Tracking the Birth Pains
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14 Significant Signs for the Terminal Generation

By Elizabeth Bouhuys
This book is dedicated to every student of Bible prophecy. May you never grow weary watching and waiting for our Lord’s return.

Maranatha!
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Introduction

You may be wondering why this book is called Tracking the Birth Pains. The answer to that question is found in the pages of an ancient text: the Bible! Thousands of years ago, Jesus and the Apostles used the birth analogy to explain joy and sorrow, the curse of sin, and the events surrounding the return of Christ. This comparison made sense to the ancient world, and it still rings true today.

For instance, if you’ve ever birthed a baby, then you are well acquainted with birth pains. In the early stages childbirth is exciting, but as the pain increases that feeling doesn’t last for long. Non-stop contractions eventually overrule the mother’s enthusiasm. Her pain intensifies and even converges until the baby is finally born. Thankfully, joy and happiness cancel out the previous misery, but hours and sometimes days of deep travail precede the promise. Consider the words of Jesus who said:

"Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world (John 16:21)."

So what do birth pains have to do with Bible prophecy? The answer to that question can be found in the New Testament. The author of the book of Romans said that the earth is in a type of labor:
“For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now (Romans 8:22).”

And like real labor, the earth is in pain, and we can expect that things will get worse before they get better. Just like a woman who has finally birthed the much anticipated promise, one day earth’s sorrows will be turned to joy at the return of Jesus Christ. So with this analogy in mind, Tracking the Birth Pains will focus on everything Jesus told his followers would happen in the years leading up to His Second Coming. But while, we are waiting on the promise to be fulfilled, let’s consider the following question:

Are We the Terminal Generation?

While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

That is a good question and one that most prophecy teachers are asking. So let’s look at the evidence. First, Jesus said that in the last days there would be an increase in lawless living! Wars, famines, earthquakes, persecution, hate, betrayal, and even false Messiahs would mark that generation. However, most people ignore these signs because every generation has experienced sorrows. What makes us so different from previous generations? In order to answer this question, we need to take a closer look at the Birth Pain Tracker.

The Birth Pain Tracker

“But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs (Matthew 24:8).”
In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus revealed 14 signs that would occur before His return, and He called these signs "birth pains":

1. False Messiahs
2. Wars & Rumors of Wars
3. Various Ethnic Conflicts
4. Famines
5. Earthquakes
6. Pestilences
7. Persecution
8. A Great Falling Away
9. False Prophets
10. Lawlessness
11. The Preaching of the Gospel
12. The Abomination of Desolation
13. Terrifying Tribulation, and,
14. Celestial Events

**Overview of the Signs**

These 14 signs fall into several categories. Most have always happened, but they are destined to grow worse as the Second Coming draws nears. Three of these signs are future events that can’t be tracked yet, but are included because we need to know what’s coming to earth. Take a look:
I. General Signs (past, present, future)-

Wars, rumors of wars, ethnic conflicts, famines, earthquakes, and pestilences have happened since the earth fell under the curse of sin, and will continue to happen until the Second Coming. But don’t make the mistake of discounting them because they are like labor pains that are growing worse by the minute.

II. Signs that Affect Israel & the Church (past, present, future)-

The second group of signs (False Messiahs, Persecution, the Falling Away, & False Prophets) have affected both Israel and the followers of Jesus Christ for centuries. And like the others they will grow worse and continue to do so until Jesus returns.

III. Sign for Messiah’s Followers (past, present, future)-

The Preaching of the Gospel began when Jesus commissioned His followers to go into the world with the good news of Messiah’s coming kingdom and will continue until the end of the Tribulation.

IV. Sign for Israel- the Abomination of Desolation (future)-

This sign is much different from the others because it requires two things: the nation of Israel had to be reestablished (fulfilled in 1948), and a Jewish Temple has to be rebuilt (future event).

V. Sign for Israel & Antichrist’s Followers (future)-

Once the Abomination of Desolation takes place, the countdown to Messiah’s Second Coming begins. There will be 42 months (or 3 ½ years) of terrible tribulation,
unlike anything the world has ever seen. This time period is called the Great Tribulation.

VI. Signs for the Earth Dwellers (future)-

At the end of the Tribulation, and immediately before Messiah’s returns, celestial events will unfold that usher in the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The grand finale will be witnessed by all who are alive and remain on earth.

Where Are We Today?

That’s a reasonable question, and one that’s best answered by visualizing the hospital pain chart. If you’ve ever made a frantic trip to the emergency room, then you are familiar with this chart which is simply an illustrated tool used to assess a patient’s level of pain.

So take a moment to picture the pain chart, and let’s use it as a point of reference to help us decide where we are now:

☐ O- Would be no pain & that’s unrealistic. We live in a fallen world so the only time this planet has ever been at a zero is in the Garden of Eden.

☐ 1-3- Although this kind of pain is manageable, it’s still a nuisance that usually requires a nap & couple ibuprofen to fix. So let me ask you a question, do you think the world has changed since you were a kid? I do, but we have learned to manage our pain and have gotten used to feeling like Dorothy when she declared, "We aren't in Kansas anymore."

☐ 4-6- This kind of pain affects your peace of mind. Do you find yourself concentrating on the terrible news these days? Are you reading the headlines
with worried or anxious thoughts? If I didn't know the Prince of Peace, I would definitely lose my peace.

- 7-9- This pain requires extreme measures. Americans aren't quite here yet, but other countries have been at this pain level for some time now (think Syria, Iraq, Egypt, etc.). When you begin to place extreme limits on the places you will go, then you are at this level.

- 10- This pain is unbearable, and this is the pain level that the earth & its inhabitants will experience during a time called the Tribulation. When cities throughout the earth experience blackouts on a regular basis, diseases begin to kill off large numbers of the population, terrorist attacks become a daily event, and cosmic signs begin to increase, you will know the earth is at a level 10!

Based on current unrest, it's safe to conclude that the United States and most of Europe are at a level 4-6. But, not so with the Middle East. With all of the unrest and terrorism occurring there, they are definitely at a pain level 7-9. Why the discrepancy? Remember, Jesus is returning to the city of Jerusalem, so the countries surrounding her will feel the greatest amount of pain, first. But know this, during the Tribulation, the entire earth will be at a level 10- not just the Middle East!

So with these things in mind, let's begin tracking the birth pains!
Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. And He said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.” As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” And Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that no one misleads you.”

Matthew 24:1-4
1. The Beginning of Sorrows
Chapter One

Birth Pain #1-False Messiahs

"For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many (Matthew 24:5-NASB)."

From the Mount of Olives, Jesus began His infamous discourse by warning His disciples of False Messiahs, and the city of Jerusalem seems to be their rallying point. Why this city? Well, there is a little known condition called Jerusalem Syndrome that may play a part in this, and years ago, while living in Jerusalem, I had the opportunity of witnessing it firsthand. If you are not familiar with Jerusalem Syndrome, let me fill you in because neither was I before living there:

Jerusalem syndrome is a group of mental phenomena involving the presence of either religiously themed obsessive ideas, delusions or other psychosis-like experiences that are triggered by a visit to the city of Jerusalem. It is not endemic to one single religion or denomination but has affected Jews, Christians, and Muslims of many different backgrounds.¹

Sadly, after witnessing this phenomenon, ranging from the mild to the extreme, I came to the conclusion

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerusalem_syndrome
that if a person visits the Holy Land with very little Bible knowledge, or any type of support system, then they run the risk of falling into errors and extremes. Why? Well, because the Holy Land attracts hordes of weirdos! And Jerusalem is the epicenter for all types of religious spirits. Satan, and his demonic army, have a field day in this city and will continue to until Jesus returns.

But this shouldn’t surprise Christians who know their Bible. Yet, I wasn’t quite prepared for some of the craziness I witnessed while living and working in the greatest city on earth. There were times it took my breath away. I even have my own interesting encounter with a false messiah:

_During the late 1990s, I had the fortunate opportunity of volunteering in a Messianic bookstore right across from David’s Citadel in the heart of Jerusalem’s Old City. Many interesting characters crossed my path. One such encounter involved a young, German man with a thick dark beard, a handsome face, and wild eyes who had stopped in to the bookstore just to talk. Our conversation went from zero to weird in a matter of seconds:_

(Weird Guy) “Look at me…” (Long pause)

(Me) “O.K…. why?”

(Weird Guy) “I look like Him, don’t I?”

(Me) “Who?”

(Weird Guy) “You know…Jesus!”

After an awkward silence, and a little chuckle from me, “Jesus” left angry because I wouldn’t
even consider his silly notion that He was somehow the Messiah. But as funny as this situation sounds, it is not unusual. While in Jerusalem, I even met “Moses.” This “Moses” wore a tattered red sweater, dirty yellowish-gray beard, and a crazy look in his eyes. “Moses” could often be found on the Temple Mount or in that vicinity spouting Bible verses and impending judgment. Most just laughed it off, but false “Jesus” joined forces with false “Moses,” and God only knows how much harm those two did to the cause of Christ in His city.

Why is a Messiah Complex So Prevalent?

Some people are truly mentally ill, and some just love glory! The reasons are vast, but one things for certain: Ever since God announced His intentions of delivering His people through a Messiah (Genesis 3:15), men (and women) have grabbed ahold of this promise and applied it to their own lives. Unlike Jesus, though, they barely left their mark on history, but their god like attempt to control the masses have earned them the title-False Messiah:

Notable False Jewish Messiahs

1. Simon bar Kochba- in 132 A.D., Simon led an infamous revolt against the Romans, & amazingly he even established a Jewish State for 3 years. Rabbi Akiva thought that bar Kochba was possibly the Jewish Messiah and gave him a name meaning “son of the star.” However, not all shared Rabbi Akiva’s view. His own disciple gave Simon a name that meant “son of the lie.” Bar Kochba’s character was

2 One of Judaism’s greatest and beloved scholars.
also rather questionable. He was quoted as saying, “O Mater of the universe, there is no need for you to assist us against our enemies, but do no embarrass us either!” This haughty “messiah” went so far as to punish both Jews and Christians for not joining forces with him to fight off the Romans. Sadly, hundreds of thousands of Jews lost their lives when they followed this wannabe Messiah into war.

2. **Sabbatai Zevi** - was a Turkish rabbi and Kabbalist who claimed to be the Messiah. In the 1600s, the Jewish world was convinced that their Messiah was about to make his appearance. A prophecy in the *Zohar* supported this belief and even declared that the year 1648 would be the year of his arrival. So, in 1648, Zevi began to claim to be the Messiah. In order to prove his claim, he began to pronounce the Tetragrammaton (the unpronounceable name of God). He was fascinated with mysticism, and his followers claimed to speak with angels, predict the future, and perform miracles. Zevi was eventually excommunicated from his local synagogue. However, over the years he managed to gain many reputable Jewish followers. Sadly, his wife had a messiah complex too and an even more sketchy background. She was a prostitute who believed that she was destined to be the bride of Messiah. Their history together is colorful one, but in the end it didn’t take long for this “messiah’s” true colors to show. When persecution arose, Zevi converted to Islam, and he even convinced 300 of his followers to do the same. Today, it is believed that approximately 100,000 Turks still follow the teachings of Sabbatai Zevi.

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3 A pseudepigraphic work claiming to be revelation from God.
3. Menachem Mendel Schneerson (the Rebbe) - was a Russian born American orthodox Jewish rabbi. During the 1900s, Menachem became the leader of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. He was considered a genius, and by the age of 17 he had mastered the entire Talmud. Menachem was a visionary and desired to make the world a better place. He looked forward to the coming of Messiah, but his followers hoped he was the Messiah. Today, some still believe Schneerson is the Messiah, even though he never made this claim. Undoubtedly, his mark on the Jewish world was far reaching.

If you thought Messianic hopes had died with the rise of secular Judaism, think again. Today, many devout Jews absolutely believe that they can hasten Messiah’s coming by doing the following:

1. **Teshuva** - Returning to God with all of your heart will quicken Messiah’s coming.
2. **Keeping the Sabbath** - Just keeping one Sabbath properly, according to some, will usher in the Messiah.
3. **Torah-study** - At least 10 men are needed to come together and study Torah. It is believed that this practice brings back the exiles of Israel and accelerates Messiah’s coming.
4. **Tzedekah** - Showing compassion to the needy is an important step to bring in Messiah.

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4 A branch of Hasidism that started in Russia that focuses on the Creator, creation & the creature.
5 A compilation of writings of Jewish tradition
6 Teshuvah means to repent & return to God with all of your heart
7 Includes the 5 books of Moses: Genesis-Deuteronomy
8 Means justice or righteousness but is often translated as charity
5. The Unity of Israel- Being of one mind is also important to Messiah’s coming. However, Israel, like all nations struggles with this one.

6. Believing in Messiah’s coming- Simply believing and anticipating His arrival is enough to bring Messiah.

Right now plenty of 21st century Jews are anxiously waiting for the first coming of their Messiah, and they are feverishly working toward that goal. But they are not alone. Over the centuries, so called “Christian” cults have had their Messiah wannabes too:

Notable False “Christian” Messiahs

1. Simon the Sorcerer—was a Samaritan and first century convert to Christianity. Over the years, he gained a large following of Samaritans because of his powerful sorceries, and it is believed that he could even fly and levitate. When Philip the Evangelist preached the Gospel to the Samaritans, they, along with Simon, believed in Jesus. He was even baptized by the Evangelist. However, when Simon saw the Apostle Peter pray with power, he tried to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit from him (Acts 9) which earned him a strong rebuke from the Apostle. Many early Christian writings mention Simon as the source of all heresies! He is believed to be one of the founders of Gnosticism. 9

2. Ann Lee—was a prominent 1700s Shaker and the leader of the United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Appearing. Her and her followers worshipped by ecstatic dancing and shaking which is how they earned the name “Shakers.” She taught that sexual

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9 Comes from the Greek word “gnosis” meaning secret knowledge & is considered a Christian heresy.
purity would make one perfectly holy and that the shaking was the result of sin being purged from the body. She did not want to marry, but eventually, Ann’s father insisted that she do so. Sadly Ann had 4 children who all died in infancy. After coming to America, her husband left her. Ann’s experiences led her to extreme teachings on celibacy and marriage. She believed in the Second Coming and preached against sin. But she also taught that celibacy and confession of sin were the only way to salvation. Her followers called her “Mother Ann” and believed she was God in female form.

3. **David Koresh** - was the founding leader of the Branch Davidians. Koresh became a “Christian” in the 7th Day Adventist Church, but later split with them and formed the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas. David claimed to be a prophet, and prophesied his death would take place in Israel and then changed it to America. There were allegations of sexual abuse and child abuse within his compound. In 1993, The Branch Davidians were part of an infamous raid that brought the deaths of Koresh and 80 of his followers.

This is just a sampling of the many false Messiahs that have come and gone from Christendom. This phenomenon occurs when churches or groups leave the Biblical text and begin to exalt their leaders causing messiah complexes to rear their ugly heads. However, true, biblical Christianity accepts only Jesus Christ as worthy of praise and worship because, He, alone, ful-

\[10\] Large “Christian” denomination that believes in the Second Coming of Christ. Adventists are well known for their Saturday services as opposed to the traditional Christian Sunday services.
filled every single prophecy in the Bible concerning Messiah’s first coming, and Jesus was the only One willing to die for your sins:

*But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities. The chastening of our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed (Isaiah 53:5).*

In the future Jesus will come again as the long awaited King:

*But I will settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever (1 Chronicles 17:14).*

And there will be no doubt as to who Messiah is:

“And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory (Matthew 24:30).”

Therefore, there is no room for anyone else to hold or lay claim to an exalted position:

*For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name (Philippians 2:9).*

Regrettably, false Messiahs will continue until the Second Coming, and you to need to know that Christians and Jews aren’t the only ones with Messianic hopes. Muslims have them too, and since Islam’s founding, Messianic claims have flourished:
Notable False Muslim Messiahs

1. *Mahdi*- in Islam, the Mahdi is a type of Messiah. Devout Muslims believe that he will appear on earth at the time of judgment and rid the world of sin. Since the birth of Islam in 610 AD, many people have claimed to be the Mahdi. The Mahdi must meet certain qualifications: he must descend from Mohammed, be a universal leader of Islam, rule the world, lead an eastern army of black flags, conquer Israel, show signs, and wonders, and he will even appear on the world scene with a peace agreement. Wow! Whom does this sound like to you? (Hint- the Antichrist)

2. *Muhammad Jaunpuri*- in the 1400’s, while visiting the city of Mecca, Jaunpuri claimed to be the Imam Mahdi. And his credentials are worth mentioning: By the age of 7, he had memorized the entire Quran. By the age of 12, he was called “Lion of the learned,” and by the age of 21, Jaunpuri was called “The Master of Saints.” When he claimed to be the Mahdi, two respected Muslims witnessed his declaration and accepted it as valid. However, he eventually died in Afghanistan.

3. *Bab*- one of the founders of Babism and a central figure of the Baha’i faith, who at the age of 24 claimed to be an inspired interpreter of the Quran. Later he declared himself the promised one or “Mahdi.” He even wrote a new Shariah (religious law.) His movement was strongly resisted in Iran, and many of his followers were killed. At the age of 30, Bab, was killed.

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11 The holy book of Islam
by firing squad. Baha’is claim that Bab is the reincarnation of Elijah the prophet and John the Baptist.

For Bible believing Christians, the above Messianic claims are laughable, but not so for thousands of others who don’t rely on the infallibility of the Bible to guide their Messianic hopes. Plenty of well-intentioned men and women have fallen prey to these wolves in sheep’s clothing.

So how can you tell a false Messiah from the real one? Well, since God is the One who introduced the idea of the Messiah in the first place, we should probably (make that definitely) base our Messianic views on what His prophets foretold. Don’t you think? God’s best seller provides every prophecy we need to know concerning the real Messiah. All we have to do is a little R & R-reading and research! So let’s review the Messiah basics that will keep you from believing the lies of every Bar Kochba, David Koresh, and Mahdi that rears its lying head in our times.

14 Significant Messianic Prophecies

□ Messiah will be born of a woman (Genesis 3:15)
□ Messiah will be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)
□ Messiah will be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14)
□ Messiah’s name means “God with us” (Is. 7:14)
□ Messiah is God in the flesh (Is. 9:6)
□ Messiah will come from the Tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10)
□ Messiah will spend some time in Egypt (Hos. 11:1)
□ Messiah will be rejected by the Jews (Isaiah 53:3; Ps. 69:8)
□ Messiah will be called a Nazarene (Is. 11:1)
□ Messiah will be killed alongside criminals (Is. 53:12)
Messiah’s hands & feet will be pierced (Zechariah 12:10)

Messiah will be a sacrifice for sin (Is. 53:5-12)

Messiah will die & be resurrected (Ps. 16:10; 49:15)

Messiah will have 2 comings: The 1st as the Suffering Servant (Is.53; Zech.12:10) & The 2nd as King Messiah (Is. 9 &11; Ps. 72; Dan.7)

Messiah had to come before the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D.\(^{12}\) (Dan.9:25-26)

With this simple checklist, it is easy to reject and refute any new claims of Messiahship. Why? Because every prophecy concerning Messiah’s first coming has been fulfilled by the Nazarene-Jesus Christ. Satan hates this fact, and wants to lead as many people as he can away from the saving truth of Yeshua Ha’Mashiach (Jesus-the Messiah). That is why so many false messiahs come and go.

Yet, true followers of Messiah Jesus are not persuaded by the hordes of false messiahs. As a matter of fact, we hold onto the truths found in the Bible, and today we are:

Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus (Titus 2:13).

As we eagerly await the Second Coming, expect deception to increase and many new claims of messiahship to come forth.

\(^{12}\) For more on this subject, I recommend the book Messianic Christology by Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum- http://ariel.org/ariel-fruchtenbaum.htm
Chapter Two

Birth Pain #2-Wars & Rumors of Wars

“You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end (Matthew 24:6).”

I loved my time in Israel. It shaped my life and provided me with wonderful memories and some scary ones too! I remember one of those more fearful memories like it was yesterday:

An unusual unrest had suddenly permeated the Messianic bookstore that I spent my days volunteering in. For the first time, since I had arrived, I sensed an urgency that I had not felt before. Well-meaning Believers bombarded me with questions and the latest news. Words like gas masks and bomb shelter were thrown at me. The expression on my face said it all. “Do I need to worry?” I found a quiet place to say a quick, but desperate, prayer. Before the words could even leave my thoughts, I was overwhelmed with a promise that quieted my soul and silenced the forces of darkness that threatened my peace of mind and Israel’s security. I heard the still small voice of the Holy Spirit speak these words: “I will cause you to walk amongst fiery coals, and you will not be burnt!” I knew it was the Lord who spoke peace to me that day, and with great assurance, I continued my daily duties of bookstore life. To be
honest, I don’t even remember any further conversations about the threat Sadaam Hussein had made. After the Prince of Peace gave me peace, Sadaam’s threat of war became a moot point. Did Sadaam make good on his threats? No, and the very next day was peaceful and uneventful.

Why did I share this story? Well, Jesus told His followers that wars and rumors of wars would happen until His Second Coming, and this story is a perfect example of a “rumor” of war. Sadly, Israel faces these kinds of threats every day. They may not realize it, but in His Matthew discourse, Jesus promised that Israel would NEVER be annihilated by her enemies:

“Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place (Matthew 24:34).”

Even though Jesus made this assurance, it doesn’t stop wars and rumors of war from happening. Did you know that the 20th century was the bloodiest and costliest century for wars? Most people read Matthew 24:6 and blow it off because the last century saw so many wars, and Jesus didn’t return then. But if you look at the words of Jesus carefully, you will see that He didn’t say wars would signal the end, only that they would happen until His Second Coming. Most importantly, He wanted His followers to stay in peace because the promise of a forever rest from wars and conflicts awaited them and us. Let’s take a look at a list of the wars that marked the 21st century:

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13 Sadaam Hussein was the President of Iraq (1979-2003). In 2006, Sadaam was convicted of war crimes & executed by hanging.
Wars of the 20th Century

- The 2nd Boer War
- Somali Jihad
- The Boxer Rebellion
- The Philippine-American War
- Italo-Ottoman War
- 1st Balkan War
- 2nd Balkan War
- WWI (1914-1918)
- Turkish War of Independence
- Greco Turkish War
- Russian Civil War
- Polish-Soviet War
- Sino Japanese War
- 2nd Italo-Ethiopian War
- Spanish Civil War
- WWII
- Cold War
- Greek Civil War
- 1st Indochina War
- French Indochina War
- Khmer Issarak War
- 1st Kashmir War
- 1st Arab-Israeli War
- Malayan War
- Korean War
- Algerian War of Independence
- Suez War of 1956
- 2nd Indochina War
- The Vietnam War
- Laotian Civil War
- Cambodian Civil War
- Yemen Civil War
- Sino-Indian War
- 2nd Kashmir War
Six Day War
Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia
Bengali War of Independence
Yom Kippur War
Lebanese Civil War
Ogaden War
3rd Indochina War
Cambodia-Vietnam War
China-Vietnam War
China-Vietnam Border Clashes
Thai-Laotian Border Clashes
Afghan Civil War
Iranian Hostage Crisis
Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan
Iran-Iraq War
Falkland Islands War
Israeli Invasion & Occupation of S. Lebanon
Invasion of Grenada
The Gulf War
3rd Balkan War
2nd Chechen War
Congo War

Wow! I counted over 50 wars or skirmishes in the last century alone. So how are we looking for the 21st century? Not too good. Take a look at a list of the wars and/or conflicts we’ve had thus far:

**Wars/Terror of the 21st Century**

- Terrorist Attack World Trade Center 9/11/01
- U.S. Operations Against Al-Qaida in Somali 2006-present
- Baluchistan War 2003-Present
- Bangladesh Army Mutiny of 2009
- Burundian Civil War 1994-present
- Central African Republic Army Mutiny 2001-present
- Chad Rebellion 2005-present
- The 2nd Chechen War 1999-present
- Colombian Civil War 1964-present
- Cote de Ivorie Civil War 2002-present
- Darfur War 2003-present
- The Ethiopia Somali War 2006-present
- Gaza War 2008-2009
- Gaza War 2012
- Georgia-Russia War 2008
- Honduras Coup 2009
- India-Bangladesh Border Conflict 2001
- India’s Maoist Insurgency 1967-present
- Iraq War 2003-2011
- Israel Palestinian War 2001-2005
- Israel-Syrian Conflict 1948-present
- ISIS War 2014-present
- Korean Conflict 1950-present
- Macedonian-Albanian Uprising 2001
- Mt. Elgon Insurgency 2005-2008
- Nepal Civil War 1996-present
- Sa’dah Al Houthi Rebellion in Yemen 2004-present
- Solomon Islands unrest 2006
- Sri Lankan Civil War 1983-2009
- Thailand Political Unrest 2006-present
- Thai-Muslim Rebellion 2003-present
- Burma Border Conflict 2001
- Ukraine Civil War 2014-present
- Waziristan War 2003-present
- The Syrian Uprising 2011-present
- The Arab Spring 2010-2011
- Saudi Campaign Against Houthis (with 9 Arab Nations) in Yemen present
- Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan War) 2001-present
Al-Qaida War 1998- present

As you can see from the above table, the wars and/or conflicts of the 21st century are set to well exceed the wars of the 20th century. Unfortunately, things aren’t looking better, and if you watch the news, you will be bombarded with recent rumors of wars. Take a look at just a few of the headlines for 2015:

**Current Wars & Rumors of Wars**

1. *Another Cold War?* Russia continues to make headlines as their fighter jets fly curiously close to American airspace, and some are suggesting another Cold War\(^\text{14}\).
2. *The Koreas are at it again* - In August 2015, heated exchanges took place between North & South Korea bringing the threat of armed conflict to a very real possibility.
3. *A nuclear Iran?* - Many believe that Iran will be nuclear in the very near future. The American government is trying to stop that from happening with an unpopular Iran Nuclear Deal, but it is a volatile crisis waiting to explode. Some believe that Israel will step in and stop Iran’s nuclear ambitions.
4. *An alliance between Iran & Russia* - Who would have thought it? Yet the Bible predicted it (Ezekiel 38, 39). Russia has supplied Iran with nuclear fuel, a sophisticated missile defense, and even civilian aircraft. What’s next...an invasion of Israel?
5. *An alliance between Russia & Saudi Arabia?* - The Times of Israel has reported that Saudi Arabia is trying to buy nuclear-capable Russian missiles.

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\(^{14}\) The Cold War was a state of political & military tension between the U.S. & Russia. It lasted from 1947-1991 (approximately). Source-Wikipedia
6. **Iran Threatens Israel’s Annihilation** - A video was recently released by the IRGC\(^{15}\) depicting Iranian troops invading Israel. Israel believes that this rumor of war has been strengthened by the recent Iran Nuclear deal, and soon it will no longer be just a rumor.

Things are going to get worse. In the months leading up to the Tribulation, and during the seven years of the Tribulation\(^ {16}\), there will be warfare like the world has never seen before. According to one prophecy expert’s website, there are eight end time battles on the horizon, and each of these are supported by Scripture:

**End Times’ Wars\(^ {17}\)**

- **The Psalm 83 War** - According to prophecy expert Bill Salus, this war happens when Israel’s neighbors attempt to destroy her and this war is imminent.
- **The First Gog of Magog War** - Russia & Muslim countries will attack Israel. This war will most likely precede the Tribulation and result in an epic 7 year peace treaty signed with Israel & the Antichrist.
- **The First War of the Tribulation** - this is a 3rd World War where Antichrist will try to conquer the world.
- **The Nuclear War of the Tribulation** - According to the book of Revelation, 1/3 of mankind will die & 1/3

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\(^{15}\) The IRGC is the Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution or Iranian Revolution Guard Corps (Source-Wikipedia).

\(^{16}\) The Tribulation, also known as the Time of Jacob’s Trouble, will begin with the signing of a 7 year peace treaty. The Tribulation is divided into 2 sections, each lasting 3 ½ years long. The book of Revelation records the events of this future time.

\(^{17}\)http://christinprophecy.org/articles/the-wars-of-the-end-times/
of the earth will be burnt up. Many Bible scholars believe that this is a result of nuclear warfare.

- **The Second Holocaust** against Jews & Tribulation Saints- Many will be beheaded unless they submit to the Antichrist.
- **The Middle-East Campaign**- the Antichrist invades Israel and takes the entire area except Jordan
- **The Battle of Armageddon**- Armies of the East come against the armies of the Antichrist. God annihilates this army before war even breaks out.
- **The Second Battle of Gog of Magog**- After the millennium, Satan is released for a season, assembles an army, & once again tries to take God’s throne. He is unsuccessful!

**Encouraging Words**

When Jesus returns, He will usher in the peace that Israel, the church, and the world have desperately longed for. Wars and rumors of wars will cease. Until that day, you can find comfort in the words of Christ who said:

*Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful (John 14:27).*
Chapter Three

Birth Pain #3-Various Ethnic Conflicts

“For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom (Matthew 24:7a).”

After warning His followers about wars and rumors of wars, Jesus preceded to tell them more bad news: Nations and kingdoms are going to fight with each other until His return. This news was probably not what His followers wanted to hear. Remember, first-century Israel anticipated Messiah throwing off Roman rule and establishing a Messianic government immediately, not years in the future. The fact that this type of warfare was foreordained to continue until the Second Coming would have been a major let down had Jesus not addressed the matter.

Nations & Kingdoms vs. Wars & Rumors of Wars

You may wondering how nations and kingdoms warring against one another are different from the general wars and skirmishes Jesus already mentioned. There is a difference, and it is found in the language of the New Testament. Since the New Testament was written in Greek,18 we will form a biblical definition of this type of warfare based on two Greek words: ethnos and basileia:

18 Greek was the common language of the first century & the reason the New Testament was written in Koine Greek rather than Hebrew.
I. Ethnos:

In Matthew 24:7, Jesus declared that nations would rise against nations. In the Greek, this would read:

*Ethnos will rise against ethnos...*

*Ethnos* means ethnic groups, tribes, and nationalities, and if we inserted this meaning in place of the word *ethnos*, the verse would then read:

- Ethnic groups will rise against ethnic groups;
- Tribes will rise against tribes, and,
- Nationalities will rise against nationalities.

II. Basileia:

In this same verse, Jesus also declared that kingdoms would rise against kingdoms. In the Greek, this would read:

*Basileia will rise against basileia...*

*Basileia* means royal power, kingship, dominion, and rule, and once again if we inserted this meaning in place of the word *basileia*, the sentence would then read:

- Royal powers, including kings and kingdoms, will rise against each other.

When we join these two Greek words together, with their meanings, the following definition emerges:

*Various ethnic groups, tribes, nationalities, kings, and kingdoms will fight with one another until the end.*
**Was Jesus Talking About Ethnic Cleansing?**

The New Testament language closely resembles what we call ethnic cleansing:

*Ethnic cleansing is the systematic forced removal of ethnic or religious groups from a given territory with the intent of making it ethnically or religiously homogeneous (Source: Wikipedia).*

However, kingdoms and ethnic groups fighting with one another is more than ethnic cleansing (in the modern sense of the word.) The broad stroke that Jesus painted, in Matthew’s Gospel, simply expanded the definition of wars and skirmishes to include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warfare</th>
<th>(According to Matthew 24:6 &amp;7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wars &amp; Rumors of Wars</td>
<td>Ethnic Disputes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew 24:6</td>
<td>Matthew 24:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• General warfare</td>
<td>• Ethnic disputes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Battles</td>
<td>• Ethnic cleansing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fights</td>
<td>• Civil wars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strife</td>
<td>• Tribal warfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quarrels</td>
<td>• Racial strife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rumors of war</td>
<td>• World wars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Kingdom disputes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Annihilation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Often these types of warfare will overlap, but they have unique differences too. And their differences will become clearer as we look at examples from history.

**Ethnic Group vs. Ethnic Group**

The history books are chock full of accounts of ethnic groups, tribes, and nationalities, who exterminated or resettled large people groups based on religion or unhealthy desires for power. For example:

- Ancient Egypt stripped Israel’s identity and forced them into slavery (Exodus);
- The Ancient Assyrians invaded the Northern Kingdom of Israel & forced them to resettle in other lands (2 Kings 17:5);
- The Ancient Babylonians forced Israelis to resettle in Babylon, take new names, and learn a new language/customs (Daniel 1);
- In 1492, Spain expelled every Jew from its land;
- In 1502, Spain also expelled the Muslims;
- In the early 17th century, Spain even expelled the Moriscos (Muslim converts to Christianity); and
- In North America, Native Americans were forced to resettle in allotted territories.

**Modern Examples of Ethnic Conflicts**

Sadly, this type of warfare isn’t an outdated practice. Throughout the world, various ethnic groups have engaged in vicious and inhumane wars. For example:

- During WWII, Hitler & the Nazi regime exterminated 6 million Jews;
- In the 1990s, the Hutus (an African Great Lakes region ethnic group) massacred the minority Tutsis;
In the 20th & 21st centuries, fighting between rebel Sudanese groups and military have left hundreds of thousands dead & 2 million displaced;
Throughout the Muslim world, the Shiites (adherents of Shia Islam) & Sunnis (adherents of Sunni Islam or orthodox Islam) fight for control, and the larger group tries to expel the smaller group;
A Muslim terrorist group, known as Boko Haram, has dedicated itself to the destruction of Christianity in the country of Nigeria;
Today, ISIS terrorizes Christians & other ethnic groups, even beheading those who won’t convert.

Kingdom vs. Kingdom

And where do we see kingdoms rising against kingdoms? The Middle East is definitely a hotbed for this type of conflict, but it happens everywhere:

In the 1950s, North Korea invaded South Korea. Even though this war is not technically over because no one won, the bitter feud continues. In August 2015, the two Koreas continue to irritate one another resulting in small skirmishes and threats of war;
In 2015, the King of Jordan, a predominantly Muslim country, went to war with ISIS, an Islamic extremist group, & Jordan fears an ISIS takeover;
In 2015, the King of Saudi Arabia joined forces with nine other Arab kingdoms to fight the Houthis. The Houthis are Shiite insurgents who are allies of Iran and Syria. Saudi Arabia fears their influence and wants to crush their uprising in Yemen.
The kingdom of Iran desires to annihilate Jewish Israel.
Unfortunately, kingdoms, ethnic groups, and nationalities will war with each other until Jesus returns, so we shouldn’t be surprised by the shocking headlines making the news today. However, there is a more pressing matter that we need to be focused on, and it concerns the little nation that could!

**Israel’s Many Brushes with Annihilation**

Woven within the pages of God’s best seller is a love story that has survived thousands of years - even in the face of assimilation and various attempts at extermination. For example:

1. *Slavery in Egypt-* The ancient Egyptians wanted to break Israel’s spirit by forcing her into slavery. A stubborn Pharaoh would not allow Israel to leave for their promised land until God intervened by sending various judgments (Exodus 5).

2. *Battles with the Philistines-* Israel had a thorn in its side, and it was named Goliath. For years, this giant man and his people threatened to destroy God’s people, but God intervened and sent David to kill the giant and release Israel from the threat of impending doom (1 Samuel 17).

3. *Ancient Persian (Iran) Threat-* The book of Esther records a threat against the Jewish people that could have brought complete annihilation. But God intervened through a Jewish Queen, and the plan was supernaturally averted.

4. *Invasion of Ancient Assyria-* The Northern Kingdom of Israel was the first to suffer the consequences of Israel’s grave sin. After being conquered by ancient Assyria, 10 of the tribes were resettled into other lands. God preserved a remnant, and in 1948 began to bring His people back to Israel (2 Kings 17).
5. *Invasion of Ancient Babylon*- The Southern Kingdom of Judah was the last to suffer the consequences of sin. Jerusalem was invaded by the Babylonian King, Nebuchadnezzar, and most of the people were taken into captivity in a faraway land. After 70 years, God brought a remnant back to Israel to begin the arduous task of rebuilding (Ezra).

6. *Roman Destruction of Jerusalem*- In 70 A.D. the city of Jerusalem and the Jewish Temple were completely destroyed. One million Jews were killed, 100,000 were enslaved, and many fled to other areas. In 1948, the supernatural happened, and the diaspora of Israel began to return. Israel has since flourished like a desert rose!

The little nation that could is a survivor, and she will continue to survive:

*Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name. They will forget their disgrace and all their treachery which they perpetrated against Me, when they live securely on their own land with no one to make them afraid (Ezekiel 39:25-26).”*

**Israel’s Current Threat**

It is no secret, though, that the rulers of Iran despise modern Israel with a hatred that surpasses Adolf Hitler’s infamous agenda. Some, ignorantly brush off Iran’s
threats as the voice of a psychotic, but harmless, neighbor\textsuperscript{19}. Yet, they err because they do not know the word of God.

Although, other countries aren’t so outspoken in their hatred for Israel, antisemitism still simmers below the surface waiting to rise at an opportune time. And, if you read the news, you will discover bold headlines encouraging Israel’s destruction and demise. For example:

\begin{itemize}
\item Hezbollah\textsuperscript{20} is trying to get an Iran missile to strike at Israel;
\item Israel faces daily terrorist threats from within and outside her borders;
\item U.S. lawmakers are trying to stop military aid to Israel;
\item Syria plans to attack Israel once its civil war ends;
\item Senior Iranian official tells the British foreign secretary that Israel should be annihilated;
\item Many feel that the current President of the U.S. has abandoned Israel;
\item Iran has aligned with Russia to purchase missiles;
\item Iran sponsors rocket attacks against Israel;
\item Gaza terror groups consistently bombard Israel with rockets;
\item The European Union largely opposes Israel but supports Palestine (the same group that terrorizes Israel); and,
\item Antisemitism is at the highest level since WWII
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{19} John Kerry recently announced that Iran’s threats to Israel don’t necessarily translate into active steps (http://www.timesofisrael.com/iran-deal-is-as-pro-israel-as-it-gets-kerry-says/)

\textsuperscript{20} A terrorist group from Lebanon made up of mostly Shia Muslims & is financially backed by Iran.
Israel’s Future Threat

The threats to Israel’s safety are guaranteed to intensify. And in the near future, the nation of Israel will experience at least three more attempts on her life:

1. *The Psalms 83 War* - Bill Salus believes that this is the next war against Israel, and it is an imminent threat. He, along with other Bible prophecy experts, believe that Psalms 83 is a prophecy, much like Ezekiel 38 & 39. Psalms 83 speaks about a confederacy of 10 nations that will join together to try to wipe Israel off the map.

2. *The Gog of Magog War of Ezekiel* - Many prophecy experts view this war as the next war against Israel. Ezekiel’s war involves a Russian led coalition against Israel that results in Israel’s victory and shows the world that God is indeed on Israel’s side.

3. *The Second Holocaust* - The book of Revelation records this terrible war against both Jews & Tribulation Saints who refuse to bow to the AntiChrist. Multitudes will be lose their lives through the gruesome practice of beheading (Revelation 20:4).

*Pray for Israel!*

The vicious threats against Israel will not stop until the Prince of Peace returns and sets up His kingdom on earth:

*For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us. And the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David.*
and over his kingdom, to establish it and to up-
hold it with justice and righteousness from then
on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts
will accomplish this (Isaiah 9:6-7).

So what can you do right now to support Israel? First,
every Christian needs to pray for this tiny, but beloved,
nation. Why? Because it is a command, and there is a
blessing in it just for you:

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: “May they pros-
per who love you (Psalms 122:6).”

And you need to know that Israel is still the apple of
God’s eye- that has never changed:

For thus says the LORD of hosts, “After glory He
has sent me against the nations which plunder
you, for he who touches you, touches the apple of
His eye (Zechariah 2:8).”

Listen, if you want to be on God’s side, then you need
to be on Israel’s side too.


Chapter Four

Birth Pain #4-Famines

“And in various places there will be famines (Matthew 24:7b).”

Even with 21st century technology, people still depend on crops to sustain them. And the same conditions that threatened crops thousands of years ago, threaten them still today. First century Israel was no different. If drought or infestation weakened the harvest, food shortages were guaranteed, and there was no back up plan. 20th century conveniences (like supermarkets) did not exist. Basically, if crops failed, you couldn’t feed your family, and if a region experienced widespread crop failure, a famine ensued.

The disciples of Jesus probably encountered many food insecurities in their lifetimes. And I have no doubt that they imagined Messiah’s appearance would cure that ailment. Yet, that didn’t appear to be the case. Jesus made it clear that food shortages and crop failures would continue until His Second Coming. By the time they heard that depressing news, the disciples were probably regretting their impromptu end-time conference.

Past Biblical Famines

But, the people of the Book were no strangers to food shortages. And they understood that famine was often a sign of God’s judgment with far reaching consequences such as relocations in an attempt to find food,
starvation deaths, disease, cannibalism, slavery, and other drastic measures. For example:

- **Ancient Canaan** – The first famine mentioned in the Bible occurred during the time of Abraham & resulted in Abraham & his wife leaving Canaan for Egypt (Genesis 12:10).
- **Ancient Canaan** - Another famine occurred during the time of Isaac (Abraham’s son) & resulted in Isaac going to Gerar (Genesis 26:1).
- **The Entire Earth** - A worldwide famine occurred during the time of Joseph & lasted for 7 years. People travelled to Egypt to buy food. The Egyptians even sold their land to the Pharaoh & the government owned everything (Genesis 41:27).
- **Ancient Israel** - This famine occurred in Israel during the time of the Judges & resulted in the family of Naomi leaving Israel for the country of Moab. After 10 years, Naomi & her daughter-in-law returned to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:1).
- **Ancient Israel** - A famine occurred in Israel during the time of King David & lasted for 3 years. The famine ended after David renewed Israel’s promise to the House of Gibeon (2 Samuel 21:1).
- **Ancient Samaria** - This famine occurred during the time of Elijah & resulted in an infamous showdown on Mt. Carmel where God rained fire from heaven (1 Kings 18:2).
- **Ancient Gilgal** - This famine occurred during the time of Elisha & resulted in cannibalism. People even ate donkeys’ heads & dove droppings (2 Kings 4:38).
- **Ancient Israel** - This famine occurred during Nehemiah’s time & resulted in people mortgaging their lands, vineyards, & houses to buy food. They even sold their children into slavery (Nehemiah 5:3).
- **Ancient Israel** - This famine occurred during Isaiah’s time & resulted in desolation, destruction, & war (Isaiah 51:19).
- **Ancient Israel** - This famine occurred during Jeremiah’s time & was the Lord’s punishment on Israel. It resulted in many starvation deaths, including young men and children (Jeremiah 11:22).
- **Entire Earth** - This famine occurred during the days of Claudius Caesar & resulted in many starvation deaths (Acts 11:28).
- **Worldwide** - This famine will occur during the tribulation & will affect the entire earth resulting in many deaths & people will turn to the Antichrist system for relief (Revelation 6:8).
- **Mystery Babylon** - This is a future famine that affects the city of Babylon. It will result in plagues, deaths, sorrow, & fire (Revelation 18:8).

### Major Famines of 20th & 21st Century

Famines aren’t just a biblical phenomenon, but the 20th and 21st centuries are well acquainted with this unfortunate fact of life. Even with the latest farming technology, nations still face regional and devastating food shortages. Take a look at the following examples, and see for yourself:

- 1914-1918- Lebanon- estimated deaths: 450,000;
- 1917-1919- Iran- 1/4 of the population in N. Iran died;
- 1917-1921-Turkestan- 1/6 of the population died;
- 1921- Russia- estimated deaths: 5 million;
- 1924-1925- Volga-German colonies in Russia- 1/3 of the population died;
- 1928-1930- China- estimated deaths: 3 million;
- 1932-1933- Russia & Ukraine- millions of deaths;
- 1936- China- estimated deaths: 5 million;
1942-1943- China- estimated deaths 2-3 million;
1941-1944- Leningrad, Russia- estimated deaths 1 million;
1944-1945- Indonesia- estimated deaths: 2.4 million;
1945- Vietnam- estimated deaths up to 2 million;
1947- Soviet Union- estimated deaths up to 1.5 million;
1959-1961- China- estimated deaths 15-43 million;
1968-1972- Sahel Drought-estimated deaths 1 million;
1974- Bangladesh- estimated deaths 1 million;
1975-1979- Cambodia- estimated deaths 2 million;
1996 N. Korea-estimated deaths up to 3.5 million;
1998-2004 Congo- estimated deaths 3.8 million;
2011 E. Africa Drought-estimated deaths 260,000;
2012 The Sahel Drought-currently affects over 18 million people

It’s hard to fathom the number of people who have starved to death since the early 1900s, and the above list only covers a minute portion of famines on record. Sadly, some countries have been hit several times, and each of these famines have resulted in at least 1 million deaths from starvation. When we see famine on T.V., it’s mostly Sub-Saharan Africa, but China and Russia have experienced severe famines too. Both countries are tied at eight famines each since the year 884 A.D. And right now, North Korea is, once again, poised for a devastating famine.

**What Causes Famine?**

If you look to the world for the answer to this question, you will be told that famine is caused by three things:
1. Crop failure
2. Population unbalance, and,
3. Government policies

However, the Bible provides another reason for famine:

“Son of man, when a land sins against Me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will stretch out My hand against it; I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man and beast from it (Ezekiel 14:13).”

Simply put, God’s word declares that famine comes to a land when they are persistently unfaithful to the Lord. That’s not a popular thing to say, but it’s true. So what can we do about famine?

An Ancient Prescription...

There is an ancient prescription, found in the pages of a timeworn text, which provides the antidote for famine. Sadly, most don’t heed it because they don’t believe they’ve done anything wrong, or because they don’t think the Bible applies to us today. But let’s look at what God’s word has to say:

“If disaster comes upon us—sword, judgment, pestilence, or famine—we will stand before this temple and in Your presence (for Your name is in this temple), and cry out to You in our affliction, and You will hear and save (2 Chronicles 20:9).”

Even though the writer of the book of Chronicles was addressing the ancient nation of Israel, biblical truth never goes stale. When famine comes, we can choose to take the antidote for our sin and apply it to our lives because God will do the same for us that He
did for ancient Israel, or we can wait it out and endure death and great hardship.

There are three things a nation must do if they want God’s to remove a judgment of famine:

1. Run, don’t walk, to the House of God;
2. Cry out to the Almighty... not just silently, but seriously lift up your voices; and,
3. Wait and watch for God to hear and save!

The solution seems quite simple, but it requires a concerted effort of the people affected and a contrite heart. Entire countries could wipe out a judgment of famine if they would only do what ancient Israel did! Devastating food shortages could be eradicated, but unfortunately most won’t heed these instructions for various reasons—pride being number one:

*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling (Proverbs 16:8).*

Consequently, widespread famines will continue until the Second Coming, and America is not immune.

**The Coming Spiritual Famine**

By the way, regional food shortages and crop failures aren’t the only kind of famine. There is a second type, and it is actually worse than the first. Spiritual famine is a very real condition, and it is coming to a country near you:

*“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord God, “That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord (Amos 8:11).”*
The prophet Amos was speaking to Israel, but this word applies to us too. And I dare say that the current evidence that we are in the throngs of a spiritual famine is stacked high. For example:

- In 2015, two Christian countries accepted sexual abomination & legalized gay marriage (Ireland & the United States);
- Churches are attending gay pride parades (By the way, God hates pride!);
- Ministers are marrying homosexuals even though Jesus said that marriage is between a man and a woman (Matthew 19:4-5);
- Christians are coming out as gay;
- Religious leaders are aligning themselves with adultery websites, and many are addicted to pornography;
- Christian businesses are fined for upholding biblical morality;
- Pastors are leaving the church & turning to atheism;
- Transgenderism is applauded;
- The Presbyterian church approved a denomination-wide boycott of Israel;
- The BBC\(^2\) regularly mocks Jesus and Christianity;
- The Bible is mocked and largely ignored by Christians and non-Christians alike.

Since we refuse to accept God’s morality, we are now poised to accept the consequences - spiritual famine. And what is the result of this type of famine?

1. There will be a shortage of people who truly hear from God (Amos 8:11);

\(^2\) The BBC is the British Broadcasting Corporation & is the 2\(^{nd}\) largest broadcaster in the world (Source Wikipedia).
2. People will seek out the word of the Lord, but won’t find it (Amos 8:12), so,
3. People will turn to other vices to fill their spiritual void (Amos 8:12).

**Warning to the Church of America**

America has not faced serious, widespread famine, but we soon will. Remember, God declared that He will send famine to a land when it is persistently unfaithful to Him! Today, America rejects the voice of the true church, mocks the authority of Scripture, rips unborn children from the womb, accepts abomination, and even applauds it. We are standing on the edge of the cliff, and if we don’t respond appropriately, a sweeping and devastating famine is coming to our great nation.

However, the response to America’s pending doom lies with the true Church of Jesus Christ:

*If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land (2 Chronicles 7:14).*

We have a responsibility! Churches need to wake up and call their people to do the following NOW:

1. Humble themselves before the Almighty God;
2. Pray;
3. Seek God’s Face, and,
4. Turn from all wickedness!

If we do these things, we are assured that God will hear us, heal us, and forgive us! I don’t know about you, but I want God to hold back judgment from this country, and I am willing to heed this eternal promise.
Even though prayer can avert a judgment of famine—especially spiritual famine, there is a coming famine that can’t be stopped. During the Tribulation, the world will experience devastating food shortages, and \( \frac{1}{4} \) of the earth’s population will die:

*I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth (Revelation 6:8).*

Because of these food shortages, people will accept the Mark of the Beast\(^{22}\) to keep from starving to death:

*And he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name (Revelation 13:17).*

The relief from hunger will only be temporary, but the results will be deadly:

*And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone (Revelation 19:20).*

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\(^{22}\) The Mark of the Beast shows one’s allegiance to the Antichrist & his world order.
If you are on the fence about a relationship with Jesus Christ, you need to know what’s coming down the road. However, there is good news. The tribulation famines can be avoided if you will do one thing right now:

That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:9).
Chapter Five

Birth Pain #5 - Pestilences

“For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places (Matthew 24:7).”

During Jesus’ lifetime, He was Israel’s Great Physician:

The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them (Matthew 4:24).

And His disciples, most likely, expected that same Messianic blessing to continue. Yet, like the other birth pains, Jesus explained that sickness and disease were destined to ravage populations until the Second Coming.

Take a look at a few of the plagues that have crippled nations, and you will discover that these ancient words were undeniably accurate:

Notable Plagues

- 541-542 A.D.- Europe- The Bubonic Plague killed 40% of the population;
- 1346-1350- Europe- The Black Death killed 30-70% of the population;
1545-1548- Mexico- Viral hemorrhagic fever killed 5-15 million people;
1576- Mexico- Repeat of the 1545 plague & this time it killed 2-2.5 million people;
1616-1619- S. New England- An unknown plague killed 30-90% of the population;
1629-1631- Italy- The plague killed 280,000 people;
1816-1826- Asia & Europe- The first cholera pandemic killed more than 100,000 people;
1847-1848- Canada- epidemic of typhus killed more than 20,000 people;
1852-1860- Russia- The third cholera epidemic killed 1 million people;
1875- Fiji- Measles killed 40,000 people;
1889-1890- Worldwide- influenza killed 1 million people;
1918-1920- Worldwide- influenza killed 75 million people;
1957-1958- Worldwide- Asian flu killed 2 million people;
1968-1969- Worldwide- Hong Kong flu killed 1 million people;
1974- India- smallpox epidemic killed 15,000 people;
1960-present- Congo Basin- HIV/AIDS has killed more than 30 million people;
2008-2009- Zimbabwe- Cholera killed over 4,000 people;
2009- Worldwide- the flu killed over 14,000 people;
2013-present- Worldwide- Ebola has killed over 11,000 people;
2015- India- Swine flu has killed over 2,000 people;

Sadly, even with all of our medical advances, the 21st century is still reeling from the effects of deadly pesti-
lences. We may not be witnessing entire populations dying from the plague anymore, but we have other plagues that concern us. Today, 35 million people are infected with the HIV/AIDS virus, and this disease still kills millions of people per year. And in 2015, Ebola reemerged and nearly scared the daylights out of Westerners as the disease spread via international travel!

**Ancient Diseases are Making a Comeback!**

Many health experts are concerned that we are seeing a reemergence of annoying pestilences that had once been eradicated. For example:

- **Measles** is making a comeback in the U.S. because parents fear vaccinations. Throughout the world over 100,000 young people still die from this disease.
- **Polio** has reemerged in war torn Syria & with adult travelers this deadly disease is spreading.
- **The Bubonic Plague** killed 1/3 of Europe’s population in the 1400s, and is remerging throughout the world- even in developed countries like the United States.
- **Whooping Cough** was almost eradicated in 1976 but it’s back, and it’s very contagious-even more so than Ebola!
- **Scarlet Fever**, highly contagious, and easily cured with antibiotics. This illness usually doesn’t cause death, but it is currently wreaking havoc in the country of Great Britain.

You may be wondering if these plagues and illnesses are just happenstance, or if they are a picture of something more. That’s a reasonable question. Let’s look to an ancient text for the answer.
Is Pestilence a Sign of Judgment?

Ancient Israel thought so, and just like famine, pestilence was considered a sign of the Almighty’s anger:

*He turned His anger against them; He did not spare the Egyptian’s lives but ravaged them with the plague (Psalms 78:50 NLT).*

Israel even witnessed deadly disease and terrible plagues strike the Egyptians because a hard-hearted Pharaoh would not obey God. You know the story, but a quick review of the ten plagues will help us realize that when God says, “Let My people go.” He means, “Let My people go, or else!”

1. The waters of Egypt turned to blood & became undrinkable (Exodus 7).
2. An infestation of frogs encompassed Egypt & the pestilence was only lifted when Moses prayed.
3. An infestation of lice covered animals & humans throughout Egypt.
4. Swarms of flies filled Egypt & they did not leave until Moses prayed.
5. A disease killed off all the cattle of Egypt.
6. Painful boils erupted over the bodies of animals & humans.
7. A terrible hailstorm with lightning struck Egypt & killed anyone out in the open.
9. A thick darkness covered the land of Egypt for 3 days.
10. The firstborn of every animal and person throughout Egypt died.
The biblical plagues should be a lesson to any leader or nation who tries to enslave or annihilate the Jewish people. Yet, today Israel is surrounded by enemies who want nothing more than to destroy her and wipe her memory from the face of the earth. They haven’t quite learned their lesson, but they will:

“And I will set My glory among the nations; and all the nations will see My judgment which I have executed and My hand which I have laid on them (Ezekiel 39:21).”

God Even disciplines Those He Loves

Like it or not, pestilence is part of God’s judgment and not just on wayward nations either! Take a look at the following list as evidence that Almighty God isn’t playing around. He means business—even if it means disciplining His own kids!

- During the reign of King David, God brought a 3 day judgment of pestilence upon Israel that killed 70,000 people (2 Samuel 24).
- Through the prophet Jeremiah, God promised to consume wayward Israel with famine, sword, and pestilence (Jer. 14:12) & He fulfilled His promise.
- God declared that those who commit evil abominations will die from famine, the sword, and by pestilence (Ezekiel 6:11).

Listen, if God didn’t spare His own children from pestilence when they committed abominations, what makes evil doers think that God will spare them? But don’t be misled into thinking that pestilence is just Old Testament doom and gloom. Take a look at these honorable mentions in the New Testament for further proof that disease is sometimes a sign of God’s judgment:
The first century church in Thyatira was warned that if they committed iniquity with the false prophetess Jezebel, they would die from pestilence (Revelation 2:23).

During the Tribulation, the breaking of the 4th seal will bring war, famine, wild beasts, and pestilence to earth killing ¼ of humanity (Revelation 6:8).

During the Tribulation, the wicked city known as Mystery Babylon will experience plagues, famine, fire, and pestilence (Revelation 18:8).

Since Jesus told His church, whom He loves and cherishes, that pestilence would be a consequence of immorality, we shouldn’t reject the idea that this is a sign of God’s judgment. However, in wrath, God still loves to remember mercy (Habakkuk 3:2)!

**Pestilence Can Be Averted**

Sadly, we still live under the curse of sin so disease and death will continue until the curse is lifted. Yet, we can avert a *judgment* of pestilence if we take God’s word to heart and lift up our voices in prayer. Like the psalmist, we can boldly and assuredly declare that the Almighty still delivers from deadly diseases, and we do not have to be afraid.

*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom will I trust!” For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper and from the deadly pestilence. You will not be afraid (Psalms 91:1-5).*
Chapter Six

Birth Pain #6-Earthquakes

“For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes (Matthew 24:7).”

The earth shakes hundreds of times per day, and most days these shakings only cause a slight hiccup in our daily lives, but as the country of Nepal recently discovered, earthquakes can be deadly and costly. As recovery efforts are underway, Nepal still cowers from strong and frequent aftershocks. These “sudden bursts of energy from the earth’s crust create seismic waves”\(^\text{23}\) that, depending on the strength of the quake, could cause multiple casualties, fierce Tsunamis, volcanic explosions, and millions of dollars in damages. One thing’s for sure, nature’s wrath is unpredictable.

Unfortunately, large areas of the world’s population are prone to multiple earthquakes because of their location near identified fault lines. Take for example, the Pacific Ring of Fire which has one of the world’s most active fault lines and is the setting for 90% of the world’s earthquakes. This earthquake zone includes the countries of Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, the United States (Pacific States), Canada, Russia, Japan, Philippines, Indonesia, New Zealand, and even Antarctica. If a super quake hits a well populated city in one of these countries, it could trigger

\(^{23}\) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earthquake
deadly tsunamis and volcanic eruptions. This trinity of natural disasters would result in thousands of deaths and could take years to rebuild homes and lives.

However, nature isn’t the only cause of all the earth’s rumbling. Today there is another culprit that is raising eyebrows. A process called “fracking” has gained media attention as concerns about this technique grows. The United States uses “fracking” to drill deep into the earth in order to recover much needed gas and oil, but this extraction process isn’t without risk and controversy. In late July, 2015, there were 40 earthquakes in the State of Oklahoma in one week, and five of these registered 4.0 or higher on the Richter scale. The governor of Oklahoma is linking the State’s earthquake swarm to fracking wastewater wells.24

Even though earthquakes have always happened and will continue to happen until The Second Coming, there does seem to be an increase in these birth pains—either as the result of unpredictable movement of the earth’s crust or through human activity. Consider these numbers from the U.S.G.S.25 website as evidence:

- From 1901-2000, there were approximately 250,000 worldwide earthquakes (3.0 or higher).
- Since 2001, there have been close to 300,000 earthquakes (3.0 or higher). At this rate, by the end of this century, there will be over 2 million earthquakes.
- From 1901-2000, there were close to 8,500 significant worldwide earthquakes (6.0 or higher).

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Since 2001, there have been almost 2,400 significant earthquakes (6.0 or higher). If we continue at this rate, the 21st century will see approximately 17,000 significant earthquakes—Twice times what they saw in the 20th century.

So far 2015 has experienced over 11,000 earthquakes (4.5 or higher).

There have been 87 significant earthquakes in 2015 (6.0 or higher). Most recently, the country of Nepal experienced a 7.8 magnitude quake & continues to have strong aftershocks.

Within one year, earthquakes in the State of Oklahoma have increased 600%!

The fact that the earth is shaking this much should tell us something! You and I are definitely witnessing earth’s “labor” pains. But why is the earth even experiencing “labor” pains? Science and the media will tell you that this is just “Mother Nature’s” fury, but the Bible provides the real answer.

All Creation is Suffering Under the Curse of Sin!

Death was not part of God’s plan for the human race, but sin & disobedience brought the curse of physical and spiritual death:

But from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die (Genesis 3:3).’

In the very beginning of creation, humans lived for centuries, but they eventually did die, and no one made it to the millennial mark. Adam, the first man, lived to be 930 years old, and one of his descendants, a man named Methuselah, lived to be 969 years old (Gen. 5:5;
27)! Our lives have been cut short tremendously compared to early humans. Even with our great medical advances, living past 100 years old is rare. Eating from the forbidden tree brought death, and all of creation suffers the consequences of our ancestors’ actions.

Then to Adam He (God) said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it;’ ‘Cursed is the ground because of you. In toil you will eat of it all the days of your life (Genesis 3:17).’”

The earth was supposed to flourish like the Garden of Eden, but sin brought death to human life, animal life, and even to plant life. And because of man’s disobedience to God’s law:

All creation is Groaning for the Curse to be Lifted

“For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now (Romans 8:20).”

If you are a parent, then you have most-likely witnessed your little one go from 0-10 on the tantrum scale because you delayed in fulfilling a much-anticipated promise. Well, like an unruly child, the earth is having a wild temper tantrum as it groans for the promise of God to be realized and the curse of sin to be removed. And every generation since Adam and Eve has endured the terrible consequences of the earth’s labor pains. Take a look at this historical evidence:
History’s 5 Worst Earthquakes

1. 1138- *Aleppo, Syria*- Magnitude 8.5; Total death toll 230,000. Many nearby towns were completely destroyed.
2. 1556- *Shaanxi, China*- Magnitude 8.0; 830,000 deaths & it was felt in 97 countries.
3. 1960- *Valdivia, Chile*- Magnitude 9.5; Modest death toll but it could be felt 435 miles away & incurred $1 billion in damages.
4. 1976- *Tangshan, China*- Magnitude 8.2; only lasted 10 seconds, but it resulted in 255,000 deaths & caused $1.3 billion in damages. And this area was considered very low risk for earthquakes.
5. 2004- *Sumatra, Indonesia*- Magnitude 9.1-9.3; Triggered 5 Tsunamis and resulted in a death toll close to 225,000.

More Earthquakes Are Coming!

Now imagine those five, ferocious earthquakes converging over a seven year period of time. Sounds scary, right? Yet, this still doesn’t adequately paint a picture of what will play out during the judgments of the Tribulation.26 Five earthquakes, unlike anything the world has ever seen, are destined to be unleashed on planet earth. The good news? You don’t have to be here for them, but millions of people will suffer the consequences of rejecting Jesus Christ. The following earthquakes are listed in the order that they will happen during the time known as Jacob’s Trouble:

1. *The Earthquake of the 6th Seal (Rev. 6:12)*- The results are fivefold: the sun becomes black, the moon

26 Also known as the Time of Jacob’s Trouble. Will last 7 years & will culminate with the physical return of Christ to earth.
turns blood red, the stars fall from the sky, the sky looks like a rolled up scroll, & the islands & mountains are moved out of their place. This is a devastating earthquake that affects all of planet earth!

2. The Earthquake that Precedes the Trumpet Judgments (Rev. 8:5) - The earth will experience terrible thunder, deadly lightning, & then a great earthquake will strike right before the first Trumpet Judgment.

3. The Earthquake near the End of the Trumpet Judgments (Rev. 11:13) - This earthquake happens when the 2 Witnesses\(^{27}\) are resurrected & results in 1/10 of the city of Jerusalem being destroyed & 7,000 deaths. This will cause a remnant of Jews to fear God & give Him glory.

4. The Earthquake at the Sounding of the 7th Trumpet (Rev. 11:19) - The heavens are opened, and God’s Temple is revealed. A terrible lightning storm results with hail, loud voices, thunder, and then an earthquake.

5. The Earthquake at the Fall of Mystery Babylon (Rev. 16:18)-The worst earthquake to ever hit the earth will happen at the end of the 7 Bowl Judgments. It will divide Mystery Babylon\(^{28}\) into 3 parts, and will destroy entire cities throughout the earth. Every island and mountain will be removed. Great hail weighing between 100-200 pounds will fall to earth.

\(^{27}\) The book of Revelation does not reveal the name of the 2 Witnesses, but some have speculated they are Elijah the prophet and Moses. However, the 2 Witnesses are prophets of God who pronounce judgment on Antichrist (Revelation 11:3).

\(^{28}\) Mystery Babylon is Antichrist’s chief city during the Great Tribulation. No one knows for sure what city this is, but there is plenty of speculation.
Men will blaspheme Almighty God rather than repent.

Final Thoughts

Until Jesus returns, the earth will continue to groan for the curse of sin to be lifted. And, the followers of Christ should not be caught off guard by the increase and severity of earthquakes. Jesus said this would happen. But we can hold tight to the following promise:

*There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him (Revelation 22:3).*

Saint, we must suffer and groan a little while longer, but there is hope. Every overcomer will be granted citizenship in an eternal city that is free from the curse of sin and death. Hold tight! We are closer now to that promise being fulfilled than we ever have been.
II. THE SORROWS INTENSIFY
Chapter Seven

Birth Pain #7 - Persecution

“Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name (Matthew 24:9).”

Before Jesus left this earth, He warned His followers of the three types of persecution they would encounter because of their allegiance to Him as the Christ:

1. They would be delivered to tribulation, & in the Greek, this phrase has three meanings:
   a. Betrayal
   b. Imprisonment, and,
   c. Secular court trials
2. They would be killed, and ultimately,
3. They would be hated by all nations

There is no doubt that being a Christian in the first three centuries was dangerous and could very well result in a cruel death. The Acts of the Apostles add further support to the words of Jesus by recording the deaths & imprisonments of many early believers:

- Not long after Pentecost, a Christian man named Stephen was stoned to death by an angry mob (Acts 7:59).
- James, the Apostle was killed with a sword by the order of King Herod (Acts 12:2).
The Apostles were imprisoned for healing people in the name of Jesus (Acts 5).

Before the Apostle Paul’s conversion, he invaded Christian homes & imprisoned men & women (Acts 8:3).

The Apostle Peter was imprisoned by King Herod because the Jews weren’t happy with his preaching (Acts 12).

Paul & Silas were beaten & imprisoned for casting out demons (Acts 16).

As the first century A.D. came to a close, the Apostle John even penned an apocalyptic book that provided further insight into early Christian life and the problems that had arisen. Imprisonment, persecution, and martyrdom were very real threats—just like the Lord had foretold:

Antipas, a faithful witness of Jesus Christ, was martyred in Pergamum (Revelation 2:13). Tradition suggests that he was roasted alive inside a bronze bull.

Christians in Smyrna were imprisoned for their faith & some may have lost their lives (Revelation 2:10).

A Jewish synagogue was harassing the church members in Philadelphia so much so that Jesus promised a special reward to them because they patiently endured the attack (Rev. 3:9).

Fast forward one hundred years, and it didn’t look like things were getting any better. In 197 A.D., Tertullian declared, in his infamous work titled *Apologeticus* that “The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church.” And even with this bold declaration, it was still

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29 Tertullian was an early Christian writer & apologist (155-240 A.D.)
more than one hundred years later before Christianity was legalized in Rome. Until that time, according to Eusebius the Christian historian, “great multitudes” of believers were killed. One well known example is called The Great Persecution, and it resulted in:

- The destruction of Christian churches and texts
- Laws against Christians meeting for worship
- The loss of legal rights to Christians who refused to deny their faith
- Christian clergy were arrested, and,
- New laws were enacted demanding all people offer sacrifices to local deities

By the time Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, thousands of Christians were martyred by cruel means such as: torture, decapitation, some were torn apart by lions, many were crucified, others were lit on fire, and one was even roasted alive inside a bronze bull.

21st Century Statistics

You can say that Westerns Christians are living the easy life compared to early believers. But sadly, this is not the case in other parts of the world. Consider the following statistics (Source- Open Doors U.S.A.):

- Approximately 10 Christians are martyred for their faith every day. This equates to 322 Christians per month & 3,864 Christians per year.
- Approximately 7 Christian churches & Christian properties are destroyed every single day. This equates to 214 per month, & 2,568 per year.
- Approximately 25 violent acts are committed against Christians every single day. This equates to 772 violent acts per month and 7,712 per year.
The above statistics may seem small in light of the amount of Christians in our world, but a Fox News report suggests the numbers are much higher:

- According to the Vatican, 100,000 Christians are killed annually because of their faith.
- Human rights groups are concerned that violence against Christians is on the rise in countries like Egypt, Pakistan, and Nigeria.
- Between 1998-2003, some 10,000 Christians were murdered in Indonesia on account of their faith.
- Syria is experiencing “religious cleansing” of Christians & some believe Christianity will become extinct in this country soon, and,
- According to Persecution.org, 200 million Christians currently live in areas under persecution.

**Current World Headlines**

Current world reports don’t paint a promising future for many Christians due to an Islamic extremist group, called ISIS, who is inciting fear throughout much of the Middle East. In early 2015, the world was in shock when 21 Coptic Christians were lined up & systematically beheaded by ISIS. As this terrorist group brutally murdered these Christians, one by one, they could be heard crying out to Jesus. Of the 21 Coptic martyrs, it was reported that one of the men was not a Christian until he witnessed the faith of the others. Before Mathew Ayairga’s head was removed by an ISIS executioner, he was commanded to follow Islam. Mathew refused. He

was then told to denounce Christ. His response was priceless: “Their God is my God.”

And who could forget Meriam Ibrahim who was imprisoned, sentenced to lashing, & given a death sentence - all while 8 months pregnant! Her crime? She was accused, by her father’s family, of leaving Islam to become a Christian. While Meriam was held in a Sudanese prison, she was shackled to the wall. Her 18 month old son was placed in a cell with her. Meriam gave birth behind bars with chains around her legs. Through much prayer and world outcry, she was eventually released & now lives in the U.S.

Sadly, these kind of stories are not infrequent. Many Christians around the world suffer in silence without even so much as a whisper from the secular media. Consider the following headlines as further proof that Christianity is under attack in large parts of the world:

- A 2006 article by Christian Today reported that Christians in Uzbekistan were being persecuted & fined for holding unauthorized religious meetings.
- According to the Catholic News Agency, an Iranian man was lashed 34 times because a copy of the Gospels was found in his car.
- A 2008 article by Alarabiya.net reported that Christians in Algeria were being fined & jailed for evangelizing Muslims.
- A 2012 article by Examiner.com reported that a prayer service in India was interrupted by Islamic extremists who beat & mocked the Christians in attendance, including a 65 year old widow.

A 2014 article by BBC.com, reported that ISIS had issued an ultimatum to Christians living in Mosul: convert to Islam, pay a fine, or die by the sword—they were forced to flee!

A 2014 article by Worthy News reported that Christians in Kazakhstan were being fined 1 month’s wages for possessing “extremist” literature such as gospel tracts.

A 2015 article by Worthy News reported that Christians in Kazakhstan were being fined for practicing their faith without the State’s permission.

A February 2015 article by Egyptianstreets.com, reported that ISIS had abducted 150 Christians, including women, children, and the elderly. They were even paraded in cages. Many were raped, tortured, beheaded, and burned alive.

A March 2015 article from Morningstar News reported that S. Sudan had jailed, tortured, and lashed a pastor because Islamists accused him of being a spy.

The Christian Post reported that ISIS even beheads children...one source said that ISIS kills every Christian they find!

**Persecution in Europe**

In Western countries, Christian persecution looks much different from what you just read. For instance, a 2010 article from The Telegraph reported that a Baptist preacher, in the U.K., was jailed because a gay police officer overheard him listing several sins. According to the article, the preacher was handing out tracts about the 10 Commandments and telling people how to get to heaven. A police officer, who was passing by, became offended when the preacher said homosexuality is a sin, and he then placed the street preacher in a jail cell for
7 hours. Granted that’s not a long time compared to what Christians in the Middle East are enduring, but the fact that this is happening in a “Christian” nation is alarming.

Not only are Christians in the U.K. facing fines and jail time, but also they are fair game for ridicule through the mainstream news outlets. In 2012, Charisma News reported that the head of the BBC announced that the news outlet has no problem mocking Jesus & Christians, but they won’t touch the prophet Mohammed. And if you think these things can’t happen in the good ol’ U.S.A., think again. A 2015 report by the Christian Examiner suggests that this is American’s future.

**Persecution in America**

For over two hundred years, American has largely been insulated from Christian persecution, but as this country moves farther and farther away from God, His Hand moves farther away from us and followers of Christ become fair game. Consequently, America will not escape the words of Jesus. Persecution has already begun. Heads are not being cut off (yet), and Christians are not being paraded in cages, but Franklin Graham worries that American Christians will be “sued into silence.” Take a look at the following headlines for proof that persecution is on the rise in the U.S.A.

- A 2011 article by Fox News reported that a California couple was fined $300 for holding in home prayer meetings.
- A 2012 article by The Blaze News reported that a Florida couple faced a $250 per day fine for holding in home prayer meetings.
A 2015 article by Patheos.com reported that a Mississippi school district was fined $7,500 for allowing a minister to pray at an honor’s assembly.

A 2014 article by the Washington Post reported that a New York couple was fined for refusing to allow a gay wedding on their farm.

A 2015 article by Fox News reported that an Oregon couple had been fined $135,000 for refusing to bake a wedding cake for a lesbian couple.

But we’re not just being fined into silence, like the U.K., we are also being mocked into silence:

A 2008 article by News Busters reported that in front of millions of viewers, an American idol contestant was ridiculed by one of the judges for his Christian beliefs about purity.

A 2013 article by TheNewAmerica.com reported that two military chaplains were mocked and even forced out of the VA program for their Christian beliefs.

A 2015 article by Worldreligionnews.com reported that a mainstream T.V. show, Impastor, mocks Christianity with an impostor gay pastor!

A 2014 article by the National Catholic Register reported that the wildly popular show Blue Bloods had hit a sour note when the Catholic patriarch on the show chided the church & declared, “The church is behind the times on the issue of gay marriage.”

Yes, these examples are mild compared to what others are suffering for their testimony of Jesus, but you can expect that persecution will intensify. American Christians who refuse to be bullied or sued into silence should expect the following to happen more frequently:
Christian businesses will be heavily fined and Christians will even be driven out of business.

Individuals will face heavy fines and jail times for speaking out about sin especially the sin of homosexuality.

Christians will be forced out of their government jobs. This is happening in the year 2015!

Christians will continue to be mocked ruthlessly by the media.

Christians will be laughed at and spit on as they share their faith.

Christians will be fired from their jobs for sharing their faith at work or for making others “uncomfortable” about their sin.

Home churches will be fined for breaking “zoning” laws.

Street preachers will be silenced and jailed.

One day, churches will no longer be tax exempt.

**Warning- Do not Assimilate!**

Since Jesus compared these present sorrows to birth pains, you need to understand that they will get worse and not better. There will be days that the pressure to conform to this world will become unbearable. Weary one, take courage, and don’t lose heart. The Sovereign Lord God has all the power and strength you need:

*He gives power to the weak and to those who have no might He increases strength* (Isaiah 40:29).

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32 Kim Davis, a Kentucky clerk, was recently jailed for gay marriage defiance. The “Christian” judge would not simply fine her because he was concerned that she would raise the funds to pay the fine!
Will you refuse to assimilate? If so, in the coming days you will be faced with these eight challenges:

1st Challenge:

Waves of persecution will sweep the land, and it will be tempting to fall back and look like the rest of the unbelievers. Will you dare to become a Joshua generation and boldly declare?

“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord (Joshua 24:15).”

2nd Challenge

The laws of the land will change, and they won’t favor the followers of Christ. Will you dare to become a Daniel generation & publically pray even when your job, home, bank account, and life is endangered?

Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously. (Daniel 6:10)?

3rd Challenge

The Bible, and those who believe it, will be ridiculed and mocked into a corner. Will you dare to become an Ezra generation & commit to studying and obeying the Word of God even when persecutors try to shame you into silence?

For on the first of the first month he began to go up from Babylon; and on the first of the fifth
month he came to Jerusalem, because the good hand of his God was upon him. For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel (Ezra 7:9, 10).

4th Challenge

Because his time to deceive is short, Satan will come in like a flood of great waters. Will you remain faithful in the face of prison, persecution, and even death?

“Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).”

5th Challenge

Preaching publicly against sin will, one day, become illegal. Will you continue to share the Gospel until Jesus returns?

And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation (Mark 16:15).”

6th Challenge

Laws and ordinances will be enacted that forbid the assembly of the saints. Will you continue to devote yourself to the Apostles’ teaching, fellowship with other believers, and to prayer?

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer (Acts 2:42).
7th Challenge

Financial woes are coming, and buying and selling will become increasingly difficult. Will you reject the love of money and trust God to supply all of your needs?

*For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs (1 Timothy 6:10).*

8th Challenge

If you continue to confess Jesus Christ is Lord, one day, you may be threatened with death. Will you silence the god of this age by boldly sharing your testimony, continuing to trust in the blood of Jesus to save you from sin, and unashamedly forsake your own life even if it means becoming a martyr?

“And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death (Revelation 12:11).”

Your response to each one of these challenges, will determine your destiny! But if you embrace them, I assure you that one day your story will be told in the halls of Heaven, and you will receive an overcomer’s reward!
Chapter Eight

Birth Pain #8- The Falling Away

“At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another (Matthew 24:10).”

As the church of Jesus Christ endures increasing persecution, the outcome will be threefold:

1. Many will fall away
2. Many will betray one another, and,
3. Many will hate one another

This doesn’t sound too good for the church, does it? However, when the winds of persecution begin to blow, they will have a cleansing effect. And ultimately the tares (those men and women who look like Christians but aren’t) will be separated from the wheat (the true sons and daughters of the Kingdom). By the way, Jesus has always had a plan for the “tares” that clutter His harvest field, and it isn’t a good one:

Allow both (wheat and tares) to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn (Matthew 13:30).”

So why is our Lord’s response to these seemingly innocent deceivers so harsh? Well, do you realize that tares aren’t just benign growths, but they are actually poisonous? These pesky little impostors look a lot like
wheat, until the ear appears, and then they are finally exposed for what they really are-frauds, hypocrites, and charlatans!

Could this be the reason Jesus repeatedly told His churches that they needed spiritual ears to hear the Holy Spirit’s voice? Absolutely! True followers of Jesus must be able to recognize His still small voice so that they will not be led astray by the loud voices of the “tares” sitting in the pews:

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).”

So how does the true church perfect the art of listening to the Holy Spirit? Simple! The key to hearing the voice of God is found in abiding:

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me (Jesus—John 15:4).”

You need to remember that both tares and wheat have “ears,” but one is listening to the voice of the world, and the other is listening to voice of the true Shepherd:

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand (Jesus-John 10:27-28).”

Consequently, the ones who are listening to other voices are the very ones who will be shaken the most by the strong winds coming to the church. Their response to persecution will reveal their true nature:
Many Will Fall Away

The first effect of persecution will be felt in the pews of the Christian church because many will fall away. But what does that even mean? Well, Jesus used the Greek words ‘poly skandalizo’ to describe this event. At first glance, these words actually look like ‘many scandals,’ don’t you think? And since our generation is marked by scandalous behavior, this would make sense. But, let’s take a closer look at this word because it has a deeper meaning:

Skandalizo (Greek):

1. To put a stumbling block in the way so that someone trips & falls;
2. To entice to sin;
3. To cause to fall away; and,
4. To cause someone to feel annoyed, displeased, or indignant.

As you can see, this word doesn’t just mean scandals in the English sense of the word. What’s interesting about the Greek word skandalizo is that it carries the weight of something that is done on purpose! And, if you look at the above definitions with spiritual lenses, the fourfold agenda of the enemy then comes into focus:

1. Our number one enemy, Satan, has a devious plan to place obstacles in front of every Christian.
2. What will these obstacles look like? They will look like the sin you struggle with the most!
3. Strong winds of persecution, coupled with sin’s enticement, will result in weak Christians leaving the faith.
4. As the masses depart from the true church, the result will be a group of angry, indignant, and annoyed ex-Christians. Why are these people so angry? Think about this for a second...Have you ever stumbled and fallen over something, like a kid’s toy? If so, you most likely felt pretty annoyed and probably even kicked the thing that caused you to stumble in the first place. Am I right?

With this satanic plan in focus, you need to understand that the falling away is much different from Christians who sin but then sincerely repent of their wrong doings. Also, do not believe those who say the shrinking of the church is a result of 21st century enlightenment. But this event, has been planned by the master schemer to lead as many weak Christians as he can into permanent sin and permanent departure from the faith. And once the falling away begins to happen, another event will quickly unfold:

#2 Many Will Betray One Another

Have you ever watched Judge Judy? Her show is full of unresolved conflict and betrayals over the smallest infraction—even amongst close family members! Sure, it’s probably sensationalized for T.V., but as the time of our Lord’s coming draws near, betrayals will no longer be a laughing matter.

In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus used the Greek word “paradidomı” to describe betrayals, and it means:

1. To give into the hands of another;
2. To give over into one’s power or use;
3. To deliver one into the custody of another—to be judged, condemned, punished, tormented, or put to death; and,
4. To permit, allow

*Parididiomi* is used over 100 times in the New Testament. So in order for us to fully understand what Jesus meant, let’s look at a few places this word appears in scripture:

1. It is used when John the Baptist was imprisoned—he was delivered into the custody of another to be put to death (Matt. 4:12);
2. It is speaking about unresolved conflicts that are brought to court- Jesus was addressing legal matters (Matt. 5:25);
3. It is speaking of Judas who betrayed Jesus for money (Matt. 10:4);
4. It is speaking of betrayals among family members—even to the point of death (Matt.10:21).

In these four examples alone we see that betrayal means: imprisonment, unresolved conflict brought to court, double-crossing, and family members who hand over other family members to be killed! With this understanding of betrayal in mind, let’s go back and reread what Jesus said, and take notice of who is betraying whom:

“At that time (1.) many will fall away and will (2.) betray one another and will (3.) hate one another (Matthew 24:10).”

The angry, fallen ones are the ones betraying each other! So why does leaving the Christian faith create so much anger and disillusionment that fallen ones will even betray other fallen ones? The book of Hebrews provides an important clue:

*For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened (that Jesus is God in the flesh & He...*
alone saves), and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame (Hebrews 6:4-6).

**WARNING - The Danger of Falling Away!**

When you betray the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, you put the Son of God to an open shame and you abandon the hope that only He can provide. For there is salvation in NO OTHER name! Despair is then given full access to your mind. And when unrestrained despair takes over a person’s thought life - anger, hate, betrayal, and spiritual death are always the results.

**5 Types of 21st Century Betrayal**

It seems that we are witnessing shocking examples of betrayals every single day. Take a look at some of the recent headlines:

1. **Many are leaving the Christian faith & turning to Islam** – In 2011, Asia News reported that Christians in Pakistan were converting to Islam to avoid persecution.
2. **Many are leaving the Christian faith & becoming atheists**- In 2014, Raw Story reported that a former pastor of the Hollywood Seventh Day Adventist Church tried out atheism for one year & decided to leave the faith.
3. **Apostate pastors are preaching from pulpits** - In 2012, Click2Houston reported that 200 American pastors were now atheists.
4. Family members are taking each other to court and suing one other- In 2014, CNN reported that a daughter sued her parents for tuition even though she had moved out of the family’s house.

5. Family members are killing one another- A 2015 article by Reuters reported that 2 teenage brothers from Oklahoma allegedly killed their parents and 3 siblings.

6. Friends are attacking other friends- Not long ago, 2 teenage girls lured another friend into the woods and nearly stabbed her to death in order to summon a fictional character.

7. Husbands are betraying wives (and vice versa) - We hear about adultery so much that we have turned a deaf ear to it, but it’s a terrible form of betrayal. An adultery website was recently hacked, exposing many adulterous men (and women) who paid to have affairs.

Don’t be dismayed when you see these kinds of betrayals intensify in the coming months and years. As persecution gets worse, betrayals of every kind will become the norm, and many “tares” will leave the church. Yet, there is still one more effect of persecution:

#3 Many Will Hate One Another

Like a raging bull, hatred will pour from the nostrils of angry decenters:

“At that time (1.) many will fall away and will (2.) betray one another and will (3.) hate one another (Matthew 24:10).

The Greek word that Jesus used for hate is ‘miseo,’ and it means:
1. To hate
2. Detest, and,
3. Pursue with hate

Jesus didn’t paint a pretty picture of the end times, did He? And to be honest with you, in my 41 years, I have never seen so many hateful people. The world’s not getting better, it’s getting worse! Take a moment to read comments on any news article that has to do with Christians, and you will discover that we are now despised like common criminals just because we lift up the standard of God’s word.

Bible believing Christians are called names like “Fundies” and mocked incessantly by mainstream media. But it’s not just Christians that are hated. Overall, people are just not that nice to one another. Name calling has gone to the extreme. Death threats over the craziest things are becoming common. It’s not even safe to go to the movie theater anymore.

**End Time Apostasy Checklist**

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul echoed the words of Jesus and warned a young pastor about an apostasy that would be unique to the end times:

*But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come (2 Timothy 3:1).*

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33 Fundie is a slang word used to refer to religious fundamentalists & is used mostly by those opposed to the Christian right movement.
34 In 2015, a dentist killed the beloved Cecil the Lion and received numerous death threats over it.
35 In July 2015, 11 theater goers were shot inside an La. theater.
Paul even foretold 19 specific events that, although they have always happened in every generation, will intensify as the Lord’s coming draws near. So let’s take a look at the list of prophesied events, and be honest with ourselves about the sorry state we are living in (2 Timothy 3:1-5):

- **People will love themselves**- think selfies, selfie sticks, and reality T.V.
- **People will love money**- think young women (and men) making sex tapes & ultimately selling their souls just for fame & money.
- **People will love to boast**- think social media.
- **People will be arrogant**- think Gay Pride parades mocking morality & insisting sin is the new norm.
- **People will be revilers**- Have you heard all the abusive and foul language being spouted lately? I worked in a public school & discovered that teachers had some of the foulest mouths I’ve ever heard.
- **Children will be even more disobedient to parents**- think children killing their own parents over discipline they don’t like.
- **People will be ungrateful**- think children & adults who take, take, take, but don’t take the time to thank the One who gave it to them.
- **People will be unholy**- think an entire generation who has kicked God out of their lives.
- **People will be unloving**- have you driven in rush hour lately?
- **People will not reconcile**- think family members suing family members.
- **People will be malicious gossips**- the stores are full of gossip rags. Need I say more?
- **People will be without self-control**- Addictions such as alcohol, drugs, food, pornography, and sex are off the charts.
People will be brutal - think ISIS beheading children.
People will be haters of good - think unbelievers persecuting those who hold to Biblical truth and morality.
People will be deceptive - Lie and deny is the way of life these days.
People will be reckless - it’s not just driving under the influence either. People spend money recklessly too.
People will be conceited - even preachers are spouting a gospel of self-love rather than self-denial.
People will be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God - think going out on the boat on Sunday rather than taking time to worship in the House of God.
People will have religion without the power of God - think going to church & listening to self-help sermons but never being set free from drugs, alcohol, sexual sin, etc.

Wow! It sounds like there will be an astonishing increase in self-centered, narcissistic, unloving, and unkind people in the last days. Do you think the above list is indicative of the 21st century? If you’re unsure, just check out the stories that are dominating American headlines, and that just might sway your opinion.

A Biblical Response

The end time falling away will introduce a wave of darkness and sin into our world, unlike anything we have ever seen before. Fear would be an understandable emotion. Yet, the Psalmist repeatedly reminded his feelings of one thing:

Why are you in despair, O my soul?
And why have you become disturbed within me?
Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him,
The help of my countenance and my God (Psalms 42:11).

If you allow hope to override fear, then you are poised to embrace the words of the Apostle Paul who encouraged his young protégé to:

1. Follow the Apostles’ teaching.
2. Imitate the Apostles’ conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, & perseverance.
3. Ground yourself in Biblical truth- convinced that God’s word is true.
4. Believe that the Bible provides wisdom & salvation through belief in Christ Jesus.
5. Believe that the Bible is useful for teaching, rebuking, correction, & training in right living, and,
6. Believe that God’s Word will equip you to do good works (2 Timothy 3:10-3:17).

During these dark times, you must keep your ears sharpened by staying in the word of God. Lean in close to the Good Shepherd, and never lose hope. Overcomer, one day you will join your voice with the Psalmist in praise to the Almighty!
false prophets are not new. They existed in the Old Testament and will continue until the Second Coming. Unfortunately though, the poison from their lips is a deadly malignancy, that can’t be ignored. Why? Because every time they open their mouths, they are on a mission to deceive as many people as possible. That’s why you need to know the five characteristics of a false prophet:

1. Their goal is to lead many away from the safety net of God’s word;
2. They feed off the isolated “sheep” who feels unloved and unwanted, therefore, causing many to wander from church to church;
3. They seek experience and place it on the same level as the Bible leading many away from doctrinal truth;
4. Their beliefs are usually vague so that their heresy isn’t always obvious to the untrained ear, and,
5. They will lead many into sin and may even teach a “greasy grace.”

As the winds of persecution blow throughout the church, and large numbers leave the faith of Jesus Christ behind, a door will be left wide open for multitudes of false prophets to weave their lies. Sadly, the
deceptive nature of these individuals won’t be obvious to everyone because, to the untrained ear, they will sound very innocent:

“Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves (Matthew 7:15).”

**Warning!**

False prophets won’t usually be dressed up in false prophet clothes. It will take a trained disciple to recognize these wolves in sheep’s clothing. Why? Because Jesus said that false prophets would also be miracle workers:

“For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect (Matthew 24:24).”

So if you think that you will easily recognize a false prophet because of the “wacky” things they do in “Jesus’ name,” think again. There will be, and are now, false prophets who can perform various miracles, and if you base your belief in their ministry on that alone, you are wide open for deception. Scary, I know! But you can protect yourself from falling prey to their lies. As long as you have your “spiritual ears” tuned in to the word of God, you will be able to spot one of these fakes. Let me share with you my own story:

*When I graduated from High School, I began to work in our local bank as a teller. The bank provided training on credits and debits, but I don’t remember any special training on counterfeit*
money. And back then we weren’t given counterfeit markers, we just went on instinct. I lived in a small town, and never once encountered fake money. After college, I even worked with the same bank for a few months as a Business Teller. In that position, I handled large amounts of cash, and frequently had to empty my cash drawer for safety’s sake. But still no counterfeit incidents to share.

Fast forward a few months, and I was finally living out my dream of studying in the land of Israel. For the next year and a half, I also volunteered at a little Messianic bookstore that was tucked away inside the Old City of Jerusalem. One quiet afternoon, a nice looking man came in to exchange some American dollars for Israeli shekels. He handed me a $100 bill, and instead of quickly exchanging the money, I hesitated and began to study the bill a little longer than usual. Something about it didn’t feel right to me. I gently told the man in front of me that I thought the bill was possibly counterfeit. To my surprise, he didn’t argue one bit. He just wanted the money back so he could take it to another money changer. I handed it to him, and off he went.

So what does my story have to do with false prophets? Well, from that experience I learned a valuable lesson: frequent exposure to the real thing made it easy to recognize a fake!

**Attributes of True Prophets**

The Bible is the place to go if you want to know about prophets, and if you study their ministries you will get much needed exposure to the real thing, and really
that’s all you need. After digging into the Scriptures, I discovered some qualities of true prophets that I want to pass along to you:

- Prophets pray for restoration (Gen.20:7)
- Prophets receive dreams & visions from the Lord (Num. 12:6)
- Prophets are NOT to speak presumptuously (Deut. 18:20)
- The word of the prophet must come to pass 100% of the time (Deut. 18:22)
- God will confirm His true prophets (1 Samuel 3:20)
- Prophets used to be called seers (1 Samuel 9:9)
- Prophets are influential (2 Samuel 7:2)
- Prophets anointed higher leaders (1 Kings 1:34)
- True Prophets’ lives were often in danger (1 Kings 18:22)
- Prophets are servants of the Lord (1 Kings 18:36)
- Some prophets perform signs & wonders (2 Kings 5:3)
- Prophets speak words of encouragement (2 Chronicles 15:8)
- Prophets speak words of judgment (2 Chronicles 21:12)
- Prophets condemn sin (Isaiah 3:9)
- Some prophets speak to nations (Jeremiah 1:5)
- True prophets were abused & imprisoned (Jer. 20:2)
- True prophets are often ignored by God's people (Jer. 37:2)
- The Old Testament prophets foretold Jesus (Matthew 1:22)
- Prophets are not honored in their home towns (Matthew 13:57)
- True prophets will testify of Jesus (Revelation 19:10)
The above attributes can even be used as a checklist\textsuperscript{36} to help you examine a prophetic minister. However, don’t use this alone, but dig into the word of God and ask the Holy Spirit to open your ears to discern truth from error.

\textit{Attributes of False Prophets}

As you study the prophets of the Bible, you will also find that Scripture provides plenty of examples of false prophets too. Some of their qualities are:

- False prophets have counseled God’s people to serve other gods (Deut. 13)
- False Prophets lie & often claim to have heard from angels (1 Kings 13:18)
- False Prophets can show great signs & wonders (Matthew 24:24)
- False Prophets appear innocent but inside they are wolves (Matthew 7:15)
- False Prophets are well-liked by crowds (Luke 6:26)
- False Prophets are greedy & exploit others with pleasing words (2 Peter 2:3)
- False Prophets are motivated by money (2 Peter 2:15)
- False Prophets introduce destructive heresy (2 Peter 2:1)
- False Prophets may even deny Jesus Christ (2 Peter 2:1)

Once again, the above attributes can be used as a checklist to help you examine the prophetic person in your midst. But I want to caution you not to base your

\textsuperscript{36} For a complete checklist, see the Appendix

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perception of a prophetic ministry on looks alone because as the old adage goes, looks can be deceiving!

*Modern Examples of False Prophets*

Unfortunately, entire cults and religions have been formed based on the teachings of false prophets. But, if you examine the lives of these men and women, it’s hard to believe that people have been so easily deceived by them. Sadly, though, many have and will continue to be duped because they don’t know God’s word. So let’s take a look at a few of history’s notable mentions and hopefully learn a lesson or two in the process:

1. *The Prophet Muhammed*- The founder of Islam who claimed to receive visits from the Angel Gabriel. These visits resulted in the formation of the Quran. The prophet had many wives and even married one as young as 6.

2. *Joseph Smith*- in the 1800s, Smith claimed to have visions & visits from angels. One angel even revealed the location of hidden books that eventually became the Book of Mormon. Smith & his followers view his revelations as being above inspired scripture.

3. *Charles Taze Russell*- The founder of a movement known as the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Russell & a colleague predicted the rapture in 1878. After that failed prediction, he changed his beliefs and determined the rapture was simply Christian tradition. His movement claims to be the true prophet of God yet their prophecies do not come to pass, and are often changed when they fail.

4. *Brigham Young*- A leader of the Mormon movement who was well-known for his polygamy. His followers called him the “American Moses.” Young’s ministry was confirmed by the “Three Witnesses” who also
confirmed Joseph Smith’s account of receiving angelic visitations. Young taught that Adam was the father of Jesus.

5. Jim Jones-Founder & leader of the People’s Temple. He made many false prophecies & in 1978 led his group in a mass murder-suicide which resulted in over 900 deaths.

6. Osama bin Laden- A strict Muslim known for his desire to reinstate Sharia Law throughout the Muslim World. He believed & preached violent jihad against the West. He & his followers are responsible for the 9/11 attacks that killed almost 3,000 people.

7. Warren Jeffs – The former President of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. It is believed that Jeffs had 70 wives. He even married his father’s wives after his father’s death. His official title in the church was “President & Prophet.” From prison, he wrote a book of personal revelations titled, *Revelations from Jesus Christ*. He is currently serving a life term for child sexual assault.

The above list is incredibly short, but provides some interesting observations to consider:

- 2 out of the 7 “prophets” claimed to have angelic visitations and even wrote their own “holy” books; however, these books differ greatly so it would appear that their “angels” are confused.
- 5 out of the 7 were polygamists.
- Many of them claimed special revelations from God.
- Many made prophecies that did not come to pass.
- Several have violent histories or histories of jail time.
- All were powerful leaders, albeit not great role models, but still each of them possessed a leadership quality that attracted others.
The Burden of Proof

So what are we to do with all of these false prophets? Well, according to the Bible, the burden of proof lies solely with the one claiming to be a prophet:

*When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him (Deuteronomy 18:22).*

And today’s false prophets can be thankful that we are under New Testament grace, or we would have a lot of dead “prophets” in our midst:

*But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die (Deuteronomy 18:20).*

However, even though the burden of proof lies solely with the prophet, the Apostle John still commanded the Church to test every spirit:

*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world (1 John 4:1).*

And since teachers administer tests, this means that Christians need to be schooled enough in the word of God to properly administer a Biblical test to every prophet and personal prophecy they hear or receive. This puts the responsibility of knowing God's word on every believer- not just the pastor. Be prepared! You will
be called judgmental and even legalistic, but really you are just honoring God's word.

**Final Warning…**

If you are reading this after the Rapture of the Church, then you need to know that a False Prophet will soon explode onto the world scene. He will even perform great signs and wonders.

*And he (the False Prophet) deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast (the Antichrist), telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life (Revelation 13:14).*

The False Prophet of Revelation will:

1. Deceive the masses
2. Perform signs & wonders, and,
3. Encourage Idolatry

Even though he attracts large crowds and performs great signs and wonders, these things do not mean that he is confirmed as a true prophet of God. The fact that he will encourage worship of a human being is a huge red flag that this man is a devil in disguise! And, at the end of the Tribulation, he will reap the consequences:

*And the beast (the Antichrist) was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone (Revelation 19:20).*
Remember, you are not to judge a prophet’s ministry by the miracles they perform, but you are to judge by the message they deliver. Abide in the Word of God and listen to the Holy Spirit, and you will undoubtedly recognize the false prophets in your midst.
Chapter Ten

Birth Pain #10- Lawlessness

“When lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold (Matthew 24:12).”

When Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden, they willfully chose to violate God’s Law. And because of their reckless decision, the entire earth has been under a curse ever since. Lawlessness has ruled the land, and it will continue to do so until Jesus sets up His Kingdom on this earth. However, like everything else Jesus foretold, this condition is growing worse by the minute. So let’s take a closer look at the New Testament meaning of lawlessness so that we can get a better understanding of what is taking place in our world:

**Anomia (Greek) a-no-me-a**

1. Condition of being without law because either you are ignorant of the law or you are willfully choosing to violate the law.
3. Those who practice sin, wickedness, & unrighteousness.

It’s interesting that the Bible includes, within the definition of lawlessness, those who practice sin, wicked-
ness, and unrighteousness. So you might be a law abid-
ing citizen of your city, state, or country, but in God’s
eyes you are still a law breaker if you disregard and even
hate His Law. And if you want to know God’s law and
order, start with the 10 Commandments, and work your
way forward through scripture. God is quite clear on the
things He hates and expects of His creation.

What Did Jesus Say About Lawlessness?

Some would have you believe that Jesus was simply
a good teacher without a care in the world. However,
that is simply not true. Jesus had a lot to say about
lawlessness, and it wasn’t good:

- Those who practice lawlessness will NOT be allowed
  entrance into the Kingdom of God (Matthew 7:23);
- The Angels have a mission: to evict all lawless people
  from the Kingdom of God (Matthew 13:41);
- There are those who appear righteous, but inside
  their hearts they are hypocrites who break the law
  (Matthew 23:28);
- Lawlessness will increase & cause people to hate
  one another (Matthew 24:12)

If you replace the word lawlessness with its Biblical
definition, the above list would then read:

- Those who practice sin, iniquity, wickedness, and
  contempt for God’s laws will not be allowed to enter
  the Kingdom of God.
- The Angels will evict all who practice sin, iniquity,
  wickedness, and contempt for God’s laws out of
  God’s Kingdom.
- There are many who look righteous, but inside they
  are hypocrites and practice sin, iniquity, wicked-
  ness, and contempt for God’s laws.
Sin, iniquity, wickedness, and contempt for God’s laws will increase as the time of the return of Jesus draws near, and this condition will cause people to be unloving and hateful.

Wow! Clearly, Jesus didn’t wink at sin as some would like you to think He did, and He wants you to know that there are consequences for lawless actions.

What Did the Apostles Say About Lawlessness?

Jesus wasn’t the only one to teach about lawlessness. The writers of the New Testament had a lot to say about this condition too. Their words will shed even more light on this subject:

- You are blessed when your lawless deeds are forgiven (Romans 4:7);
- In your B.C. (Before Christ) days, you were a slave to lawlessness, but in Christ you are to be a slave to righteousness (Romans 6:19);
- Christians are not to join together with lawless people (2 Corinthians 6:14);
- In the last days, there will be an apostasy, and a Man of Lawlessness (the AntiChrist) will arise (2 Thessalonians 2:3);
- There is a mystery of lawlessness that is at work in our society. The one who restrains this lawlessness will eventually be removed, & the AntiChrist will have his season to rule this earth (2 Thessalonians 2:7);
- Jesus gave His life so that we could be redeemed from lawless living (Titus 2:14);
- Jesus hates lawlessness (Hebrews 1:9);
- God desires to forgive our lawlessness (Hebrews 10:17); and,
Everyone who practices sin practices lawlessness (1 John 3:4)

From the teachings of Jesus and the apostolic writings, we can safely conclude the following:

1. God hates lawlessness.
2. In God’s eyes, sin is lawlessness.
3. No law breaker will be allowed entrance into heaven.
4. The last days will be marked by an increase of lawlessness, and soon,
5. A lawless one (the Antichrist) will govern this earth for a 3 ½ year period of time.

This is scary stuff! But the truth is better than a lie. And you need to know that God’s standard is the gold standard for living. Sadly, in these days most people don’t even come close to hitting the mark because it requires complete surrender to God’s plan through His Son – Jesus Christ:

But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe (Galatians 3:22).

Danger Up Ahead!

The lawlessness that permeates this generation will NEVER bring true freedom. As a matter of fact: Lawlessness Will Usher in the Lawless One!

For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end
by the appearance of His coming (2 Thessalonians 2:7-8).

Are we close to the revealing of the lawless one? Well, we need only look at recent events to answer this question. As I write these words, riots, looting, and violence are taking place in Baltimore, Maryland. What began as “peaceful” protests soon erupted into rage and lawlessness. The National Guard had to be called out to reign in this violent outburst. But riots aren’t the only example of lawless living. Remember, the true definition of lawlessness includes those who practice sin and willfully disobey God’s laws.

Today, America laughs in the face of all that is holy. Many throw out Biblical truths with the erroneous belief that God’s word should change with the times. However, sin has always existed, and in every form. Remember, wise King Solomon once said:

*History merely repeats itself. It has all been done before. Nothing under the sun is truly new (Ecclesiastes 1:9-NLT).*

Lawless societies have come and gone, and the 21st century will not go down in history as enlightened. No, sadly the lawlessness of this generation will hold the door wide open for the Lawless One (the Antichrist), and many will watch society, as they once knew it, crumble before their very eyes.

**Statistics**

If you’re not convinced that lawlessness is an epidemic in the United States, let me highlight a few statistics for you:
The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world (over 2 million).
The United States has one of the highest homicide rates in the industrialized world.
The United States has one of the highest rates of deaths from child abuse in the industrialized world.
In the United States there are more than 33,000 active gangs with over 1 million people claiming allegiance to some type of gang.

Just these statistics alone should clue us in on the fact that something is brewing in our great country, and it’s not good. Take a look at a few of the headlines that grabbed front page news in late 2015:

**Examples of Lawlessness**

- On June 26, 2015 the Supreme Court of the United States made gay marriage the law of the land usurping the law of God.
- On the night the Supreme Court ruled in favor of gay marriage, the White House was aglow in the colors of the Gay Pride rainbow.
- Planned Parenthood has come under scrutiny for selling baby parts for profit.
- A lone Muslim gunman opened fire on two military locations killing 4 Marines.
- A Florida man was accused of planning to blow up a beach for the Islamic State.
- A California teen allegedly raped & murdered an 8 year old neighbor girl. He then disposed of her body in a dumpster.
- It has been reported that two Los Angeles gangs are in a contest to kill 100 people in 100 days.
- A Pennsylvania prisoner simply walked out of prison and killed a woman in her home.
So What in the Name of Lawlessness is Going On?

These headlines and statistics reflect a society that is getting sicker every day. We need intervention, and we need it now. No presidential candidate or sweeping reform will ever get to the root of the problem because lawlessness can only be cured by the Great Physician:

Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds (Titus 2:13-14).

And as lawless living gains momentum, you may start to feel like the bottom is falling out from underneath you. But if you have purposed in your heart to become a Daniel generation, then you are poised to receive fresh insight:

Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever (Daniel 12:3).

Insight doesn't come by accident. If you truly want understanding of the times you are living in, then you have to soak in God’s word every single day. No self-help book or even the best life coach money can buy will make you insightful:

Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world (1 Corinthians 1:20)?
True wisdom only comes from the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of Wisdom and the author of the Word of God:

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him (Ephesians 1:17).

Final Thoughts

Unfortunately one of the greatest consequences of increased lawlessness is increased lovelessness!

“Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold (Matthew 24:12).”

So how in the world can you overcome a generation filled with lawless and loveless people? It won’t be easy, but it will be supernatural. There are five things that will assure your victory:

1. You must return evil with good:

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21).

2. You must have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ:

I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father (1 John 2:13).

3. You must abide in the Word of God:

I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have
written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one (1 John 2:14).

4. You must realize that greater is the One living inside of you than the one living in the world:

   You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4).

5. You must keep the faith:

   For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith (1 John 5:4).
Chapter Eleven

Birth Pain #11- The Gospel of the Kingdom

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

For thousands of years, the Law of Moses and the Prophets guided Israel, but after the last Old Testament prophet died, the Gospel of the Kingdom began to be preached by Jesus, and eager followers of Messiah wanted to be part of sharing this exciting message:

“Until John the Baptist, the law of Moses and the messages of the prophets were your guides. But now the Good News of the Kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is eager to get in (Luke 16:16- NLT).”

What is the Gospel of the Kingdom? Simply, it is the good news that Messiah’s righteous rule and reign on earth is about to be set up for all to see.

Centuries before Jesus stepped out of eternity and onto the dusty streets of ancient Israel, the prophet Daniel was given a sneak peek of Messiah’s rule, and His words, so long ago, spur our hearts even today:

I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom that all
peoples, nations, and languages might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away; and His kingdom is one that will not be destroyed (Daniel 7:13-14).

It Started With Jesus

The message of Messiah’s coming Kingdom provided a much-needed “spring cleaning” to the hearts of Israel’s hopeful. With every word that Jesus spoke, layers of stuffiness and rigidity that had accumulated for centuries were slowly being removed, and Messianic hopes filled the streets once again. As the winds of change blew, an air of excitement and expectancy drifted through every village. “Could this be the One?” was the question on everyone’s lips. For this man was unlike any other previous Messiah wannabe:

Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people (Matthew 4:23).

His message didn’t just include a far off promise, but it included a right now reward for the people who had faithfully waited so desperately long for Messiah’s coming. Blind eyes were opened, deaf ears suddenly heard voices, the lame jumped from their sick beds, dead bodies came out of tombs, evil spirits fled, and every disease that came in contact with the Miracle Worker was healed. The humble Nazarene left His mark on history, and many Jews became convinced that Jesus was indeed their Messiah:
Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing (John 2:23).

It Continued With the Apostles

With the first coming of Jesus, hopes soared to new heights, but they soon fell to new lows. Why? Because the first mission of Israel’s Messiah was not what the people had anticipated or wanted. The Suffering Servant was sent to deal with the sin issue once and for all:

Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors (Isaiah 53:12).

With His first mission almost completed, Jesus set about preparing His followers to carry on kingdom business:

And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation (Mark 16:15).”

The Apostles took the “baton” from Jesus, and the results are nothing short of supernatural. It wasn’t long before an entire continent had heard the Good News:

This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks (Acts 19:10).
And It Continues With Us

We are entrusted with the same commission that Jesus gave the first disciples. “Go” never became “Stop”:

*Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction (2 Timothy 4:2).*

It’s been almost 2,000 years, and men and women from every generation since then have grabbed hold of the spiritual “baton”:

*One generation will praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts (Psalms 145:4).*

And Christianity continues to thrive even in the midst of darkness. Take a look at the following statistics37, and be encouraged:

- Christians make up 1/3 of the global population
- In the unevangelized world, there are 20,500 full time Christian workers
- In the evangelized, non-Christian world there are 1.31 million full time Christian workers
- There are 306,000 foreign missionaries to other Christian lands
- Approximately 78 million Bibles are distributed every year

Jesus said that His church will not be stopped:

37 [http://christianity.about.com/od/denominations/p/christiantoday.htm](http://christianity.about.com/od/denominations/p/christiantoday.htm)
Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means ‘rock’), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it (Matthew 16:18).

But The Church Will Be Gone Soon!

There is strong evidence that we are living in the season of the Lord’s return:

“Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door (Matthew 24:32-33).”

Jesus promised His followers that He would come quickly, and no one would know the day or the hour:

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone (Matthew 24:36).”

And on this unique day, He would snatch His followers from the earth in an event known as the “rapture”:

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).”

Soon millions of Bible believing Christians will be gone, and a tremendous void will be left in the unbelieving world:
For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming (2 Thessalonians 2:7-8).

So Who Will Preach the Gospel of the Kingdom?

The book of Revelation provides the clues we need to answer this question. During the Tribulation, two groups of people will come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and it is widely believed that they will boldly preach the Gospel of the Kingdom until Jesus returns to set up His earthly rule. The first group of evangelists are called the 144,000:

And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel (Revelation 7:4).

The second group of evangelists are called Tribulation Saints, and they come from the nations of the earth:

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb (Revelation 7:9-10).”

During the Tribulation, multitudes of men and women will come to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and
Savior, and they will wreak havoc on the kingdom of the Antichrist- resulting in many of their deaths:

Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4).

However, this mass murderer won’t stop the preaching of the Gospel:

And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people (Revelation 14:6).

The Good News of the Kingdom will not be stopped— even if an angel has to preach it from the heavens!

Word of Caution...

Before going any further, you need to know that Jesus issued a strong admonition to His followers:

“But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved (Matthew 24:13).”

And this caution applies to present believers too! Why? Because Jesus knew that His followers needed to be endowed with, not just power, but with endurance. That’s an ugly word to some, but boy we need it now—more than ever. Beloved, endurance doesn’t just mean patiently waiting, but it also means refusing to retreat.
And if you refuse to run from the battle that is raging, you will become part of a company of overcomers who have boldly shared the Gospel of the Kingdom throughout the world for the last 2,000 years.

When you let patience possess your soul, then you will be handed the same spiritual “baton” that others before you grabbed ahold of. Like the psalmist, you will praise His name to the next generation, and when our Lord returns, you can be assured that you will receive a great reward:

*Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him (James 1:12).*
Birth Pain #12- The Abomination of Desolation

“Therefore when you see the Abomination of Desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath (Matthew 24:15-20).”

The Abomination that Jesus foretold is a future event, so it can’t be tracked just yet. However, it is important to know the timing of prophesied events. And for those who are left behind to endure the sorrows of the Tribulation, this chapter will help you make sense of everything that’s taking place. But first you need to know that once the Abomination of Desolation does occur, some key events have already happened:

- The true Church has been raptured & is with Jesus in Heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:16);
- The Tribulation has begun with the signing of a peace treaty between the Antichrist and the nation of Israel (Daniel 9:27);
Two sets of judgments have been unleashed on earth: the Seal Judgments & the Trumpet Judgments (Rev. 6 & 8); The Third Jewish Temple has been built (Mat. 24:15); and, The first 3 ½ years of the Tribulation have happened (Dan. 9:24-27).

As Jesus summarized the events of the last days, He quickly jumped to a period of time called the Great Tribulation. It is called great because it is the time that Antichrist will rule the world from Jerusalem which is precipitated by the Abomination of Desolation.

**The First Abomination of Desolation**

The prophet Daniel is the first person to mention a specific event called the Abomination of Desolation:

*Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation (Daniel 11:31).*

Daniel chapter 11 covers almost 400 years of future history, and he nails every single prophecy. Because Daniel’s prophecies are so specific and extremely accurate, scoffers try to deny the authenticity of the book of Daniel and even attempt to date it much later than it was written. In this verse, though, Daniel predicted, with 100% accuracy, that the following things would happen to the future temple:

- The Temple would be desecrated by an evil ruler & his armies;
- The sacrificial system would be stopped, and,
- An Abomination of Desolation would occur.
Remember, Daniel was in captivity most of his life, and the Temple had previously been destroyed by the Babylonians (586 B.C) so Daniel’s prophecy concerns a Temple that wasn’t even built yet!

Daniel’s first prophecy of an Abomination of Desolation found its fulfillment through the hands of a wicked ruler, named Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 B.C. Antiochus went so far as to slaughter a pig on the altar of the Jewish temple, and even dedicated the Temple to Zeus. Antiochus committed an abomination that left the Jewish temple desolate, but not the abomination of desolation that Jesus spoke about (Matthew 24).

**What is the Abomination of Desolation?**

In order to answer this question, we need an understanding of the word abomination as the Hebrew people understood it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abomination</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stink, abhor, loathsome, abominable, utterly detest, abominable thing i.e. an idol</td>
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The Bible calls many things an abomination. For instance, the following are all utterly detestable to the Holy One of Israel:

- Homosexuality (Leviticus 18:22)
- Idolatry (Deuteronomy 7:25)
- Transvestites (Deuteronomy 22:5)
- Unclean offerings (Deuteronomy 23:18)
- Unholy marriages (Deut. 24:4; Malachi 2:11)
- Unbalanced measures (Deut. 25:16)
- Erecting High Places for idol worship (2 Kings 23:13)
- Devious behavior (Proverbs 3:32)
- These 7 things: a proud look, lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that plans wickedness, feet that are quick to run to evil, a false witness, and one who stirs up strife (Proverbs 6:16-19)
- Violence, deceit, & iniquity (Proverbs 8:7)
- The one who justifies wickedness & condemns righteousness (Proverbs 17:15)
- Scoffers (Proverbs 24:9)
- The prayer of the lawless one (Proverbs 28:9)
- Religious Rituals (Isaiah 1:13)
- Adultery & sexual impurity among relatives (Ezekiel 22:11)
- Profaning God’s sanctuary (Mat. 24:15)

From the above list, we can conclude that an abomination is something that a Holy God finds offensive. However the Abomination of Desolation is not just something God dislikes, but it is something that contaminates His House on earth:

“Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation (Daniel 11:31).”

I don’t know about you, but if a ruthless individual stormed into my freshly cleaned home, sat down in my favorite chair, and then declared Himself the new owner, I would be livid:

*Who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God (2 Thessalonians 2:4).*
Imagine how the God of the Universe feels when this happens in His house:

*If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are* (1 Corinthians 3:17).

Even though the context of the above scripture concerns Christian living, you get the point: God considers His house holy because His Spirit dwells inside of it, and His Spirit is God! That is what makes the Abomination of Desolation in the third Temple unique to all other things that God considers an abomination.

**The Second Abomination of Desolation**

In a later chapter, the prophet Daniel wrote about yet another Abomination of Desolation:

> "From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days (Daniel 12:11)."

The second prophecy concerns the nation of Israel in the very last days, and Jesus confirmed Daniel’s prophecy when He said:

> "Therefore when you see the Abomination of Desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand) (Matthew 24:15)..."

Some scholars, though, believe that the abomination Jesus foretold was fulfilled in 70 A.D. when the Second Temple was destroyed by the Roman Empire. As a symbol of Rome’s dominance, an image of an eagle was erected on the east side of the Temple, and sacrifices
were offered to the image. Of course, the Jews considered this a terrible abomination, and men like Sir Isaac Newton even believed that this was the Abomination of Desolation.

However, Jesus made it clear that this was still a future event reserved for a time period called the Great Tribulation:

“For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will (Matthew 24:21).”

Many prophecy experts believe that the Abomination of Desolation begins when the false prophet erects a statue of the Antichrist inside God’s newly rebuilt Temple and brazenly commands the world to worship him. This belief is based on details that the books of Revelation provides:

> And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life. And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed (Revelation 13:14-15).

Even though the book of Revelation doesn’t mention the Abomination of Desolation by name, it does provide more insight into the time period called the Great Tribulation. And it also reveals that during the Tribulation, there will be a third temple in Jerusalem:
“Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread underfoot the holy city for forty-two months (Revelation 11:2).”

**Putting the Prophetic Puzzle Together**

When you put all the pieces of these prophecies together, it is safe to conclude:

1. The Abomination is a detestable thing to God and will make God’s Temple unclean;
2. Daniel prophesied 2 Abominations of Desolations;
3. The first Abomination was fulfilled in 167 B.C. by Antiochus Epiphanes, a type of Antichrist & it preceded Messiah’s first coming;
4. The second Abomination is reserved for the midpoint of Daniel’s 70th Week (the Tribulation) & will precede Messiah’s 2nd coming;
5. Jesus confirmed the prophecy of Daniel as an end time Abomination;
6. Israel had to be a nation again in order for the 2nd Abomination of Desolation to occur;
7. A Third Temple must be built before the Abomination of Desolation can happen; and,
8. The Abomination of Desolation will start the Great Tribulation.

**What Comes Next?**

After the Abomination of Desolation takes place, some will heed the warning of Jesus to flee, and others will not. But only half of Jerusalem’s inhabitants will escape:

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

Where do Israelis flee to once Antichrist has set up his abomination? That is a very good question. Like all end time prophecy, there is some speculation about this. Jesus told the Jews to flee to the mountains, but He didn’t say which ones:

*Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains (Matthew 24:16).*

Some end time experts believe that the Jews living in Jerusalem will actually flee into the neighboring country of Jordan to a place called Petra. There is no specific scripture that identifies Petra as a safe haven during the Great Tribulation, but there is a prophecy that Jordan will escape the hands of the Antichrist:

> “He will also enter the Beautiful Land, and many countries will fall; but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom (S.W. Jordan), Moab (W. Central Jordan) and the foremost of the sons of Ammon (Jordan) (Daniel 11:41).”

From the above verse, many Bible prophecy experts have concluded that Israel’s neighbor will provide her with refuge from the cruel intentions of the Antichrist. Of course, it’s just speculation, and only time will tell. However, for those who missed the rapture, the subsequent 42 months will be Hell on earth...
Chapter Thirteen

Birth Pain #13- The Great Tribulation

“For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short (Matthew 24:21-22).”

The future Tribulation will last for 7 years and is divided into two sections. The first half will last 3 ½ years and consists of two sets of judgments (Seal & Trumpet Judgments). The second part of the Tribulation is called the Great Tribulation, and will last for another 3 ½ years. It is during the second half of the Tribulation that God’s wrath is ultimately revealed:

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God (Revelation 16:1).”

After the Abomination of Desolation is set up, God’s anger at Antichrist, and his followers, reaches its boiling point. Why? There are two reasons:

1. God’s house was just trashed! Remember, I mentioned that if someone came into my house and desecrated it, I would be livid. Imagine how God feels
2. It’s payback time. For years, the enemies of God killed the prophets and saints, and God has been longsuffering toward them, but there comes a time when enough is enough.

During the Great Tribulation, centuries of stored-up wrath will finally overflow producing unimaginable sorrows, unlike anything the world has ever experienced or ever will again. It’s hard to fathom all the birth pains that Jesus foretold converging into one catastrophic event, but this would be the only way to describe what’s about to unfold over the final 3 ½ years leading up to Christ’s visible return to earth. Jesus even promised that these days would be cut short in order to save the lives of the elect.

Who Are the Elect?

In Greek, this word means chosen ones—specifically those chosen to receive God’s salvation. Remember, during the Tribulation multitudes of people, both Jews and Gentiles will come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Some will even survive the Great Tribulation! On account of those followers, the days of God’s wrath on the kingdom of the Antichrist will be cut short.

The Coming Wrath

There will be seven displays of God’s wrath, and in the book of Revelation they are called the “Bowl Judgments.” Let’s take a closer look at each of them:
#1 Terrible Sores

The first display of God’s wrath produces an ulcer type sore that is both painful and ugly to look at:

So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image (Revelation 16:2).

Some Bible scholars believe that this judgement affects the head or right hand where the Mark of the Beast was taken:

He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads (Revelation 13:16).

People have speculated that the “mark” is an RFID chip, and it somehow leeches poison into the bodies of those who took Antichrist’s mark. Of course that’s only speculation, but it is possible. The good news is, this judgment is reserved for those who accept the Mark of the Beast. The bad news only applies if you are around to take it!

#2 The Sea Turns to Blood

The events of the Tribulation will be hard enough with all of the food and water shortages, but then the worst possible scenario unfolds:

The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like that of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died (Revelation 16:3).
The second display of God’s wrath results in the oceans becoming blood along with the deaths of ALL marine life. Will the waters really turn to blood or just become blood red and poisonous? Only time will tell. Either way, the seafood industry will be completely obliterated.

**#3 The Waters Turn to Blood**

If poisonous oceans aren’t bad enough, all fresh waters will become utterly useless and undrinkable:

*Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, “Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things. For they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it (Revelation 16:4).”*

The third display of God’s wrath is the Almighty’s retribution on those who killed the Saints and prophets, and God’s word declares that they deserve what happens to them.

**#4 Men Are Scorched**

As if things couldn’t get any worse, the sun will even become like a ball of fire to earth’s inhabitants:

*The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory (Revelation 16:8-9).*
It seems that the protective ozone layer is somehow removed, and all the bad UV rays are able to reach earth with great strength. Amazingly, this fourth display of God’s wrath will harden the hearts of mankind. Sadly, even in anguish and distress, people will still refuse to repent or cry out to the Lord God for mercy.

#5 Darkness & Pain

During the Tribulation, Antichrist will rule from a throne and a city called Mystery Babylon. For years, scholars have speculated on the location of this wicked place, but it is only speculation. We do know, however, that God has promised to judge, with a heavy hand, a city known for its evil ways.

*Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds (Revelation 16:10-11).*

Imagine writhing in pain, surrounded by darkness, all the while blaming God for the misery brought on by years of lawless living. That is the reality of the fifth display of God’s wrath on mankind.

#6 The Euphrates River Will Dry Up

The Euphrates River is located in the countries of Turkey, Syria, and Iraq, and receives most of its water from melting snow and rainfall. This is important to know because the 4th display of God’s wrath affects the Sun and causes the earth to become scorching hot, resulting in unprecedented, worldwide drought. But it’s
not until the 6th judgment that the Euphrates River finally runs dry:

*The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east (Revelation 16:12-13).*

We don’t know why it takes so long for this river to run dry, but we do know that the sixth display of God’s wrath has a unique purpose: The dry riverbeds of the Euphrates create a pathway for kings from the east to gather and assemble a great army. Who are these kings and why do they form their coalition? We don’t know the names of the kings, but we do know they come from the east, and their ultimate purpose is to go to war against the Lamb of God (Revelation 19:19). However, before this great battle, known as Armageddon, takes place, a final display of God’s wrath is revealed.

**#7 Mystery Babylon’s Fall**

A futuristic city, known in Revelation as Mystery Babylon, will receive the full brunt of God’s anger:

*Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, “It is done.” And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty. The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not*
found. And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe (Revelation 16:17-21).

The last judgment will complete God’s wrath and will result in:

1. An epic lightning storm
2. Violent thunder
3. A Great earthquake- resulting in the city of Babylon being split into 3 parts
4. Every city of the world will be destroyed
5. Islands will cease to exist- large earthquakes can easily produce tsunamis and this will most likely wipe out every island on earth!
6. Mountains will crumble
7. 100 pound hailstones will fall to earth, and,
8. People will curse God

The kings that assembled in the riverbeds of the Euphrates River will watch the destruction from afar and will actually weep and mourn over Babylon’s fall:

“And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city!’ For in one hour your judgment has come (Revelation 18:9-10).”

In anger and obstinace, these same kings, along with antichrist’s army, will make their way to Jerusalem in hopes of defeating King Messiah:
And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. (Revelation 19:19).

It’s laughable, I know, but Revelation reveals the consequences of their egregious actions:

And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh (Revelation 20:21).

In the meantime, anyone alive and remaining after the final display of God’s wrath, will soon witness the Almighty’s grand finale.
Chapter Fourteen

Birth Pain # 14: Celestial Events

“But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken (Matthew 24:29).”

Immediately following the final judgment of the Tribulation, an epic celestial storm will amaze the surviving earth dwellers. Four cosmic events will happen in rapid succession:

#1- The Sun Will No Longer Shine

If you are familiar with the events of the Tribulation as recorded in the book of Revelation, then you are aware that the sun has been affected by three previous judgments:

I. The 6th Seal Judgment-

“I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood (Revelation 6:12).”

The first years of the Tribulation witnessed the breaking of the 7 Seals, called Seal Judgments. Once the 6th seal is broken, the sun will turn an interesting shade of black. But we are not told how long this phenomenon lasts for, and it does appear that the sun bounces back
from this. It’s possible that the Apostle John was describing a solar eclipse, where the moon passes in front of the sun for a short period of time.

II. The 4th Trumpet Judgment-

The fourth Trumpet Judgment also affects the sun and causes 1/3 of it to go dark and stay that way. The daytime hours will even be shortened by 1/3 because of this phenomenon:

“The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way. (Revelation 8:12).”

III. The 4th Bowl Judgment-

But there is still one more judgment that mentions the sun. At some point in the final 42 months of the Great Tribulation, the sun will lose its protective ozone layer:

“The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory (Revelation 16:8-9).”

This event was witnessed by the Apostle John who described flames of fire shooting from the sun resulting in

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38 It’s interesting to note that religious Jews view Heavenly events, such as eclipses, as signs (Rashi) for the nations, and Jewish tradition suggests that the sun represents the gentile world.
scorching hot temperatures and many heat related deaths. After this last, painful judgment, you can imagine that the survivors of the Great Tribulation will welcome the disappearance of the sun.

#2- The Moon Will Disappear

Just like the sun, the moon is mentioned in previous judgments too.

I. The 6th Seal Judgment-

“I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood (Revelation 6:12).”

Once the 6th seal Judgment is broken, the moon becomes blood red. And if you have watched the news lately, then you are aware that the Blood Moon phenomenon has been the recent rage because of a rare tetrad of Blood Moons occurring in 2014-2015 during the Jewish Feast cycles. Blood Moons are simply lunar eclipses that take on a reddish appearance. Yet, these types of cosmic signs have always been an omen to the Jewish people.39

II. The 4th Trumpet Judgment-

And like the sun, the moon will be affected during the 4th Trumpet Judgment too:

“The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars

39 There are 2 dates where the blood moon is not a bad sign for the Jewish nation: 1.) Pesach (the 15th of Nissan) - this feast celebrates the Exodus; and 2.) Sukot (the 15th of Tishrei) and celebrates God hiding His people from evil.
were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way. (Revelation 8:12).”

Have you ever walked outside at night, looked up in the sky, and wondered where the moon was? No doubt you have done this as this is a naturally occurring phenomenon known as the New Moon. A new moon occurs when the moon rises as the sun rises and sets as the sun sets resulting in the night moon facing us on earth. However, this cosmic event is different from a New Moon because it does appear that after this judgment, a full moon will never be seen from Earth again. Imagine 1/3 of the moon’s light disappearing from view. Depending on the moon phase, there will be many nights without the moon’s light at all.

Yet, once Messiah returns, the light benefits we receive from the moon would be outshone by the light of Messiah anyway so the moon’s purpose will become irrelevant.

#3- The Stars Will Fall from the Sky

Like the sun and moon, the stars have their own role in the judgments reserved for earth:

“And the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind (Revelation 6:13).”

I. The 6th Seal Judgment-

With the breaking of the 6th Seal, in the early part of the Tribulation, 3 cosmic events will unfold:

1. A solar eclipse
2. A blood moon, and
3. A magnificent meteorite shower

But, I’m pretty sure this meteorite shower will be unlike anything the world has ever seen before. Imagine looking up into the night sky and suddenly seeing thousands upon thousands of stars shooting towards earth. I believe this is what the Apostle John witnessed, and so will the left behind world.

II. The 4th Trumpet Judgment:

Just like the sun and moon, the stars will also be affected by the 4th Trumpet Judgment:

“The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way (Revelation 8:12).”

We don’t know what happens to cause this great judgment, but we do know that the earth will lose 1/3 of its nightlights! Some of us live in the city so we don’t notice the stars too much at night anyway, but if you have lost electricity, you will definitely notice that 1/3 of the moon is missing and 1/3 of the stars in the night sky no longer shine. Trust me. God isn’t going to let this cosmic event go unnoticed to human eyes.

And like I said, when Messiah returns, there will be no need for the nightlights anyway because He is the star of Jacob:

I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. He will crush the foreheads of Moab,
the skulls off all the people of Sheth (Numbers 24:17).

And no other heavenly bodies could possibly outshine King Jesus:

And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb (Revelation 21:23).

#4- The Heavens Will Shake

Right before Messiah’s grand entrance the heavens will shake, rumble, and roar with excitement:

“But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken (Matthew 24:29).”

People get ready! Jesus is soon to split the eastern sky and make His presence known!
Chapter Fifteen

The Second Coming

And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other (Matthew 24:30-31).

After centuries of hoping, waiting, trusting, and believing that Messiah would one day come, the appearance of the ages will culminate with the following 5 wonders:

#1 - The Sign of the Son of Man

Some have believed that the “sign” of the Son of Man in the sky will actually be the cross. Maybe that’s true, but I have another theory, and it stems from the words of an ancient text. The prophet Zechariah foretold a unique day where God would personally step in to destroy Israel’s enemies:

“And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem (Zechariah 12:9).”

And on this day, the Holy Spirit will be poured out on all of the Jews living in Jerusalem:
“I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication (Zech. 12:10)…”

Why will they receive both a Spirit of grace and of prayer? Well, because Israel has been partially blinded to the truth for so long that they will need a spiritual awakening in order to see what God wants them to see. And once this veil is removed from Israel’s eyes, they will view Messiah for who He really is, and what they did to Him:

“So that they will look on Me whom they have pierced (Zechariah 12:10)…”

This bitter realization will cause ALL of Israel to mourn and weep loudly over the Suffering Servant they once rejected:

“And they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn (Zechariah 12:10).”

Messiah’s appearance in the sky is the sign Israel has always wanted and will eventually receive, but not without much travail and heartache.

#2- The Tribes of the Earth Will Mourn

Imagine the feeling you would have if you spent your life rejecting the true Messiah and then realized that He is the One you and your people have been waiting for. That’s how every Israeli will feel. This awakening will bring so much regret and remorse, that loud cries will be heard throughout the land:
In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. The land will mourn, every family by itself; the family of the house of David by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Levi by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself and their wives by themselves; all the families that remain, every family by itself and their wives by themselves (Zechariah 12:11-14).

Most fittingly, the grieving will begin in the city that our Lord was crucified: Jerusalem. This event is compared to the time Israel wept over the death of the beloved King Josiah. At the time of Josiah’s death, songs and lamentations were even written about Him (2 Chronicles 25:35)! A bereaved Israel will finally acknowledge that the King of Glory, hidden as a Suffering Servant, had walked among them:

*And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews (John 19:19).*

As the city that killed their King begins to mourn and lament, the rest of the nation will follow. Wives and husbands will enter into personal grief over the One they had rejected. Deep sorrow will fill the land and rightfully so.

**#3- All Eyes Will See Him**

Once Israel has come to terms with who Messiah really is, then the nations of the earth will see Him too:
And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory (Matthew 24: 31).

In the very last part of the first century, the Apostle John foresaw Messiah’s Second Coming and provided even more details of this glorious event (Revelation 19:11-13):

□ The heavens will be opened
□ A glorious King on a white horse will appear
□ The King will have 3 names: 1) Faithful & True; 2) one that no man knows; and, 3) The Word of God
□ The righteous King will judge the nations
□ The King will subdue the nations who rejected Him, and
□ The King’s clothing will be dipped in blood

But, you to need to know that the New Testament isn’t the only book to see into the future, the Old Testament prophet Daniel saw this much anticipated day too:

I kept looking in the night visions, and behold with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him and to Him was given dominion, glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away. And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed (Daniel 7:13-14).

#4- A Loud Trumpet Will Sound

Throughout history, the coming of a King was always announced with the sounding of trumpets:
“Let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there as king over Israel, and blow the trumpet and say, ‘Long live King Solomon (1 Kings 1:34).’”

This day will be no different:

And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet (Matthew 24:31)...

#5- The Angels Will Gather the Elect

I have no doubt that the angels have been anxiously awaiting this day, and they, too, have a mission to accomplish:

They will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other (Matthew 24:31).

Without any further delay, the messengers of Messiah will fly from one end of the earth to the next, gathering the remaining elect so that our Father can execute the justice He promised His servants so long ago:

Now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them (Luke 18:7)?

Remember, the elect are the faithful Saints who rejected Antichrist and refused His mark:

“For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the
sun beat down on them, nor any heat (Revelation 7:15-16).”

After enduring the sorrows of the Great Tribulation, the Tribulation Saints will receive a new home and the gift of eternal life:

“For the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes (Revelation 7:15-17).”

I don’t know about you but my mouth is watering for a taste of eternity, and it won’t be long:

He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly (Revelation 22:20).”

And with the rest of the saints, I am in joined in declaring:

Exciting and fearful days are coming soon to a sky near you. But even with this amazing promise to look forward to, it’s still hard to fathom the force and impact of the last day judgments that will unfold right before the Second Coming. Yet, there is good news is! We don’t have to endure it. God’s word serves as a warning for each one of us. All of these sorrows can be avoided if you will simply heed the prophecies contained in an ancient, timeworn text.

*I want you to remember what the holy prophets said long ago and what our Lord and Savior commanded through your apostles (2 Peter 3:2).*

Sadly, many have grown weary of hearing about the Lord’s coming:

*Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts. And saying, where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation (2 Peter 3:3-4)*?

Scoffers have come and gone, and even within the church people are beginning to ask. “Where is the promise of His coming?” It’s been almost two thousand years, but to the Lord it’s only been two days:

*But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day (2 Peter 3:8).*
Over the years, Bible believing Christians have endured ridicule and mocking for teaching the “doom and gloom” of prophecy. But, like ol’ Noah, our faith will one day be made sight:

*Those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat. Only eight people were saved from drowning in that terrible flood (1 Peter 3:20- NLT).*

Noah prophesied that flood waters would consume the earth before rain had ever even fallen from the sky! Of course, the people laughed and jeered at the thought of something so absurd. It offended all human reasoning. However, had they listened, more than eight people would have survived.

**The Days of Noah**

Noah’s generation made a fatal mistake that cost the lives of everyone but eight people. They mocked and ignored the word of the Lord because:

1. They had never seen rain before (Gen, 2:6),
2. Noah seemed crazy to them (1 Peter 3:20), and
3. Ol’ Noah prophesied the same “doom and gloom” message for 120 years (Gen. 6:3).

Our generation is poised to make the same fatal mistake:

“For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will
the coming of the Son of Man be (Matthew 24:37-39).”

Many people will endure God’s wrath simply because:

1. They are preoccupied by other matters,
2. They ignore Bible prophecy, and,
3. They lack understanding.

But it doesn’t have to be this way. Jesus instructed His followers to stay alert, and if He said that almost 2,000 years ago, how much more does that apply to us?

“Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming (Matthew 24:42).”

What’s Taking So Long?

Every generation has held onto the promise of the Lord’s return. As followers of Jesus pass the spiritual baton onto the next generation, hearts are stirred and hope is renewed. However, you may be asking, “What’s taking so long?” In God’s great mercy, He has waited for a full harvest:

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

But, He won’t wait forever:

“So, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place (Matthew 24:33-34).”
We should not throw out the office of prophet because some have mishandled it and led others astray. No, but we do need to do what the Apostle John said, “test the spirit of the prophet to see if they are false or true (1 John 4:1).” This checklist can serve as a guide to help you do that. But don’t use this alone. Rely on the Holy Spirit who will “guide you into all truth (John 16:13).”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirements of True Prophets</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Further Study/Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do the prophet’s words encour</td>
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<td>Read Genesis 20; 2</td>
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<td>age restoration &amp; repentance</td>
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<td>Samuel 24</td>
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<td>Do the prophet’s dreams, visio</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>Read Deuteronomy 13</td>
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<td>ns, or supernatural experiences</td>
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<td>line up with the Word of God?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Read Deuteronomy 18</td>
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<td>Is the prophet humble?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Read Deuteronomy 18</td>
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<td>Are the words of knowledge a</td>
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<td>Read 1 Samuel 3</td>
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<td>woman as a reliable prophet?</td>
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<td>rm this prophet’s ministry?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the prophet influential? The prophet doesn’t have to speak to kings but does he/she influence other leaders?</td>
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<td>Read 2 Samuel 7 &amp; Jeremiah 1</td>
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<td>Does the prophet pray over others?</td>
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<td>Read 1 Kings 1</td>
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<td>Do the prophet’s words anger sinners &amp; sometimes put the prophet’s life or well-being in danger?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Read 1 Kings 18</td>
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<td>Is the prophet a servant of the Lord and of His people?</td>
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<td>Read 1 Kings 18</td>
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<td>Do signs &amp; wonders in the prophet’s ministry lead people into a relationship with Jesus Christ?</td>
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<td>Read 2 Kings 5</td>
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<td>Does the prophet balance words of encouragement with words of judgment?</td>
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<td>Read 2 Chronicles 15 &amp; 21</td>
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<td>Does the prophet condemn sin?</td>
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<td>Read Isaiah 3</td>
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<td>Has the prophet suffered for his/her adherence to God’s word?</td>
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<td>Read Jeremiah 20</td>
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<td>Is the prophet ignored or silenced by sinners in the church?</td>
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<td>Read Jeremiah 37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the prophet lift up the name of Jesus above every other name? Does he/she testify that Jesus is the only way to God?</td>
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<td>Read Matthew 1 &amp; Revelation 19</td>
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<td>Is the prophet rejected in his/her home town and/or own family?</td>
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<td>Read Matthew 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the prophet encourage and model reading God’s word?</td>
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<td>Read Acts 13</td>
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<td>Does the prophet fast &amp; pray?</td>
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<td>Read Daniel 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the prophet mourn sin?</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Read Jeremiah 8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Jesus warned that false prophets would come and go until He returns to earth, and they would deceive many people. So how do we recognize a false prophet from a real one? The Word of God is our standard, and the Holy Spirit is our guide. Prayerfully use this checklist to help you recognize false prophets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of False Prophets</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Further Study</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the prophet lead people away from a personal relationship with God &amp; more towards a legalistic religion? Does he/she want strict adherence to his/her teachings?</td>
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<td>Read Deuteronomy 13</td>
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<td>Is the prophet truthful in their personal life and ministry life?</td>
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<td>Read 1 Kings 13</td>
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<td>Does the prophet claim to hear messages from angels? Are these angelic messages contrary to the 66 books of the Bible?</td>
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<td>Read 1 Kings 13</td>
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<td>Does the prophet draw a crowd because of signs &amp; wonders he/she performs?</td>
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<td>Read Matthew 24 &amp; Luke 6</td>
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<td>Did the prophet seem innocent &amp; harmless, at first, but later did he/she split the church or wreck marriages or finances?</td>
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<td>Read Matthew 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the prophet use you or others for his/her personal gain?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Read 2 Peter 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the prophet greedy, always wanting more of something?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Read 2 Peter 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the prophet require a “love” offering in order to prophesy? Does the prophet require a large sum of money to minister? (note: there’s nothing wrong with giving to servants of the Lord, but when they require it or manipulate you into giving it, that becomes a problem)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Read 2 Peter 1 &amp; 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the prophet deny the divinity of Jesus? Does the prophet claim there are others ways to Jesus? Does the prophet believe Jesus was only a created being, a good man, or just a prophet?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Read 2 Peter 2; John 14:6; Isaiah 7:14; Revelation 1:8; John 1:1-5</td>
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<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the prophet seem to puff up his/her message with special revelations like dreams, visions, angelic visitations, etc.? (Note: God does give dreams &amp; visions. He still speaks, but does the prophet use this as the only proof of his/her ministry?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Read Revelation 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the prophet introduce false teaching into your church? Did he/she claim this teaching was by special revelation?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Read 2 Peter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the prophet teach from the Bible? Does the prophet encourage Bible study? Has the prophet tried to synchronize other “holy” books with the Bible?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Read 2 Timothy 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the prophet pray &amp; fast? Does the prophet encourage praying &amp; fasting?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Read 1 Kings 21; Daniel 9; Joel 2; Matthew 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the prophet serve others? Does he/she exemplify servanthood?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Read Matthew 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many times has the prophet been married?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Read 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of False Prophets</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Further Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there one set of rules for the prophet &amp; another set for the people?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Read Daniel 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the prophet committing sexual sins? i.e. homosexuality, fornication, sexual abuse of minors, watching pornography, multiple partners, visiting prostitutes?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Read Genesis 13; 1 Corinthians 5 &amp; 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there obvious/unconfessed sin in the prophet’s life? Does the prophet encourage his/her followers to sin?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Read 1 John 1:9; Hebrews 10:26; Matthew 18:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the prophet encourage use of mind altering drugs in order to draw you closer to God? Does the prophet encourage drunkenness?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Read 1 Corinthians 3; Galatians 5:19-21; Proverbs 20:1; Ephesians 5:18; Isaiah 28:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the prophet physically or mentally abusive to his/her followers?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Read Matthew 11:30; Ephesians 6:4; Romans 13:8-10; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Galatians 5:19-21; Zechariah 11:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of False Prophets</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Further Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the prophet use foul language or take God’s name in vain?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Read Exodus 20:7; Ephesians 5:4; Colossians 3:8-10; 2 Timothy 2:16; Matthew 12:36; James 3:10; Luke 6:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the prophet alienate you from others? (Note: Wild animals do this to their victims)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Matthew 7:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is he or she prone to angry outbursts ‘in the name of the Lord’?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Read Proverbs 29:22; Ecclesiastes 7:9; Matthew 5:22; 2 Corinthians 12:20; Galatians 5:20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples of True Prophets

The first 16 prophets all have books of the Bible that bear their names. The rest are listed in various passages as prophets or prophetesses, and I have provided the biblical reference for you. Please extend your study of this important ministry.

□ Isaiah (& Isaiah’s wife – Isaiah 8:3)
□ Jeremiah (also wrote the book of Lamentations)
□ Ezekiel
□ Daniel
□ Hosea
□ Joel
□ Amos
□ Obadiah
□ Jonah
□ Micah
□ Nahum
□ Habakkuk
□ Zephaniah
□ Haggai
□ Zechariah
□ Malachi
□ Abraham (Gen. 20:7)
□ Aaron (Ex. 7:1)
□ Miriam (Ex. 15:20)
□ Moses (Deut. 34:10)
□ Deborah (Judges 4:4)
□ Samuel (1 Samuel 3:20)
□ Gad (1 Samuel 22:5)
□ Nathan (2 Samuel 7:2)
□ Ahijah (1 Kings 11:29)
□ Jehu (1 Kings 16:7)
□ Elijah (1 Kings 18:22)
□ Elisha (1 Kings 19:16)
Examples of False Prophets

The Bible provides plenty of references to false prophets. If you study the following passages, you will gain a proper biblical understanding of the work of false prophets and become better equipped to recognize their deception.

- The prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18; 2 Kings 10)
- The prophets of Samaria (Jeremiah 23:13)
- Hananiah (Jeremiah 28)
- False Prophets of Israel (Jeremiah 14:14; Lam. 2:14; Ezekiel 13:9; 22:28)
- Balaam (Numbers 22; Deut. 23; Josh. 13:22; 24:9-10; Nehemiah 13:2; Micah 6:5; 2 Peter 2:15; Jude 1:11; Rev. 2:14)
- Bar-Jesus (Acts 13:6)
- The False Prophet of Revelation (Rev. 16:13)
- Jezebel (Rev. 2:20)
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About the Author

Beth is a wife, mother, teacher, and lover of God’s word. She grew up in rural Ohio. For years, she enjoyed attending church with her family. Her teenage years would shake her faith in God. At the age of 20, after four years of living far from God and church, she surrendered her life to Jesus and began an incredible journey.

She soon attended Bible College in Atlanta, Georgia. Those years were instrumental in building the foundation of her faith. She fell in love with Bible study and answered the call to ministry. In 1998, Beth boarded a plane for Tel Aviv, Israel. She briefly attended Jerusalem University College on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem. The next two years were devoted to volunteer work at Christ Church in Jerusalem’s Old City.

Not long after returning home, Beth met and married Chris. They have been married for 14 years. She became a mother in 2003 to a son named Christian. He was born with a congenital kidney defect, and lost his right kidney at only 5 months old. His young life has produced many struggles, yet he is a miracle. Years later in 2010, a sweet little girl would enter the world ten weeks early and prove that she too is a survivor. Beth, and her family currently reside in Port St. Lucie, Florida.

Beth taught in the public school system for 6 years before deciding to begin a full time writing career. Her first book, The Survival Guide to Apocalypse, was published in December 2014. She looks forward to writing many more books devoted to the study of God’s word.
Other Books

The Survival Guide to Apocalypse-

The left behind world is in panic. Millions of people have suddenly vanished. How will you survive this mass disappearance? Everything you need to know to overcome Earth’s final years is found in the pages of this book.

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Do you find yourself drawn to the book of Revelation, but unsure where to begin? Rest assured because Revelation is not just for Theologians! This engaging workbook will introduce the student of God’s word to a verse by verse study of the first chapter of Revelation.

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