of peace.

My point being, after the beginning of the birth pangs for a generation, there will be short season called world peace and safety, a very short season. It does not last seven years, only half of the seven years. The Antichrist promises for seven years, but in the middle of the seven years he breaks his promise and the peace is gone.

- J. With peace established between Israel and Islamic nations, they will have a new common enemy—the Church. Why? Because the Church will expose Satan’s role in the counterfeit world peace. Imagine how hard it will be for unbelievers to understand this. For the first time the world will be at peace. The Church will be viewed as fanatical, extreme, and even as dangerous to world peace.

Well, there are problems for the Church now because Israel and the Islamic nations in the Middle East have a new common enemy, the Church. Well, it is not limited to Israel and the Islamic nations. This will be a worldwide issue, but I brought it right to the Middle East situation. Because the whole time the Church will say, “That man is not a man of peace. He is demonized, He is the Antichrist. He is a deceiver.”

They will say, “What on earth are you talking about? Why are you Christians so impossible to please?” Imagine how hard this will be for them to understand. For the first time the world is at peace. You know I am sure there will be some disturbances here and there, but in the general sense it will have a greater sense of peace than any other time in history. The Church will be looked at as fanatical. The Church will be looked at as extreme, dangerous. Islam, Israel, other nations, they will say, “You people!” I mean the Body of Christ in all the nations will be speaking up.

- K. At this time the harlot Babylon religion will persecute the Church (Rev. 17:2-6) leading to many falling away (1 Tim. 4:1). The world will be offended at Jesus and His standards of “intolerance” that are promoted by the praying Church.

There will be a falling away in the Church because the Lord is going to require the Church to stand true to His Word. Many are going to be buying into the false peace and safety. When they buy into it, they are buying into the Antichrist’s agenda and his values. It is not just that they are peace-loving; they are buying into his values. They are coming under him. They are coming into an indebted situation. If they accept his peace, they have to accept his government. They will be applauding his peace and therefore applauding his government.

I believe that the great falling away the Bible talks about in the final generation—again it is just my opinion—I think it has already begun. It has not happened in a massive way yet, but I think in the last few years there has been a clear, distinct movement of believers drawing back from their faith. In forty years of ministry I have never seen anything like the last five and ten years. I do not have a date for when it began, that kind of thing,

but it is a clear trend. Many of my long-term pastor friends who have been in ministry forty years are saying that they have never seen anything like this. The amount of good, solid people starting to say, “Well, I do not know if I believe the Bible is the real authoritative word of God. Maybe there are other ways.” They are entertaining all kinds of ideas and thoughts that ten, twenty, thirty years ago they would never ever imagined.

The pressure in that hour of being true to the Lord’s Word will cause many people to say, “You know, I am done with this Christianity thing. I am going into the world peace thing, I am going into the world peace movement. I am done with the fanatical people calling the peacemakers demons. The truth is those Christians are the ones who do not love peace; that is the real problem.” There are going to be a lot of people who leave the Church under that logic and under that line of reasoning.

- L. Some believers will rationalize the need to collaborate with the Antichrist’s regime. This will open the door for betrayal between close relationships. Offenses will abound and escalate into hate.
- M. The Church must take a stand on the fact that this seemingly brilliant and dignified world leader will eventually demand to be worshipped as God.
- N. The net result: Many will be brought to false sense of security called “a spirit of slumber.” Jesus and the apostles likened it to sleeping instead having a lifestyle of watching with prophetic discernment.
- O. Unbelievers will rejoice in seeing peace and safety seemingly established. However, it will be a time of persecution for the Church because they will proclaim the time of peace as the work of the devil, which will enrage many. This is a time of increased birth pangs for the Church is persecuted.

⁹Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. ¹⁰And then many will be offended [at God and Christians], will betray one another, and will hate one another. (Mt. 24:9-10)

Now we are in Matthew 24:9. The beginning of birth pangs is verses 4-8. The beginning of the birth pangs are now over. In verse 9 it is not a general increase of persecution like we are seeing right now. There is a clear increase of persecution in the nations here. We are talking about something at a far other level, at a whole other level. Look at what Jesus said. I mean it is really hard to really take this at face value, but we need to. This is during the world peace and safety season when the Church is exposing the whole peace plan as rooted in demonic strategies and deception. Verse 9, Jesus said. At that point we have passed the beginning of the birth pains. The birth pains are going up to a whole other level for the Church. Now society is rejoicing in peace, but the Church is having a really tough time because “they will deliver you up to tribulation.” They will trouble you. They will cause you all kinds of trouble: economic trouble, they will trouble your reputation, they will stand against you. It is going to go beyond that. They will kill you. He says, “You will be hated by all nations.”

We have read this over the years and said, “Hated by all nations” as in there is always somebody somewhere who does not like a Christian. No, Jesus is not talking about a remote situation where somebody in that faraway nation does not like a Christian. The trend of the nations, the official public policy and the governmental position, will be hatred towards Christians, not disdain where they kind of roll their eyes and say those Christians are crazy. It will go far beyond that, backed up by legislation. The official policy of the nations will be to kill Christians and hate them. I do not mean mocked, but hated, because they will see Christians as the only group holding the line against world peace.

Verse 10, “then many will be offended.” He says that the offense level will go to a whole other level. Because a lot of Christians at this time will leave the faith and join the peace movement, the betrayal that will take place in

family lines and friendships and circles will lead to offense. People will be offended at God. People will be offended at the prophetic church and what they are saying.

It will go beyond just hating Christians. It will become social anarchy, because verse 9 is hatred towards Christians, and verse 10 is the next step. Verse 10 is when social anarchy goes to a whole other level: it is people hating people. It will not remain that they hate just Christians, because if you hate Christians in the way that they will in verse 9, eventually hatred will consume their life. They will turn on each other. There will be anarchy against each other. This is the context which the greatest harvest of history is going to come out of.

Now some people look at this and say, "I do not like this." Well, in the natural I do not like it either. Nobody in heaven is taking my vote tonight. They like me up there, but I do not get to vote on this plan. I have seen the Body of Christ for years try somehow to dismiss these words of Jesus away from the future. They think, "I do not like these verses, therefore I am going to figure out some way theologically or somehow to just dismiss them."

Jesus said a few verses later in Matthew 24, "I assure you, everything I say will come to pass. Though heaven and earth will pass away, My words, every word, will be proven as true."

So I am looking at the greatest harvest, but in the time of the greatest intensity and pressure. It will be the greatest hour for people who love the leadership of Jesus. If someone is in the church, but they do not love Jesus' leadership not really, that is they like church membership and they like church activity but they do not really like Jesus' leadership, they are not going to like what it is going to unfold. Well, none of us are going to like the negative, but we will see the glory of Jesus magnified, the power of God, millions coming to the Lord, the Church purified, people abandoning their compromise. A lot of people abandoning their faith, but others saying, "No more compromise. I am wholly for the Lord. No more immorality, no more lying, no more slandering, none of this other stuff. I am totally for the Lord." It is going to have an amazing result in the Church and in the nations.

It is going to be rough on the flesh. The Lord would say, "Do you understand there is a baby? There is the birthing of the whole new world order. There is the salvation of the whole nation of Israel, and beyond that all the nations are going to come into the glory of God in fullness. Jesus is coming down in His physical resurrected body. He is bringing the New Jerusalem with Him to the earth. It is going to be amazing."

You only die for a second. Like, you are alive, and a second later you are in the new realm. It is like, "Oh, wow! That was quick. Wow!" People are so afraid of dying. But the goal in life is not to stay with the physical, tainted body forever. It is to get the new one; that is the goal. The goal of God's purpose is not to make sure we do not die; it is to make sure we stay faithful. Dying only takes a second. Now it may take a few minutes before that second comes. That is the time you really want to pray, "What Thou doest, do Thou quickly, Lord! Come quickly, Lord Jesus!"

- P. The harlot Babylon religion will thrive during this period. This religion of tolerance will cause the nations to be drunk or intoxicated with joy over her promises, prosperity, tolerance, and seductions that offer benefits including a unified religion (that ends war) and a prosperous economy.

²The inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication. (Rev. 17:2)

During the time of world peace and safety, the global Harlot Babylon religion will be thriving in that hour. With this global Babylon religion, a religion of tolerance, there is peace and safety. The Antichrist has not pulled his mask off yet. He still looks like a man of peace. There is a worldwide unification of religions:

everybody is right, everybody is saved, every doctrine works, everybody's god or something like that, whatever they want it to be.

Look at Revelation 17. The earth will be drunk with the dogma and the promises of this world church. They will be drunk; they will be intoxicated. "Man, what an amazing new religion! What amazing promises! How affirming! We get to sin at deepest levels we want, yet we are still filled with the glory of God! This is remarkable!" They will be drunk on the promises and doctrines and the whole ideology of this system. They will be intoxicated. They will have no discernment as to what is going on.

- Q. The Harlot religion will have great prominence. It will be arrayed in purple (royal status) and will be respected by the elite financial leaders of the earth who will give their allegiance to her. Yet the harlot Babylon will cause multitudes to be intoxicated with the blood of the saints who expose her.

⁴The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet (royalty), and adorned with gold...having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication...⁶I saw the woman (harlot Babylon), drunk with the blood of the saints and...the martyrs of Jesus... (Rev. 17:4-6)

Here we are still in Revelation 17. This woman, this world religion, will be arrayed in purple. She will have royal status, and she will be adorned with gold. The elite financial merchants of the earth will be supporting her. There will be money, honor, status of royalty. Look at what happens in verse 6: the nations will not just be drunk with this world religion, this world religion will be drunk on the blood of the saints. They will be intoxicated against the Church. That is what Jesus is talking about in Matthew 24:9-11, the passage we looked at. He said that there is coming an hour—it is a very brief hour—when the intensity of the hatred will go to a whole other level. The harvest will come out of it, and the purification of the Church will come out of it, and glorious testimonies and lives completely transformed under Jesus' leadership.

- R. This will be a time when unbelievers are living without the turmoil of the beginning of birth pains, unlike in the Great Tribulation. Jesus described these people as occupied with eating, drinking, and marrying as in the days of Noah. This expresses a sense of peace and safety *after* the beginning of birth pangs, yet *before* the Great Tribulation (the final 3½ years). The people will feel safe and at peace. In other words, it will be a temporary period of economic, social, and military peace. Notice in this time frame there are no wars or economic crisis, as described in the beginning of birth pangs.

³⁷But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark... (Mt. 24:37-38)

V. THE THIRD TIME FRAME: GREAT TRIBULATION

- A. The third time frame in the end times will be *Great Tribulation* or the heavy labor pains (the final 3½ years of this age; Mt. 24:15-31; Rev. 6-19). This begins with the abomination of desolation.

¹⁵"When you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place"...¹⁶let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains..."²¹For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. ²²And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved... (Mt. 24:15-22)

Okay, let's look at the third time frame. The first time frame is the beginning of the birth pangs. It goes on for a generation, which could be up to a 100 years, we do not know. The second time frame, the unbelievers are

rejoicing in peace and safety, but they are turning on the Church. They are drunk in their rage against the Church, but the Church gets purified and the great harvest comes.

Then the third part is the heavy labor, the final three-and-a-half years. The angel Gabriel told Daniel there are seven years. That is, there is one week; it is a week of years. Seven years, and in the middle of it this man, who made peace, breaks the peace, and he shows his true colors. Matthew 24:15, Jesus said, “When you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet.” That is, Jesus said to go study Daniel the prophet about the abomination of desolation and you will get the details. You will get the bigger storyline. You will know about the seven years and the breaking of the vow in the middle of the seven years or the breaking of the covenant. You will know about the abomination of desolation. That is a fancy term for what the Antichrist is going to establish—the image of the beast and the mark of the beast—and demand everybody to worship him as God. That is what the abomination of desolation is in one sentence.

- B. The final stage of labor will be the **most troubling** time in human history. This is the 3½ year time frame of “hard labor” in which the pain will be the worst for everyone. Jesus indicated that if those days were any longer than 3½ years, then no flesh would physically survive it (Mt. 24:22).

Verse 21, Jesus says that when that happens there will be a time of heavy labor, if you want to use the contraction analogy, like no time in human history. Verse 22, it will be so intense that no flesh would be saved. It does not mean that nobody would be born again. It means if this thing went on for decades everybody would be killed. It only goes on for three-and-a-half years. There will be millions and millions of people who are not killed during it. Jesus said it will be really intense. You might ask why it must be so intense. The Lord would say, “I am transitioning the earth to the age to come, and I have many things I am accomplishing in this moment of transition.”

- C. During this time, the Antichrist will openly show his hostility without needing to deceive unbelievers. He will not hide his cruelty or wickedness in the final 3½ years of natural history before Jesus returns. At this time he will require all to worship him and will ban all other religions.

VI. SUMMARY OF THE THREE TIME FRAMES IN THE END-TIMES

- A. ***Beginning of birth-pains***: these occur over a generation leading up the final seven years of this age. ***⁷For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes...⁸All these are the beginning of sorrows. (Mt. 24:7-8)***

So just to sum it all up, just for your own study, we have the beginning of birth pangs. Ten trends. It contains ten trends, and next week we are going to look at them a lot more detail.

- B. The second time frame in the end times will be a time of *counterfeit worldwide peace and safety*. It will come just *before* the Great Tribulation in the first 3½ years of the final 7 years of this age.

³When they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains [Great Tribulation] upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. (1 Thes. 5:2-3)

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. ¹⁰And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ¹¹Then many false prophets will rise up...¹² lawlessness will abound... (Mt. 24:9-12)

Second, we have the counterfeit world peace and safety. Now right here you could put Matthew 24:9-11. That is when they kill the Christians and all that. You could fit that right in there if you wanted to.

- C. The third time frame in the end times will be *Great Tribulation* in the final 3½ years of this age
²¹*For then there will be **great tribulation**, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time...* ²²*And unless those days were shortened, **no flesh would be saved**.* (Mt. 24:21-22)

Third, we have the Great Tribulation.

VII. SUMMARY OF THE BIRTH PAINS: 15 SIGN TRENDS

- A. Jesus identified *10 trends* as the *beginning of birth pains* (Mt. 24:4-8; Mk. 13:5-8, Lk. 21:8-11). Matthew mentioned 7 trends and Luke added 3 more—“commotions” (21:9), “fearful sights” which includes great signs from heaven, and “perplexity the roaring of the sea” (21:11, 25).
⁵*For many will come in My name, saying, “**I am the Christ,**” and will deceive many. ⁶And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled... ⁷For nation will rise against nation [ethnic conflict], and kingdom against kingdom [economic warfare]. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes... ⁸All these are the **beginning of sorrows**.* (Mt. 24:4-8)
⁸*...there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows.* (Mk. 13:8)
⁹*But when you hear of wars and commotions... ¹¹And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven.* (Lk 21:9-11)

There are fifteen signs, fifteen trends, that are identified. Ten of them are at the beginning of the birth pangs. Five of these trends come after the beginning of the birth pangs and show up in those final seven years. They show up in the second and third period that I just described.

The other trends of the intense persecution, social anarchy, false prophets happen at a whole other level. That is because the false prophets are going to be emissaries of the Antichrist. They are going to be selling his religion, and that is why there are going to be so many of them. They are going to be rewarded handsomely, and they will perform signs and wonders because they are ambassadors of his demonic, worldwide religion under the false prophet. That is why there will be so many false prophets at that time.

- B. *Ten trends* associated with the beginning of birth pains increasing over a generation
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*: These are signs in the sky and weather (Lk 21:11).
 10. *Perplexity at the roaring of the sea* (Lk 21:25)

Luke 21 identified 10 trends without calling them the beginning of birth-pangs. He mentioned the 7 trends in Matthew 24 and added three: *commotions* (21:9), *fearful sights as great signs* (21:11), and *perplexity at the roaring of the sea* (21:25).

Here are the ten in the beginning of the birth pangs. We want to get familiar with these ten because to watch them making global headline news gives us the understanding or the message that things are moving quickly in that direction.

C. *Five trends that will greatly increase for the final 7 years (after the beginning of birth-pangs).*

⁹“They will...kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. ¹⁰And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ¹¹Then many false prophets will rise up...¹²And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold...¹⁴And this gospel...will be preached...to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Mt. 24:9-14)

1. *Persecution* (Mt. 24:9)

2. *Social anarchy* as hate dominates society (Mt. 24:10)

3. *False prophets* (Mt. 24:11)

4. *Lawlessness abounding* (Mt. 24:12)

5. *Love growing cold* (Mt. 24:12) as people suffer the darkness of a seared conscience (1 Tim. 4:2).

These are the five trends that happen past the beginning of birth pangs in those final seven years.

D. God’s people must be strengthened to escape the snare of fear and lust to stand in victory (Lk. 21:36). Both Jesus and Paul emphasized the call to “*watch*” in the context of describing pressure in 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).

⁴²Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. (Mt. 24:42)

³⁶Watch...and pray always that you may be counted worthy [have strength] to escape all these things...and to stand [in victory] before the Son of Man.” (Lk. 21:34-36)

Now Jesus ends Matthew 24 with the same thing in Luke 21, of course, because Luke 21 and Matthew 24 are the same message. He calls the people of God to watch and pray. “Watch and pray that you would,” it says, “be counted worthy,” but every other translation says, “that you would have strength to stand.” That is, you would not yield to compromise, you would not yield to fear in that hour. You will have strength to stand is what the passage is meant to say here, as all the other English translations, almost every one of them, say, “pray that you will have strength to stand.”

Now you will notice Jesus says over and over, “Watch and pray. Watch and pray.” What are we supposed to watch? Watching means open your eyes and watch. I mean it is just that simple. See what the Bible says about the signs and see what is happening in the culture, in society, in the political arena, the economic arena. Look at what is happening as it corresponds with what Jesus said would happen, connect the dots, and let it create urgency in your life.

He did not say just to pray. A lot of people pray, but they do not watch. Meaning they pray, they are growing closer to the Lord, but they do not know the storyline. They do not know what the signs are. They do not connect the events in society to what the Bible said would happen. So though they are praying, and that is good obviously, and they are growing in the Lord, they are not connecting with the big storyline that heaven is leading across the nations. They say, “Well, I don’t really do the end-time stuff.”

I say that is not really a good answer. You want to do the Jesus stuff? If Jesus talked on the end times, you want to do that. If He talked on the gifts of the Spirit, do that. If He talked on evangelism, do that. If He talked about relationships...do whatever Jesus talked about. We do not pick and choose. Jesus said, "Watch." As a matter of fact He said it over and over. I have the passages here.

- E. **Watch:** We are to grow in understanding by watching the biblical signs of the times unfold. As our understanding increases, it produces greater urgency in us. By *watching* what the prophetic scriptures say about the end-time distress in the nations, people can see prophecy progressively unfold before them. As people watch, they inevitably talk about what is occurring and how it lines up with biblical prophecy. Thus they will connect with more people who have a common urgency.

*That is what this course is about, but I am also talking to those that are here this weekend just for the **Stand Conference**. I want to encourage you to watch, watch and pray. Not just watch, but watch and pray. Not just pray, but to watch because, beloved, whatever we watch we talk about. That means if you watch a tremendous show about the arts or something in athletics, if you watch it and it grabs you, you talk about it.*

When you start seeing these things as much more than just the birth pangs, when you see all the biblical signs, and you start connecting them, you get familiar with them, you watch them, then you will start talking about them. If you talk about them, you will start bonding with people with a common urgency and vision. You will start participating together in the greater narrative, the greater storyline of what is going on. I am going to end here with that.