

Signs of the Times Update (Days of Noah)

Today we are departing from our usual method of Bible Study to take a short break and look at several items you have asked me about. When I did a survey of the class to understand what topics you would be interested in studying together we talked about books and subjects. I want to do the “subject” today relating to an update on the signs of the Times. While I will cover the key signs to overview the scripture, I want to focus more on a single topic to bring a little more depth.

[Our beginnings of teaching and focusing on Prophecy...watchmen on the wall]

Today the whole world seems out of control, careening toward disaster, without any restraint, and we are being pressed on all sides...

Ripped from today's headlines

Today's Headlines – Part 1

- Earthquakes, Hurricanes, Tsunamis, Wildfires, Floods, Record Snow and Ice, record heat, and Volcanoes
- Increased Insect and wild animal effects (Zika virus)
- Biological and Chemical attacks or attempts
- Pandemics, Disease, Genocide
 - Bird flu, swine flu, MRSA infection, stronger resistant strains
 - Genocide in Africa, Bosnia, and Iraq and Iran
- Shortages of Food and Water
 - Starvation and Famine
- Government taking away our freedoms, one by one
 - Financial crisis, Healthcare, Oil, Jobs, futures
 - Increased helplessness and acting out in violence
 - Freedom of religion, no ability to practice your faith w/o Gov involved
- Nuclear armament by North Korea and Iran
- EU/France and others “forcing a settlement in Israel/Palestinian” area
- Christian Martyr's larger than at any other time
- ISIS murdering, beheading, exterminating Christians, Jews, and others
- Rapid Moral and Social decline- driving God out of all public square

Today's Headlines- Part 2

- OT prophecies concerning end times coming to pass
 - Gog / Magog allies with Persia (Russia and Iran) – Ezek 38-39
 - Allies added: Ethiopia, Libya, the Arab nations, the “-stans” in the Black Sea area
 - All arrayed against Israel
- Rising prices in all areas
- Decline in Cultural Values
 - Abortion, rejection of marriage, homosexuality, transgender, cloning
 - Punishing believers who follow the Lord
- Apostasy- turning away from God
 - Churches failure to uphold God's Commands / teachings
 - Christian Nation debate
 - Hedonistic, pleasure seeking priorities
 - Pushing God out of public spaces (schools, buildings, Pledge, Money)
 - Marginalizing Christians, Values, Tradition
- European Union (revived Roman Empire predicted in Revelation)
- One World Church movement driven by latest Pope
- Anti Semitism increasing: Historic in Europe plus rising Muslim population
- Israel in Isolation – pulling back of support for Israel and it's historic claims on the land
 - Q: US seems to be Israel's strongest ally in the World and we are softening our support

One of the best scripture narratives on “signs of the times” is Matthew 24 and 25. These chapters are called the **Olivet Discourse**, and were words spoken by Jesus to His disciples about “His Coming Again”. Many people are confused by these scriptures but they speak of what we call the Second Coming, not of what we call the “rapture”. This is critical to understand what these verses mean.

But before we read Matt 24, let me set the stage for our discussion. The Bible is divided into time periods which have “pivot points” which define or focus God's redemptive plan. There is:

1. **Creation** – the time when God created the World, the Universe, and everything in it that is not pre-existent. (God, Christ, Spirit) This is also called the **Age of Innocence**.
2. **Fall to Flood** – This is the period where Man rebelled against God and followed his own path leading to the destruction of Mankind, except for 8 souls. If you study dispensational theory this time frame would include the **Age of Conscience**, and the **Age of Human Government**. God judged the earth except for Noah and his family, and made certain promises to Noah
3. **Age of Promise**- this is highlighted by the Abrahamic Covenant and the Land Covenant. This is the time from Abrahams call through the Exodus from Egypt.

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4. **Age of the Law** – Moses the Law giver brings the Torah and the 10 commandments to God's chosen people. This is the period from Mt Sinai to the death, burial and resurrection of Messiah. Jesus was born a Jew, under the Law of Moses and fulfilled the OT prophecies for the Messiah.
5. **Age of Grace** – **This is where we are now**. The time period between the coming of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost) and the Rapture of the Church. This is the time all people must come to Christ by accepting His free gift of Grace.
6. **Age of Judgment** – Those who do not accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will go through the time called the "tribulation" which is 7 years long and replayed through the Revelation of Christ written by the Apostle John. This culminates in the **Second Coming of Christ**.
7. **1000 year reign** of Christ on Earth – Known as the **Millennial Kingdom**, this is a literal reign of Christ back on earth and is also laid out in the book of Revelation.
8. **Eternity** – Life forever with the Lord in the New Heaven and New Earth

There is not universal agreement on either the number of "age's " or even the idea of God dealing with man differently in different periods of time, but I believe it is clear that God has entered into His covenant with Man in stages and at different times. Our lives are forever changed by these interventions so I accept the notion of timeframes without getting hung up in the weeds on fine points. If you accept these notions, then it is clear we are in the Age of Grace, heading for the time of Judgment and the second coming of Christ.

As we wrap our minds around the fact that we are living in the middle of the Biblical timeline, and approaching a pivot point or inflection in the status quo...it is important for us to step back from our normal lives and reflect on what it means.

With this in mind...turn to Matt 24 **(Only cover relevant portions in class)**

The Destruction of the Temple and Signs of the End Times

24 Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. ² "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

³ As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

⁴ Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah,' and will deceive many. ⁶ You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of birth pains.

⁹ "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. ¹⁰ At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and

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hate each other,¹¹ and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.¹² Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold,¹³ but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

¹⁵ “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’^[a] spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.¹⁷ Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house.¹⁸ Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak.¹⁹ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers!²⁰ Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.²¹ For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.

²² “If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.²³ At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it.²⁴ For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.²⁵ See, I have told you ahead of time.

²⁶ “So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the wilderness,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it.²⁷ For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.²⁸ Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

²⁹ “Immediately after the distress of those days

“the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”^[b]

³⁰ “Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth^[c] will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.^[d] ³¹ And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

³² “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near.³³ Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it^[e] is near, right at the door.³⁴ Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

The Day and Hour Unknown

³⁶ “*But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son,^[f] but only the Father.* ³⁷ *As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.*

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³⁸ *For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹ and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.*

⁴² *“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.*

⁴⁵ *“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. ⁴⁷ Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁸ But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time,’ ⁴⁹ and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. ⁵⁰ The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. ⁵¹ He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

As it was in the days of Noah so it will be at the coming of the Lord.

Luke 17:28-30

²⁸ *“It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. ²⁹ But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. ³⁰ “It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed.*

As it was in the Days of Noah and Lot, so it will be at the coming of the Lord.

What does this really mean? If one looks at all the Biblical signs of the coming of the Lord we see many things that have always been in play.

Signs of the times...

- **Matt 24: 3-25**

- Many come in His name claiming to be Christ, do not be deceived
- Wars, rumors of wars...do not be alarmed since these things must be
- Nation against Nation, Kingdom against Kingdom, famines, earthquakes
- Falling away from the Faith, increase in wickedness, love grows cold
- Gospel preached to all Nations
- **Day of the Lord** will be severe, but those who stand firm will be saved

Wars and rumors of war, famines, earthquakes, volcanoes, pestilence, plagues, unquenchable violence, immorality, hate, no fear or respect for God, God's Law, or God's people, Isolation of Israel, anti-Semitism, Deception both in the Church and in general, Apostasy in both forms (falling away and walking away), Driving God out of the public square, and persecution of God's people. These things have always been in play in each generation, BUT like birth pains, they are coming faster and seem to be all over us today.

In the past few weeks: Nathan Deal rejected a bill to protect Religious Freedom, NC Governor approved a bill that protected men and women's bathroom from those that feel like another gender today. Major celebrities boycotted NC, and NFL/NBA and MLB locked arms to pressure Nathan Deal to reject basic Amendment 1 rights. Terrorism is under control, except that it isn't... Bible believers should give up their antiquated and old fashioned ideas about sexuality and perversion. NC State requires Christians get a permit to talk about Jesus to others, the recovery is getting better, but it isn't...kindergarteners are subjected to transgender and fluid gender discussions. Politics of destruction, lying, covering up, deception, and anger at it all have given us the choices we have for President, and the abortion industry has killed 60 Million babies (since Roe v Wade) in the US alone, and 40 Million each year in the world. Christians being slaughtered and hunted down in the Middle East...beheaded, burned or shot...just for being Christians. Muslim terrorism against Jews, and Christians, and US interests and people is

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worldwide. Europe is being overrun by terrorists bent on killing and taking over these countries. I could go on and on...Violence is everywhere. Sexual perversion is everywhere and coming out of nowhere, disdain for God and the things of God is everywhere. Lawlessness, deception, manipulation, apostasy in the church...all are washing over us at a frightening pace. I think it is clear that the birth pains are coming quicker and quicker. The sign is not the events themselves although they are important, but that they are washing over us faster and faster.

Also the modern nation of Israel was just 68 years old on May 14, 2016 being born on May 14, 1948. The signs of the end times must take place while Israel is a country for it to be "time".

The days of Noah and Lot – wickedness everywhere, sexual perversion rampant, no thoughts or fear of God, lack of success of God's people to change the culture (Noah preached for 120 years on righteousness as he built the ark, NO ONE other than his family repented and sought the Lord). Lot was immersed in the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah, and although he maintained his righteousness, he lost his witness. When he moved there he had thousands of people he maintained, but over time he could not save them because he became part of the system

A warning to us...Are we keeping ourselves clean but burying our heads to the corruption around us? Have we lost our witness in our world? Are we reflective of Lot who was unable to witness with the smell of the world all over him?

What do we do? Do we hide? Do we withdraw and take no stand or position? Do we even see the corruption, the deception, the perversion, the lies, and lawlessness around us? It is in our world, our nation, our state, our neighborhood, our family and our churches.

What can we do?

- Be faithful ourselves to God – Faith, Trust, and Obey the words and commands of the Lord.
- Be silent no more about what is happening.
 - Demonstrate positive witness by our actions
 - Speak up for God to be salt and light
 - Pray and work with those we love to make sure they are prepared to meet the Lord
- Next week we will begin the two part discussion of “Silent No More”

Come next week and we will begin this discussion on “Silent No More” and Biblically look at what we should be doing.

FIVE (5) reasons Pastor's don't teach Prophecy by Tom Hughes

(<http://www.ericbarger.com/hughes.five.prophecy.htm>)

1 — they don't understand it.

2 — they fear offending members of the congregation.

3 — People will be scared.

4 — People might not tithe if they think we're close to the end.

5 — Fear of looking like the loony-tune fringe.

From a more cynical viewpoint we could say “they don't believe it”. They are scoffers who do not believe the Word of God is true, and therefore will not teach it.

Now let's look at it from the other side.

1 — Prophecy is an amazing apologetic.

The prophecies of the first coming of Christ were fulfilled. They stand as evidence that the Bible can be trusted. Prophecies of His second coming work the same way, except we get to witness these events in our time, often with our own eyes.

The nations of the world seem moved as though by a hidden hand into exactly the right positions on a global chess board. What an amazing thing to see it happening before our eyes! It builds faith and draws our attention God-ward.

2 — Prophecy is the best evangelistic tool today.

The future fascinates us all, because we're all headed that direction. The Bible says a great deal about the future, so people are likely to listen when you talk about prophecy. The Evidence that Jesus is coming soon forces listeners to recognize the veracity of the Bible and gives them a glimpse of the enormity of Christ's claims.

If Bible prophecy is being fulfilled in our day, it means that the rest of the Bible is also true. Jesus really is God the Son and really did die in our place so that our sins can be forgiven. The truth of Bible prophecy leaves no room for the wannabe messiahs of this world. It quickly becomes obvious that there is salvation in no other name.

3 — Rightly taught, it is a motivator to do good and have a ready heart.

Understanding prophecy gives us an eternal perspective on life. It shows us the proper context in which to view the things that happen in our lives. Prophecy makes us less attached to the temporal and more willing to invest in the eternal.

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Peter wrote, “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God.” (2 Peter 3:10-12 NKJV)

Teaching prophecy emphasizes what manner of persons we ought to be — holy in conduct and godliness.

4 — Other reasons to teach end times prophecy.

Again and again, Jesus told his disciples to use Him as their example. In John 13:15, He washed His disciples feet. Then He said to them, “I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you.” (NKJV)

Let Jesus also be the example in what we teach and preach. He taught a great deal about His **Second Coming** and the signs surrounding it. We should, too.

Jesus often said to “Watch!”

Paul wrote, “For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.... But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.” (1 Thessalonians 5:2, 4-6 NKJV)

My prayer is that more and more Christian congregations the world over begin to “watch and be sober” so that the Day does not overtake them as a thief.

See URL in beginning of article for information.