

Our passage today tells of an occasion when Jesus began answering questions that His disciples had about the signs of His return at the end of this age. He spoke of the spiritual deception, political upheaval and natural disasters that will increase in frequency and intensity like labor pains in the time leading up to His return. These things are also described in the book of Daniel and of Revelation.

1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to *him* for to shew him the buildings of the temple.

“And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple” – Jesus had just finished teaching the people and giving a blistering condemnation of the Pharisees and the other Jewish leadership there in Jerusalem in the previous chapter. Once He concluded, Jesus left the temple and began heading toward the mount of Olives (v. 3). The “temple” refers to the temple complex which included the temple, the various courts surrounding it and the walls separating the courts as well as the other building used to support worship. **“and his disciples came to *him* for to shew him the buildings of the temple”** – Herod the Great had begun restoring and rebuilding the temple complex in 20 B.C. and the project was not completed until A.D. 64. The work was very ornate, beautiful and expensive and the disciples apparently were pointing out to Jesus how impressive and beautiful the construction work was, although unfinished.

2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

Jesus was not impressed with the expense and beauty that was adorning the temple because He knew that it was temporary. He declares to the disciples that the destruction of everything they saw there would be so complete that not one of the stone blocks used to build them would be left standing upon another. This was fulfilled in A.D. 70 when the Roman general Titus destroyed Jerusalem. The Roman soldiers made it a point to separate every stone from another in search of gold that rumored to be hidden in the walls.

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

“And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately” – Jesus apparently immediately turned and left the city because the next chance the disciples have to speak with Him is when He had found a place to sit on the mount of Olives, likely in a place overlooking the city.

“saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign [mark; token] of thy coming, and of the end [completion; consumation] of the world [age; period of time]?” - According to Luke 19:11, as they were approaching Jerusalem before the triumphal entry, the disciples were under the impression that the kingdom of God “should immediately appear.” They may have thought that Jesus was going to Jerusalem at that time to establish His earthly kingdom, especially after witnessing His triumphal entry into the city. Even after the resurrection they ask Jesus if He was about to establish the kingdom (**Acts 1:6** “*When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*”). However, after hearing Jesus’ weeping over the coming judgment of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44), His blistering condemnation of the Jewish religious leaders (chapter 23) and His prediction of the destruction of the temple (v. 2), they had become confused. They approach Jesus to ask three questions: (1) When will these things happen? (2) What will be the sign indicating your arrival to establish the kingdom? (3) What will be the sign that this current age is coming to a close?

4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. 5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

Jesus will describe three categories of signs that will reveal that His return is nearing. Over the last 2,000 years since Jesus spoke these words each of these signs have already been occurring. However, they will increase in frequency and intensity as the time of His return approaches. The first sign He mentions is spiritual deception. There will be many deceivers that will claim to be the Messiah and even using the name of Jesus Christ. The ultimate one will be the Antichrist, who will insist that people worship him. Sadly, many people will be deceived by these false Christs. He warns us not to be deceived and will describe how to recognize His coming.

6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

The other signs will be wars, political turmoil and natural disasters. When you see wars and hear of wars, it does not necessarily mean Jesus is about to come. There have been wars as long as human beings have been on the earth, but the number, intensity and duration of war and aggression between nations will escalate as the time of Christ’s return approaches. In fact, the latter half of the tribulation will be characterized by war as the Antichrist engages in military campaigns to conquer the world. Jesus said “these things must come to pass” (wars and aggression throughout history) because of man’s sinful heart, Satan’s influence and God’s judgment make it inevitable. Not only will nations fight against one another, natural disasters like famines, pestilences and earthquakes will also be on the rise.

8 All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.

The Greek word for “sorrows” refers to the labor pains of a pregnant woman. Just as labor pains become more frequent and intense as the time of the child’s birth approaches, “these things” (spiritual deception, political turmoil and natural disasters) will begin to escalate until they finally reach a peak at the return of Christ. The book of Revelation details these things, describing how Satan uses the Antichrist and the false prophet to become more active in the earth as well as listing the judgments that God will pour out on the earth in the seal, trumpet and the vial judgments.

9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

“Then shall they deliver you up [to give into the power or custody of another] **to be afflicted** [pressed together], **and shall kill you”** – Another sign will be the persecution of Christians. The Greek word translated “deliver you up” refers to being given over to the authorities (arrested). The word for “afflicted” is also translated “tribulation” in the Bible. It will become increasingly dangerous to be a Christian as the day of Christ’s return approaches. Jesus is warning that followers of Christ will be arrested, punished and even killed for His sake during the tribulation.

“and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake” – There will be no nation on earth where Christians will be safe or protected. No matter where they go, they will encounter the hatred of people who will want to turn them over to the authorities to be punished for following Jesus Christ.

10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

The Greek word for “offended” means “to cause to stumble.” Apparently the persecution will cause many who claim to follow Christ to stumble in their faith. They will turn on one another and betray other Christians, apparently driven by self-preservation. The Greek word translated “betray” here is the same word translated “deliver you up” in v. 9. The persecution will cause the false Christians to reveal their true colors as they turn from following Christ and against the true followers of Christ. They will hate the true Christians, likely blaming them for the persecution that they themselves are trying to avoid. This lack of love will be evidence that they have not been truly saved.

1 John 3:10 *“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.”*

1 John 3:13-15 *“Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.”*

11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

Throughout history there have been many false prophets that have deceived many people, but in the time leading up to Christ’s return the number of false prophets will increase dramatically (as labor pains) as will their powers of deception. During the tribulation these false prophets will likely be preaching the virtues of the Antichrist, following the example of The False Prophet described in Revelation who will be able to perform miracles in order to deceive people into worshipping the Antichrist (Rev. 13:11-17).

12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

The Greek word for “iniquity” means “lawlessness.” In the face of the persecution and the ungodliness of that day, the love for Christ of many followers of Christ will grow cold. They will not be as fervent for Christ for fear of being persecuted for His sake. Some will even turn away from following Christ - evidence that they were not truly saved after all. **1 John 2:19** *“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”*

13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Those who remain faithful to Christ until His return and have not turned away from following Him despite the persecutions they have to endure are the ones who have truly been saved. Jesus isn’t saying that these are earning their salvation by enduring but that they will endure because they have been saved. They have genuinely been born again and have the help of God to prevent them from forsaking Christ. **1 John 4:4** *“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”* **1 John 5:4** *“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”* The world wants us to abandon our faith in Jesus Christ and this will escalate as the time of His return approaches. Only the presence of the Holy Spirit in us (because we have been born again) will prevent us from yielding to the world’s temptations and pressures to be unfaithful to Christ.

14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

Despite the persecution of God’s people and the opposition to the gospel leading up to Christ’s return, the gospel will be preached into every part of the world before He comes back. Whether this is accomplished by the preaching of the two witnesses in Revelation (Rev. 11:3), the witness of the 144,000 (Rev. 14:1-5), the preaching of the angel flying through the heaven (Rev. 14:6-7), or a combination of all, the whole world will hear the gospel and will not have an excuse if they have not repented before Christ returns. Once all the world has heard the gospel, then the end of age will happen and Christ will return.

Verses 15-51: Jesus continues describing the conditions on earth prior to His return. He warns of the danger to the Jewish believers when the Antichrist desecrates the temple as predicted by Daniel (vs. 15-22). He again warns us that there will be false Christs claiming to be Him (vs. 23-26) and tells us how unmistakable His genuine coming will be (vs. 27-31). In vs. 32-33 Jesus uses the example that we can recognize the coming of summer when the fig tree starts putting out leaves. In the same way, we will recognize that Christ’s coming is near when we see the signs He is describing. Jesus then expresses the certainty that what He says will come true (vs. 34-35). However, God the Father has not revealed the exact day of Christ’s return and so it will be a surprise to the inhabitants of earth (vs. 36-43). Therefore, as God’s children, we should be ready at all times for Christ’s return by being faithful (vs. 44-51).