

Hope Channel presents

DISCOVERIES '08

3

By Mark Finley

Jesus, Jerusalem and Starting Endtime Prophecies

On September 8, 1985, 16-year-old Sean Sellers and a companion killed a convenience-store clerk. Sean described the murder in these words: “We didn’t take any money. We didn’t take any merchandise. We just took the life of an innocent man for Satan.” The 16-year-old killer wasn’t even a suspect in the case until six months later when he killed his parents. He was angry at his mother and performed an occult ritual beforehand, explaining, “There was nothing but cold hatred in me.” Sean Sellers was the youngest man on Oklahoma’s death row till he was executed by lethal injection.

Did that story shock you? Probably not. If you’ve been reading your own daily newspaper, you’re probably beyond being shocked at the evil in today’s world—a lawless world that knows no bounds.

Long ago, Jesus sat on a hillside with His disciples and predicted such a time as this. Jesus’ disciples privately asked, “What shall be the *sign* of Thy coming and of the end of the world?” **Matthew 24:3**. The Master foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and then clearly outlined the signs that would precede His Coming. The events that led up to the destruction of Jerusalem would also be present at the end time—but on a much larger scale before Jesus’ Return.

It’s amazing that when we compare Jesus’ prediction in Matthew 24 with the predictions in the Book of Revelation, they provide an incredibly accurate picture of *our* day! It is *our* lifetime of which Jesus spoke! For 2,000 years, the words Jesus spoke on that hilltop in Jerusalem were preserved in the Book of Matthew so we could know the events of *our* time that signal the *end* time. Specific, clear signs would precede the most momentous event of the ages—Christ’s Second Coming.

What are the signs of which He spoke? He told of signs in the world of **religion, politics, nature, and society**. Today, these signs are played out in the stories splashed across our newspapers and TV screens. Let’s examine each of these signs individually.

SIGNS in the world of RELIGION: Jesus foretold in **Matthew 24:5** that “Many shall come in My name, saying, *I am Christ*; and shall deceive many.” Thousands, in their search for certainty, turn to cults, to false Christs and false prophets who recruit many to follow them. Jesus warned in **Matthew 24:24**, “There shall arise *false Christs*, and *false prophets*, and shall show great signs and wonders.”

The Book of Revelation confirms that part of Satan’s plan is *deception*: “He performs great signs so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on earth in the sight of men. And he *deceives* those who dwell on the earth by those signs he was granted to do in the sight of the beast.” **Revelation 13:13-14**. The devil will unleash his deceptive power to take captive men’s and women’s minds.

False religions have increased phenomenally. Cults recruit those who are searching. The *Heaven’s Gate cult* produced a farewell video and then took their own lives. *Jim Jones* of the People’s Temple led nearly 1000 to their death in the jungles of Guyana as they drank cyanide-laced Kool-Aid. *David Koresh*

led his followers to a fiery death in Waco, Texas. To say nothing of *Swiss cults* whose members burned themselves to death, or a *Japanese cult* planning nerve gas attacks on Japanese subways. There are Bible-based cults, UFO cults, Satanist cults, New Age cults, Eastern cults.

The Bible predicts a mighty false revival just before the Second Coming. Over two thousand newspapers in the U.S. carry astrology columns. Dial 900 phone numbers, and psychics will tell your future—for a fee. Click on Internet sites, and you can be guided through numerology, tarot cards, and dream interpretations. The devil is pulling out all the stops in these last days. But God is not caught by surprise—He warns us in His Book.

SIGNS in the world of POLITICS: In **Matthew 24:6-7**, Jesus says, “You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. . . . For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.” The 20th Century saw World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Arab-Israeli Wars, the war in Bosnia, the Gulf War, Kosovo, southern and northern Ireland, wars all over Africa from Rwanda and Somalia to the Sudan and the Congo. One source estimates 180 million people have been killed in the last century—a total far greater than for any other century in history. Peace treaties, based on frail human promises, are signed one day and broken the next. Speaking of our time, the Apostle Paul declared in **1 Thessalonians 5:3**, “When they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them. . . . And they shall not escape.”

Today the nuclear threat is greater than ever. Even though the U.S. has downsized our nuclear arsenal, Russia has not. In August of 1999, CBS’s *60 Minutes II* aired a program about Russia’s Secret Cities continuing to produce *plutonium*—the key ingredient in nuclear weapons. When terrorists and rogue governments go to Russia seeking to buy plutonium to make nuclear bombs, scientists who have not been paid by Russia’s crumbling economy are sorely tempted to sell their precious commodity.

Revelation 11:18 puts it this way: “The nations were angry and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged. And that You should reward your servants the prophets and the saints, . . . and should destroy those who destroy the earth.” With unchecked nuclear weapons, we now have the capacity for self-destruction. This is certainly one of the greatest signs of Jesus’ Return, for never before in history has mankind had the capability to destroy all the earth.

SIGNS in the world of NATURE: In **Matthew 24:7**, Jesus said, “There shall be famines, and pestilences [strange diseases], and earthquakes in diverse places.” Do we see *famines* today? Experts know that for many, chronic hunger is an ever-present part of life and that 10,000 people a day, or more than 3.5 million people per year, die of starvation. Do we see *pestilences* today—strange diseases running rampant? Some diseases are becoming resistant to antibiotics. And new diseases appear for which science has no cure—AIDS, Mad Cow disease, the Ebola virus. Do we see *earthquakes* today? Seismograph stations record 12,000 to 14,000 earthquakes per year—about 35 per day. Many earthquakes of disastrous magnitude peppered the century just closed. Turkey and Taiwan recently had devastating quakes. There’s a whole lot of shaking going on!

SIGNS in the world of SOCIETY: No signs are more obvious than those in the social world. Jesus plainly predicted in **Matthew 24:37**: “As the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For 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.” In Noah’s day, God’s standards were no longer accepted. And how is society’s moral fabric today? *Living together outside of marriage* is commonplace. *Out-of-wedlock babies* account for 30.1% of all births in America. The *divorce rate* quadrupled, from 4.3 million in 1970 to 18.3 million in 1996.

SIGNS in the world of KNOWLEDGE: **Daniel 12:4** speaks of “the time of the end” when “knowledge shall be increased”—knowledge about Daniel’s prophecies and knowledge in general would increase. As you turn on your computer, remember: ours is an age truly exploding with knowledge.

Looking to our daily newspaper for hope, we find only despair. Looking to the Bible in despair, we find hope. Fulfilled prophecies are all around us—Jesus is coming soon!

THE BIBLE SAYS

- Matthew 24:3** Jesus' disciples asked for a sign of His Coming and the end of the world.
- Matthew 24:4-5, 11, 24** There will be many false religious teachers: false christs and false prophets who will deceive and mislead many.
- Rev. 13:13-14** Satan and his agents will perform signs and wonders to deceive people.
- Revelation 16:14** Spirits of devils will perform signs and miracles to mislead many.
- 2 Tim. 4:3-4** The time will come when people won't endure sound doctrine but will seek out teachers who will tell them what their itching ears want to hear.
- Matthew 24:6-7** There will be wars and rumors of wars; nation will rise against nation.
- Luke 21:25** There will be distress of nations, with perplexity.
- Luke 21:26** Men's hearts will be failing them, from fear of those things happening.
- 1 Thess. 5:2-3** Peace talks, based on man's frail promises, will avail nothing.
- Revelation 11:18** When the nations are angry, Christ will ultimately destroy those who would destroy the earth.
- Matthew 24:7** There'll be natural disasters—famines, pestilences, earthquakes—all over.
- Matthew 24:12** There will be rising crime and violence, iniquity.
- 2 Tim. 3:1-4** There will be perilous times with moral decadence of every kind.
- Matthew 24:37-39** There will be times of wickedness and violence, as in the days of Noah.
- Genesis 6:1-2, 5, 12-13** In Noah's day, wickedness, evil, corruption, and violence were rampant everywhere.
- James 5:1-5, 8** There will be economic difficulties, with labor and management troubles.
- Daniel 12:4** Near "the time of the end . . . knowledge shall increase."
- Luke 21:34** But many will be too weighed down with the cares of this life.
- Matthew 24:48-51** The evil servant says, "My Lord delays His Coming."
- 2 Peter 3:8-10** God chooses to save all—but He honors our freedom of choice.
- Revelation 14:6** The everlasting gospel will be preached in every nation and tongue.
- Matthew 24:14** This gospel will be preached in all the world; then the end will come.
- Matthew 24:42-44** God's counsel is—"Be ready."

Quick Quiz

Our heavenly Father has *so much* He longs to teach us! Think of each seminar session as one in a series of steps leading upward—a series of “lessons from heaven.” May we learn our lessons well, so we in turn can teach others. God’s Word, the Bible—our Textbook for this seminar—offers **Learning Unlimited!**

#3 - Jesus, Jerusalem and Startling Endtime Prophecies

1. One religious sign of the End is that Jesus says, “There shall arise false _____, and false _____, and shall show signs and wonders.”
To check your answer, see Matthew 24:24 .
2. T The most destructive, world-wide conflicts in human history occurred in the 20th Century,
 F fulfilling the political sign Jesus predicted in “wars and rumors of war.”
To check your answer, see Matthew 24:6-7.
3. To all earlier generations, it must have sounded *incredible* and *incomprehensible* that Christ should come to “destroy them that _____ the _____,” for never before in all ages has man had that awesome capacity!
To check your answer, see Revelation 11:18.
4. T Pictures of starving children around the world haunt us in today’s media, like a visual echo
 F of Jesus’ prophecy of “famines . . . in diverse places.”
To check your answer, see Matthew 24:7.
5. Our *crime-ridden* cities, filled with violence, testify that Jesus’ social sign of the End is fulfilled, when He said that just before His Coming society will be “as it was in the days of _____, when “the earth was full of _____.”
To check your answer, see Matthew 24:37 and Genesis 6:11 & 13.
6. A sign in nature’s world is Jesus’ warning of “_____,” or strange diseases, some of which man himself causes, such as *deaths from smoking*.
To check your answer, see Matthew 24:7.

A Thought for Today

1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.