

The background of the cover features a silhouette of a bare tree with many thin branches, set against a warm, glowing orange and yellow background that suggests a sunset or sunrise. In the center, an open book is visible, with its pages slightly curved. The title is overlaid on the book and tree. The word 'BIBLE' is in white, all-caps, sans-serif font. 'Prophecies' is in a large, elegant, golden-yellow script font. 'FULFILLED TODAY' is in white, all-caps, sans-serif font. The author's name is at the bottom right in a white, cursive script font. There are also some golden-yellow decorative swirls and leaf-like patterns on the left side of the cover.

BIBLE
Prophecies
FULFILLED TODAY

David W. Cloud

Bible Prophecies Fulfilled Today
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Bible Prophecies Fulfilled Today

This book is excerpted from *The Future According to the Bible*, which is available from Way of Life Literature in print and eBook editions.

The next major event on God's prophetic calendar is the Rapture of the New Testament believers, an event in which the dead in Christ will be raised, the living saints will be changed from mortal to immortal, and all will be caught up to meet Christ in the air.

The Bible tells us that the Rapture is imminent. We don't know exactly when it will occur but it can happen at any time. As Jesus said,

“Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Mat. 24:44).

True Christian living, as exemplified by the believers at Thessalonica 2,000 years ago, is to serve the living and true God in this present world while living in expectation of the return of His Son from heaven.

“For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Thess. 1:9-10).

We will deal with the Rapture in a separation chapter, but the point of this section is to demonstrate that the time is very late. Though we cannot know the exact time of the Rapture, we can know that it is drawing near because we can see many prophecies being fulfilled.

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so

much the more, AS YE SEE THE DAY APPROACHING” (Hebrews 10:25).

Following are some of these prophecies:

Men Running to and fro

“... many shall run to and fro” (Daniel 12:4).

Men running to and fro is a definite sign of the end times. For the first 6,000 years of man’s history transportation didn’t change much from century to century--with men walking, riding beasts of burden, or traveling on sailing ships--but since the 19th century there has been an explosion of transportation technology to allow men to “run to and fro.” First there were railroads and steam ships, then automobiles and modern all-weather highways, airplanes, and space shuttles. When Adoniram Judson traveled from Boston to India as the first American foreign missionary in 1812, the journey took four months. Today the same journey takes one or two days.

The Knowledge Explosion

“... and knowledge shall be increased” (Daniel 12:4).

The explosion of knowledge is a sign of the end times.

“Up until the 1900s it was said that the accumulation of knowledge doubled every century. At the end of World War 2 every 25 years. Today knowledge is doubling every year and a half. IBM predicts that in the next couple of years, information will double every 11 hours” (“Knowledge Doubling Curve and You,” MartinGover.com, Oct. 6, 2009).

Those who were born near the turn of the 20th century, such as my parents, witnessed an explosion of knowledge such as the world has never seen. In that one lifetime the world moved from the buggy age to the space age. When my mom was born in rural central Florida, they had no electricity or indoor plumbing. The airplane had only

recently been invented and even the telephone was still relatively new. Those who had telephones were on “party lines” and could hear other people’s conversations, but in her lifetime, the ultra-modern Kennedy Space Center was built not far from where she was born as the prominent symbol of the rocket age.

The increase of knowledge has brought us into the computer age. The first general purpose computer, UNIVAC, was built in 1951. It weighed 29,000 pounds, took up 350 feet of floor space, and stood 8.5 feet high. In the 1960s the integrated circuit was invented, and today’s tiny laptops are millions of times more powerful than the UNIVAC.

The increase of knowledge has allowed man to walk on the moon and to send robot craft on a 154-million-mile journey to explore the surface of Mars.

The increase of knowledge has allowed scientists to discover the fundamental elements of the universe and map the DNA of the living cell.

The increase of knowledge has brought us into the global communications age, with its satellites, Internet, and smart phones. There are nearly six billion connected mobile devices and two billion people on the Internet (“No Borders Mean Flatter World,” *BBC News*, June 29, 2012). With this technology the nations will be able to observe the events described in Revelation 11.

“And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth” (Rev. 11:8-10).

Global Rebellion against God's Law

“Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.” (Psalm 2:1-9).

The Psalms contain many prophecies, some of which were fulfilled at Christ's first coming and many of which point ahead to His second coming.

Consider the events described in this Psalm.

The Gentile kings and their people will unite in rebellion against Jehovah God and His Anointed. The “heathen” are those who reject the God of the Bible. They “rage” against God. They intend to cast away His bands and cords, referring to His holy laws, so they can live as they please. This is fulfilled throughout the earth today. The heathen have been raging against God since man's fall and since Cain, the first son of Adam, killed his prophet brother, Abel (Genesis 4). But the rage has grown in intensity in these last days and will culminate in Armageddon. Rage against God's holy laws is the chief characteristic of the western pop culture that has spread throughout the earth. The rage is expressed continually through movies, television, literature, the news media, the fields of education, fashion, and art. The rebellion is seen in the false religions, communism, evolution, militant atheism (e.g., the American Atheists paid for billboard ads in September 2012 calling the God of the Bible “sadistic” and

Jesus a “useless Savior”), and the homosexual rights movement. Consider that the blessed gospel has been preached in every nation and at least portions of the Bible have been translated into most languages, but the vast majority of the people have turned their backs to God’s gracious offer of salvation through His Son.

The Psalmist says that God will laugh at the rebels, not in joy but in scorn, because puny man cannot pull Him from His throne or thwart His plans.

God will establish Christ’s kingdom with its headquarters in Jerusalem in spite of worldwide opposition, and He will not establish it by a-millennial reconstructionists or by charismatic or emerging kingdom builders, but by almighty power and the rod of iron (Psa. 2:5-6).

Consider, too, the exhortation by the Psalmist.

“Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him” (Psalm 1:10-12).

Men are exhorted to submit to the Son of God and put their trust in Him now while there is an opportunity. Compare 2 Corinthians 6:2. “For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

The expression “kiss the son” signifies, first of all, submission. It was customary in Bible times for subjects to kiss kings. “Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?” (1 Samuel 10:1). To kiss an idol was a sign of submission to the god represented by the idol (1 Kings 19:18). To “kiss the son” therefore refers to a sinner

repenting of his rebellion against God and surrendering to Christ as Lord. The expression “kiss the son” is also a sign of compassion. A kiss is a tender thing. It reminds us that salvation in Christ is not a matter of cold religious duty; it is a personal and intimate relationship with the Son of God. Compare Matthew 11:28-30.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

We are reminded that God delights in mercy more than judgment.

“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

“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).

We see that men are to serve the Lord in fear and trembling. This is the evidence of true salvation. It is not a mere sinner’s prayer. It is a life-changing conversion experience.

Willful Skepticism

“Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4 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. 5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: 6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: 7 But the heavens and the

earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2 Peter 3:3-7)

This amazing 2000-year-old prophecy describes the skepticism that prevails in the 21st century. “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days SCOFFERS...” (2 Pet. 3:3).

The prophecy indicates that the 19th century marked the beginning of the “last days” of the church age, because it was in the 19th century that this prophecy began to be fulfilled to perfection. The 19th century witnessed an explosion of skepticism in the form of theological modernism, humanism, Unitarianism, Darwinian evolution, communism, and agnosticism.

1. We see the rejection of the Bible’s doctrine of the Flood (2 Peter 3:4-6).

Peter describes scoffers in the last days who will say that “since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” (2 Pet. 3:4). This is a perfect description of the “uniformitarian” view of geology, which came to the fore in the 19th century through Charles Lyell’s *Principles of Geology*. Lyell had a great influence on Charles Darwin. According to this view, the geological strata were laid down gradually over millions of years and there was no global Flood. Walt Brown, Ph.D. in mechanical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), describes the view that has prevailed since those days.

“Professors in the new and growing field of geology were primarily selected from those who supported the anti-catastrophe principle. These professors did not advance students who espoused catastrophes. An advocate of a global flood was branded a ‘biblical literalist’ or ‘fuzzy thinker’--not worthy of an academic degree” (*In the Beginning*, p. 253).

Prior to the 19th century, it was generally believed even by scientists that God created the world and that there was a catastrophic universal Flood. In 1930 Merson Davies observed, “We should remember that, up to 100 years ago [up to 1830], such a marked prejudice against the acceptance of belief in the Deluge did not exist.” For example, in the 17th and 18th centuries Cambridge University scholars believed in a universal Flood, but by Darwin’s day in the mid-19th century they did not. Thomas Burnet (1635-1715), royal chaplain to king William III, argued for a worldwide flood in *A Sacred Theory of the Earth* (1681). This was one of most popular works on geology prior to the 19th century. John Woodward (1665-1728), founder of the Woodwardian Professorship of Geology at Cambridge, argued that the global Flood was the cause of the fossil beds. This position was published in *An Essay Toward a Natural Theory of the Earth* (1695).

But by the 19th century, the evolutionary view took control and the prophecy of 2 Peter 3 was being fulfilled.

2. We see mankind’s rejection of divine creation.

“For this they willingly are ignorant of, that BY THE WORD OF GOD THE HEAVENS WERE OF OLD, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water” (2 Peter 3:5).

Peter says the scoffers will reject the Bible’s teaching that the world was made “by the word of God.” The doctrine of evolution has gone hand-in-hand with agnosticism, atheism, and a denial of the supernatural. It was Thomas Huxley, “Darwin’s Bulldog,” who coined the term “agnosticism” to describe the view that man cannot know whether or not there is a God, that man can only know the truth through “science” and that “religion” isn’t allowed a voice.

The scoffers do mention “creation” (2 Pet. 3:4), but by this they don’t mean the six days of creation according to the Bible. Even Charles Darwin used the word “creation” at the

end of *On the Origin of Species*, but he later explained that by this he simply meant that life “appeared by some wholly unknown process” (Darwin, *Autobiography*, p. 272).

3. We see the motive of the scoffers.

“... scoffers, walking after their own lusts ... For this they willingly are ignorant of” (2 Pet. 3:3, 5).

The Bible is a supernatural Book that reveals the secrets of men’s hearts. It pierces “even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit” (Heb. 4:12). In the case of the last days scoffers, the Bible peers deeply into the human soul and reveals that their unbelief is “willful” because their motive is to walk in their own lusts and not be bound by God’s moral laws. It is their love of sin that puts them in rebellion against God. Men first refuse to submit to God, refuse to believe, then Satan blinds their minds.

“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Cor. 4:4).

The will of man must surrender to God and His truth for the blindness to be lifted.

“But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away” (2 Cor. 3:14-16).

The will is the difference between a Ph.D. like Lowell Coker (microbiology and biochemistry, author of *Darwin’s Design Dilemma*), who believes the Bible, and a Ph.D. like Richard Dawkins (author of *The Blind Watchmaker*), who doesn’t. Both men are trained in modern science at a high level and both look at the same evidence, but they come to completely different conclusions, and this is because one man

simply refuses to believe the implications of what he sees with his own eyes.

Evolutionist Richard Lewontin admitted as much when he said, “We have a prior commitment to materialism. ... we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door” (“Billions and Billions of Demons,” *The New York Review*, Jan. 9, 1997, p. 31).

This is a pointed reminder that every child growing up in a Bible-believing church must make his own choice about God and salvation, and that a desire to walk after one’s own lusts will result in spiritual blindness. Each child has the ability to believe or not to believe. God gives men a choice, but they must suffer the consequences of those choices. I grew up in a Baptist church and heard the gospel from my earliest years, and I don’t recall ever rejecting Jesus and the Bible in a conscious manner. What happened was that I simply loved sin and pursued sin. I “believed in” Jesus, but I didn’t repent before God and bow to Christ as Lord. I was captivated by the rock & roll pop culture. As a result, my mind became blinded and I ended up as a skeptic by age 20 and an Americanized Hindu by age 22.

4. We see their ignorance (2 Pet. 3:5).

Skeptics tend to be proud of their knowledge, but in reality they are ignorant of the knowledge that counts the most, which is knowledge of God’s Word. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom (Psalm 111:10).

Most of the committed skeptics don’t know anymore about the Bible than I did before I was saved. In fact, most of them probably don’t know as much. I thought I knew the Bible, because I had grown up in a Bible-believing church and had attended faithfully until my teenage years, but actually I just knew some disjointed Bible stories that didn’t seem to have any real bearing on daily life. I didn’t understand the overall theme of the Bible; didn’t understand how each part of the Bible fits together to form the whole; didn’t know the rules of proper Bible interpretation or how

to apply them. I had never been taught how to defend the Bible against skepticism, and didn't even know it was defensible. I didn't know any of the evidences for the Bible's divine inspiration. I didn't even have a really clear understanding of the gospel, though I had made a profession of faith in my youth. I had never read the whole Bible through, but I argued against Bible-believing Christians as if I were a true expert! (My impenitence and rebellion was my own fault, but my ignorance can be attributed to some part to the shallowness of the church in which I was raised.)

5. We see their faith.

“For this they willingly are ignorant of...” (2 Pet. 3:5).

Evolutionary skeptics typically pride themselves in thinking that they are following the scientific facts, whereas the Bible believer is pursuing “blind religious faith.”

The truth is exactly the opposite. In reality, the skeptics are pursuing their own lusts rather than truth. They are willfully ignorant and are holding blindly to myths.

There is nothing more mythical and unscientific than to believe that everything came from nothing, that life came from non-life, that intelligence came from non-intelligence, and that great intelligence is a product of small intelligence!

6. We see their undeserved opportunity.

“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 Pet. 3:9).

God is not willing that any perish. The reason that God sent His Son to die for man's sin is His love for the world (John 3:16), and every skeptic has an opportunity to be saved through repentance and faith in Christ.

Many highly educated scientists have believed God's Word. The book *Testimonies of Scientists Who Believe the Bible* contains biographical sketches of about 70 men and

women with Ph.D.s in the hard sciences that believe in a six-day creation. This free eBook is available from the Way of Life web site -- www.wayoflife.org.

God cannot be blamed for man's judgment. Unlike the caricature of God that many evolutionists believe, God is compassionate. For example, the late atheist Christopher Hitchens called God a "divine dictator" and likened Him to the brutal ruler of North Korea. In fact, God is so merciful and compassionate that He Himself came to this sin-cursed earth, through His Son, and suffered on the cross in the place of the very creatures who had rebelled against Him. God has not sinned against man; man has sinned against God and broken His holy laws.

I am thankful that skeptics can be saved. I was a skeptic in 1973 when God convicted me of my sin and showed me the truth through His Word and I bowed my knees before His majesty and repented of my rebellion and trusted Jesus as my Saviour. Multitudes of skeptics have been saved by God's grace, and you can be, too.

7. We see the future of skeptics who persist in unbelief.

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10).

God is merciful and compassionate and longsuffering, but He is also holy and just and He does not ignore the breaking of His laws. Salvation is available in Jesus Christ for every man, but if a man dies in his sin without the Saviour he will suffer eternal condemnation. There will be no end to the judgment because there is no end to the sinning. Sinners who die in their sin do not cease to exist; the body dies but the spirit lives, either in heaven or in hell. And unconverted sinners persist in their rebellion against God even beyond the grave.

To reject Jesus Christ is to reject the only divinely-appointed means of salvation. To reject God's gracious offer of salvation in Christ, to resist the Spirit of God who is in the world to draw men to Christ, is the unforgivable sin.

The Peace Movement

“For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape” (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

The cry of peace is another sign of the end times. The first International Peace Conference was held in 1899 in The Hague with the objective of preventing wars and ushering in world peace. After World War I the League of Nations was formed with the same objective, and after World War II the United Nations took its place. At the UN headquarters in New York is a statue of a man beating a sword into a plow and the words of Isaiah 2:4 are inscribed in a wall. But the UN will never bring peace to this troubled earth, because “there is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked” (Isaiah 48:22). The prophecy being fulfilled today is not Isaiah 2:4, but it is Joel 3:10, which is a call for the nations to beat their plowshares into swords and arm themselves for war.

The ultimate fulfillment of 1 Thessalonians 5:3 will occur when the Antichrist comes on the scene as a man of peace. The world will be convinced that he will solve all problems and usher in an age of peace and prosperity.

The Me Generation

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy” (2 Timothy 3:1-2).

The first characteristic of the end-time apostasy that the Spirit of God describes in 2 Timothy 3 is that men shall be

“lovers of their own selves.” There has never been a better description of the modern pop culture that has permeated the world through the facilitation of modern communications technology.

The *Time* magazine “Person of the Year” for 2006 was “YOU.” The magazine cover featured a sheet of Mylar to reflect the reader’s own face.

It is the age of MySpace, YouTube, my music, my tweets, my fashion, my generation, my attitude.

The pop culture is all about me, and it is a dramatic fulfillment of Bible prophecy and a sign of the end times.

The Explosion of Apostasy

“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. ... For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 3:13; 4:3-4).

We will look in more detail at the New Testament prophecies of apostasy in the next chapter, but here we will simply mention that it is a great sign of the times and powerful evidence that we “see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:25).

The apostasy has spread so widely that the vast majority of churches are false. This shows us that the hour is very late.

There is the Roman Catholic Church, which is nothing more than Christianized heathenism. Consider Santa Maria Maggiore church (Saint Mary Major) in Rome, where Mary is depicted as the Queen of Heaven sitting with Jesus on His throne, and Mary is depicted in a statue as the Queen of Peace, and Mary is even hanging with Jesus on the cross! (For photos of these and other blasphemous depictions of Rome’s

Mary see “Rome’s Mary on the Cross and on God’s Throne” at www.wayoflife.org.)

There is the World Council of Churches, which has 340 member denominations in 120 countries representing 500 million professing Christians. It is totally apostate. For example, at the 1993 Re-imaging women’s conference, sponsored by the World Council, the participants worshipped the goddess Sophia, prayed to trees, were encouraged to wear Hindu tikas to “represent the divine” in them, and gave a standing ovation to lesbians.

There is the Evangelicals and Rome movement which has brought non-Catholics into close association with the Roman Catholic Church. One of the groundbreakers in this movement was Billy Graham, the world’s most famous evangelist. Throughout his career, Graham praised the popes and turned his “converts” back over to the Catholic churches. For example, at the 1984 Graham crusade in Vancouver, British Columbia, crusade vice-chairman David Cline stated, “If Catholics step forward there will be no attempt to convert them and their names will be given to the Catholic church nearest their homes.” The Evangelicals and Rome movement can be seen in the close relationship between Charismatics and Rome and Contemporary Christian musicians and Rome. It can be seen in the spread of Roman Catholic contemplative prayer practices among evangelical Christians.

There is Rock & Roll Christianity, which is a perfect fulfillment of 2 Timothy 3:3-4 in that it is a Christianity that lives according to its own lusts (“don’t tell me how to live, what music I can listen to, what movies I can watch, where I can go”). Multitudes of churches are mere entertainment centers. A 2006 report on the largest churches in Toledo, Ohio, by a secular newspaper, was entitled “Viva Las Jesus” because the newspaper had observed that the churches were presenting a Christ that was more akin to Las Vegas than Scripture. The reporters said they loved the rockin’ music and the “short and sweet sermons” with no hellfire.

These evidences of the explosion of apostasy are clear signs of the end times.

The Homosexual Rights Movement

“Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; 29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. 30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. 31 In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. 32 Remember Lot's wife” (Luke 17:28-32).

In Luke, Jesus likened the end of the church age to the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, which is a reference to aggressive homosexuality.

“But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them. And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly” (Genesis 19:4-7).

In addition to Christ’s mention of Sodom in Luke 17, it is mentioned three other times in the New Testament in reference to the end times (2 Peter 2:6; Jude 7; Revelation 11:8).

The spirit of homosexuality has swept across the world like wildfire in the past 25 years. When I was growing up you didn’t hear anything about homosexuals. Those who existed were “in the closet” and certainly weren’t marching on the streets and demanding “marriage” rights. That was a different world compared to today. “Gay marriage” has been legalized

in several states and countries. Global, multibillion dollar corporations such as Microsoft, Apple, Starbucks, and Google, campaign for homosexual rights. The Episcopal Church in America ordained a homosexual bishop in 2003. The Metropolitan Community Churches, founded in 1968, has 222 congregations in 37 countries that are largely composed of homosexuals. They describe themselves as “a leading force in the development of Queer theology.” When the president of Chick-fil-A made a public statement in August 2012 in support of “traditional marriage,” he was treated like an enemy of mankind by large numbers of prominent people and the mayors of some major cities said his restaurants aren’t welcome in their towns.

This is a dramatic sign of the end times.

Governmental Surveillance

“And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” (Rev. 13:17).

Government surveillance has increased so dramatically in the last decade as to be breathtaking, and there can be no doubt that it is a sign of the times.

It’s almost impossible to move around and communicate in modern society without being observed by the government. It is impossible to use a credit card, bank machine, phone card, mobile phone, travel internationally, etc., without creating an electronic trail.

U.S. agencies such as the Information Awareness Office, National Security Agency, (NSA), Center Intelligence Agency (CIA), and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) spend billions of dollars annually to intercept and analyze telephone and internet traffic.

Since 2007 federal, state, and local government agencies are allowed to access imagery from military intelligence satellites to observe the activities of U.S. citizens (“U.S. to

Expand Domestic Use of Spy Satellites,” *Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 15, 2007).

The FBI is creating a billion dollar underground computer facility to store DNA, facial recognition data, iris/retina data, fingerprints, and palm prints of people living in the U.S. (“FBI Prepares Vast Database of Biometrics,” *Washington Post*, Dec. 22, 2007).

The CIA has committed to a \$600 million, 10-year deal with Amazon for cloud computing services (“CIA Tech Boss on Your Data,” *The Blaze*, Mar. 20, 2013). Ira Hunt, the CIA’s Chief Technology Officer said they “try to collect everything and hang onto it forever” and claimed that it is “very nearly within our grasp to be able to compute on all human generated information.”

The Department of Homeland Security awards billions of dollars in grants to assist local, state, and federal agencies to install and operate video surveillance equipment. An example is Chicago’s Operation Virtual Shield which connects over 2,200 cameras to a centralized monitoring center (“Surveillance Cams Help Fight Crime,” *Chicago Sun Times*, Feb. 19, 2009). The city plans to have a surveillance camera on every street corner by 2016 (“We’re Watching,” *CBS News*, Sept. 6, 2006).

William Binney, who was one of the foremost mathematicians and code breakers at the National Security Agency, warns that the NSA is spying on Americans with the technology it developed to spy on foreign governments. He said the government “is collecting information on everyone” and if you become a target “for whatever reason ... the government can go in--or the FBI, or other agencies of the government--they can go into their database, pull all that data collected” (“NSA Whistleblower Explains Chilling Interview,” *TheBlaze*, Dec. 5, 2012).

Michael Bloomberg, the mayor of New York, says that in about five years there’ll be cameras everywhere” (“Michael Bloomberg,” *TheBlaze*, Mar. 22, 2013).

London, England, operates an estimated 500,000 surveillance cameras.

Some U.S. school districts, such as those in San Antonio, Texas, are requiring students to wear radio tags that allow the institutions to track their movements (“US School Tag Tracker Project,” BBC, Nov. 23, 2012). A student who sued the school for invasion of privacy and for forcing her to act contrary to her religious convictions lost in the courts.

There is increasing surveillance from the air by drones. The U.S. and the U.K. are working on plans to build fleets of surveillance drones for use by police and government agencies. DARPA has funded the development of teams of drones that “pilot themselves, automatically decide who is suspicious and how to go about monitoring them, coordinate their activities with other drones nearby, and notify human operators if something suspicious is occurring ... a swarm of automated, self-directing drones can automatically patrol a city and track suspicious individuals, reporting back to a centralized monitoring station” (“Surveillance,” *Wikipedia*).

In Project Golden Shield, China is installing millions of surveillance cameras with advanced analytics and facial recognition software, all connected to a centralized database and monitoring station. The plan is to computerize and store a digital photo of the face of every one of the 1.3 billion people in China (“China’s All-seeing Eye,” *Rolling Stone*, May 29, 2008). U.S. corporations such as IBM, General Electric, and Honeywell are assisting in this Orwellian project. (In the 1930s IBM assisted Hitler in his program of “racial purification” by providing Hollerith data processing machines. See the free eBook *Darwin’s Social Influence* at www.wayoflife.org.)

Businesses, too, are in the surveillance game. They are linking surveillance cameras to sophisticated software that allows them not only to spot shopkeepers but also to profile customers and observe their movements and reactions to such things as sales displays and general shopping situations.

Companies are purchasing mannequins equipped with cameras in their eyes that glean data on customers at eye level (“Bionic Mannequins Spy on Shoppers,” *Bloomberg*, Nov. 22, 2012). Retailers in Europe and the U.S. are using these surveillance devices to observe the age, gender, and race of passers-by, and the company that makes the mannequins is testing technology to allow retailers to eavesdrop on what customers are saying.

The European Union

“And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters’ clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. 42 And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. 43 And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. 44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” (Daniel 2:41-44).

According to the prophecies of Daniel, a revived form of the Roman Empire will play a central role in the end times.

The Roman Empire is the fourth kingdom described in the vision of Daniel 2, and we are told in this passage that it will not cease to exist until it is destroyed at Christ’s return. The old Roman Empire was signified in Daniel as two legs of iron, as it was divided into eastern and western portions. The feet and toes of the empire will still exist in the end times and will be broken and consumed by God’s kingdom.

Daniel also tells us that the Antichrist will arise as a prince out of the Roman Empire.

“... and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate” (Daniel 9:26-27).

In the prophecy of the 70 Weeks, Daniel identifies the Antichrist as the prince of the people who destroyed Jerusalem after the death of the Messiah. This occurred in 70 A.D. at the hands of Rome under General Titus. This key prophecy tells us that the Antichrist will not arise from one of the Muslim countries, though there is no doubt that Muslims will be aligned with the Antichrist, as will all religions. The Muslims have their own prophecies about an Antichrist and a false prophet and even have prophecies about the return of Jesus as a Muslim, but it is vain to speculate as to how these might or might not be fulfilled. The Muslim prophecies have no biblical authority and they disagree among themselves, and the Bible itself does not give us enough information about how the Muslims will fit into the Antichrist's scheme. It is obvious that something will happen to allow the Jews to build the Third Temple, which will eventually be occupied by the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:3-4). I would guess that the Antichrist will make this happen somehow.

According to Daniel's prophecies, we know that western Europe will play a major role in the end times. In that light it is interesting that the European Union was formed in 1993. It encompasses 500 million people and owns 30% of the world's gross domestic product. The Euro was adopted January 1, 2002, as a common currency. Someone was quoted in 2008 as follows: “... now Europe is free from the Atlantic Ocean to the

Black Sea, its peoples mingling happily trading with each other, watching the same football games, sharing the same Aegean beaches” (“The Road Ahead,” *Time*, Dec. 1, 2008). The symbol of the European Union is the ancient Tower of Babel, and outside of the Union’s headquarters is a statue of a woman riding a beast!

We don’t know if the existing European Union will play any role in the rise of the Antichrist, but we do know that some sort of European union will!

Babylonian Commercialism

“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and THE MERCHANTS OF THE EARTH ARE WAXED RICH THROUGH THE ABUNDANCE OF HER DELICACIES” (Rev. 18:1-3).

“And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and LIVED DELICIOUSLY with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning. ... The MERCHANDISE of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. THE MERCHANTS OF THESE

THINGS, WHICH WERE MADE RICH BY HER, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing” (Rev. 18:9, 12-15).

“And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft *he be*, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for THY MERCHANTS WERE THE GREAT MEN OF THE EARTH; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived” (Rev. 18:22-23).

This passage describes the spirit of Babylonian commercialism in full frenzy in the end times.

In addition to idolatry, commercialism was one of the chief characteristics of the city-states and empires that arose from ancient Babel beginning in the third millennium BC.

The spirit of commercialism characterized the city states of Babel, Ur, Uruk (Erech), Nineveh, Mari, and Elam. It characterized the empires of Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome.

The ancient city of Assur alone has yielded more than 22,000 tablets describing the activities of ancient merchants (Foster and Foster, *Civilizations of Ancient Iraq*, p. 106).

In fact, the idolatry was integrated with the commercialism. Of the Great Temple at Hattusa in the ancient Hittite kingdom, it was said that it “as much the heart of the city’s commercial enterprises as it was its religious center” (Billie Jean Collins, *The Hittites and Their World*, p. 33).

The temple of Ishtar at Uruk (Erech) “had a staff of hundreds, including scores of craftsmen, and controlled at least 17,000 hectares of agricultural land and extensive date orchards, many of which it leased out to citizens for a share

of the crop” (Foster and Foster, *Civilizations in Ancient Iraq*, p. 140).

During the reign of King Shulgi in the late third millennium BC, the temples at Ur owned massive flocks of sheep and goats amounting to 350,000 animals (Harriet Crawford, *Sumer and the Sumerians*, p. 58).

There was a passion to buy and sell, to conduct international trade, to create desirable goods that men and women would lust after, to pursue a level of profit that would make the seller rich, to collect as many possessions as possible.

And the passion to obtain possessions and wealth was not limited to “legal” means but extended to deceit, fraud, theft, kidnapping, and violence.

This is not surprising, since Babylonianism was and is a passion to fulfill the lusts of fallen human nature, and Jesus taught that one of the sins that is prominent in man’s fallen heart is “covetousness” (Mark 7:20-23).

The Bible further identifies covetousness with idolatry (Colossians 3:5). This is because the covetous person puts money and possessions before God and His will, whereas Jesus taught us to “seek ye FIRST the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). He warned of the sin of the rich man who “layeth up treasure for himself, and is NOT RICH TOWARD GOD” (Luke 12:21). It is not wrong to make money and have possessions and enjoy them (1 Timothy 6:17-19). It is not wrong to plan wisely for the future and its possible obligations; but it is wrong to put anything before my relationship with the true and living God and it is wrong to live by sight rather than faith. To do so is the essence of idolatry.

The spirit of Babylonian commercialism is the spirit of unbridled lust. It is the spirit of the pursuit of the pleasures of this life apart from a right relationship with the true and living God. It is loving the creation more than the Creator.

Revelation 18 is an amazing prophecy in light of the system of international trade that exists today. Multi-billion dollar global corporations such as Apple and Nike and Disney or Starbucks do not merely sell *things*; they promote a philosophy of living as one pleases apart from the “shackles” of God’s holy laws. They flaunt their rebellion to God’s laws by supporting such things as homosexual “marriage.” There is no God in the world of Apple or Nike or Disney or Starbucks other than the god of self.

Revelation 18 is also an amazing prophecy in light of the unrestrained covetousness that characterizes the end-time rock & roll society. Young people have been murdered for a pair of sneakers. They have sold their kidneys for an iPad. People have died in the violent confusion of a Black Friday shopping frenzy. Sensual gambling havens such as Las Vegas are multi-billion dollar enterprises because of the people’s passion for covetousness and the fulfillment of every lust of the fallen flesh.

The book of Revelation lifts the veil of end-time commercialism and exposes its demonic underpinning.

“And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by THY SORCERIES were all nations deceived” (Rev. 18:23).

The occultic spirit of the New Age permeates end-time commercialism.

“In Daniel’s day, Babylon was the home of magicians, soothsayers, and astrologers who were official counselors of the king. All of today’s reviving cults of satanism, spiritism, occultism, witchcraft, and astrology will gravitate toward [the new] Babylon. Modern science having proved itself such a poor practitioner for the diseases of the soul, the peoples of the earth are turning more and more to the occult world with both curiosity and credulity” (John Phillips commentary).

The spirit of end-time commercialism and global trade are empowered by “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2).

For more on the spirit of Babylonianism, ancient and modern, see *The Future According to the Bible*, which is available from Way of Life Literature in print and eBook editions.

Israel Back in the Land

“Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. 5 Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: 6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. 7 So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. 8 And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them” (Ezekiel 37:4-8).

The most significant sign of the end times is the restoration of Israel to her land and the creation of the modern state of Israel.

The continued existence of Israel in spite of 2,000 years of global disbursement is one of history’s amazing stories and it was prophesied in ancient Bible passages such as Deuteronomy 28-30. In Deuteronomy 28 God warned that if Israel turned away from Him and rebelled against His law she would be scattered to the ends of the earth and troubled wherever she went.

“And it shall come to pass, that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither

thou goest to possess it. 64 And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. 65 And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: 66 And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: 67 In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see” (Deuteronomy 28:63-67).

This is a perfect description of what happened to Israel following the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 A.D. But the same prophecy said Israel would return to the Lord.

“And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, 2 And shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; 3 That then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. 4 If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: 5 And the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers” (Deuteronomy 30:1-5).

Ezekiel gave more information about the return of Israel, telling us in the prophecy of the valley of dry bones that she

would return in two stages. First, she would return to the land in a spiritually dead condition (“no breath in them”). After that she would be converted. See Ezekiel 37:7-10.

We are witnesses to the fulfillment of the first part of this prophecy. In May 1948 the new state of Israel was established. The official declaration said: “Our call goes out to the Jewish people all over the world to rally to our side ... and to stand by us in the great struggle for the fulfillment of the dream of generations for the redemption of Israel.”

U.S. President Harry Truman immediately announced his recognition of Israel. The Jews celebrated throughout the world. In Rome they paraded under the Arch of Titus, which was built by the Roman emperors to celebrate the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple.

Israel is, indeed, back in the land, but as Ezekiel prophesied, she remains in a spiritually-dead condition.

A large percentage of Jews today are “secular.” They might observe a few Jewish traditions and rituals, but they have no conviction that the Scripture was divinely inspired and no passion to know God and obey Him in all things.

Even the leaders of the Zionist movement that ushered in the modern state of Israel were, for the most part, “secular, non-observant, Jews, and many were even anti-religious” (Price, *The Battle for the Last Days Temple*, p. 250).

Theodor Herzl, the father of the Zionist movement, was not motivated by religion but by nationalism (*New World Encyclopedia*). He stated in his diary that he was “agnostic.”

In the official proclamation of the modern state of Israel in May 1948, there was no mention of “God”--only a vague reference to the “Rock of Israel.” This was because many of those who founded the state were staunchly opposed to any reference to God. For example, Aaron Zisling of the Labor Party said, “I cannot sign a document referring in any way to a God in whom I do not believe” (cited from *My Life*, Golda

Meir, p. 223). The word “Redeemer” was left out of the announcement for the same reason.

Many of Israel’s most revered leaders and war heroes since 1948 were “secular Jews.”

This includes Israel’s first prime minister, David ben Gurion. His vision was “of a new type of Jew, ‘emancipated from religion,’ whose Judaism would be expressed by a national framework” (Motti Friedman, “The Making of the State,” The Jewish Agency for Israel, July 1998). Ben Gurion held “radically anti-Halakha [Jewish Religious Law] views” (“Judaism in Israel: Ben Gurion’s Private Beliefs,” *Israel Studies*, Vol. 4, Iss. 2, 1999, p. 64).

Golda Meir, one of the greatest of modern Israel’s heroes, said, “I wasn’t at all pious” (*My Life*, p. 104). Her autobiography gives no glory to God for the restoration of Israel and no faith that God’s promises to Israel will be fulfilled. Her “vision of our future” was merely that Israel “remains a flourishing democracy and a society resting on social justice and equality” (*My Life*, p. 460). She was a feminist who basically abandoned her husband to pursue her socialistic dream of nation building.

Moshe Dayan, prominent Israeli leader (Minister of Defense, Minister of Agriculture, Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces), was a “secular Jew” whose faith in God was vague to non-existent. He gave God no glory in his autobiography, ending it with the following purely humanistic sentiments:

“But our foremost duty is to live up to the vision of ourselves, to fashion a pioneering state, a creative society that flourishes from the fruits of its own labor, a courageous state prepared to fight to the death to defend itself, a people of ideas and ideals striving to achieve their national and historic purpose--the revival of the Jewish nation in its homeland” (*Moshe Dayan: Story of My Life*, 1976, p. 621).

Benjamin Netanyahu became Israel's Prime Minister in 2009, the first Prime Minister to have been born in Israel since it became a state. In *A Place among the Nations: Israel and the World* (1993), Netanyahu doesn't mention God or His laws and covenants. For Israel's military victories he gives glory to the military rather than to God (pp. 274, 371, 397). He says that Bible prophecy does not tell us what to expect for the future (p. 372). He attributes the modern rise of the Jewish state to "a human spirit that refuses again and again to succumb to history's horrors" (p. 401).

Israel's spiritual blindness is also evident in the field of archaeology.

Jewish archaeologists, who should be at the forefront of finding evidence for the truth of the Bible, are among its fiercest enemies. We are told that the archaeologists in Tel Aviv are at the forefront of biblical skepticism. Adam Zertal, who has excavated Joshua's Altar at Mt. Ebal, told Steve Rudd that "the most anti-Biblical forces in archeology are the professors in the various universities in Israel" ("Joshua's Altar," <http://www.bible.ca/archeology/bible-archeology-altar-of-joshua.htm>).

Consider the book *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* by Israel Finkelstein and Neil Silberman. Finkelstein is the director of Tel Aviv University's excavations at Megiddo. The conclusion of this book is that "there is no evidence for the existence of Abraham, or any of the Patriarchs; ditto for Moses and the Exodus; and the same goes for the whole period of Judges and the united monarchy of David and Solomon. In fact, the authors argue that it is impossible to say much of anything about ancient Israel until the seventh century B.C., around the time of the reign of King Josiah" (Ibid.).

The skepticism of these spiritually blind Jewish archaeologists gives ammunition to Muslims in their zeal to prove that Israel's title to the land is weak or non-existent.

Israel's spiritual death is further evident in that she has exalted rabbinic tradition to an authority above God's Word.

Even the ultra-orthodox Jews are no better than the Pharisees of old.

They do not study the Bible so much as they study vain Jewish tradition. The Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs says, "Even today, there is no regular study of the Bible itself in ultra-Orthodox yeshivas" ("The Crown of Jerusalem," Dec. 20, 2001, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs report).

They pray, but their prayers are vain showy rituals. They visit the Wailing Wall to be near the old Holy of Holies and make a great show of putting on their phylacteries in just the right manner and praying in a certain posture and with certain movements.

They keep dietary laws (kosher) religiously, but they make laws that go far beyond what the Bible commands. For example, the Bible says you must not seethe a kid in his mother's milk (Deut. 14:21). Jewish tradition adds to this by concluding that it is wrong to mix meat with any dairy product such as cheese. (No cheeseburgers!) God's law does not require this. It is vain human tradition that has been added to God's holy law. As in Jesus' day, the Jews still strain at gnats and swallow camels (Mat. 23:24).

Consider the practice of the Passover. There is no lamb and no shedding of blood. The focus of the Passover for religious Jews today is the Seder, which is a ritualistic meal that has little to do with the true Passover. It is preceded by the painstaking removal of all leaven (Hebrew *chametz*), but the biblical definition of leaven has been greatly enlarged by vain Jewish tradition. For orthodox Jews it consists of anything made from grain that has not been completely cooked within 18 minutes after coming into contact with water, plus all rice, corn, peanuts, and beans. In fact, such things cannot even be fed to one's pets or cattle during Passover and must be either destroyed or sold to non-Jews. The main things that are eaten at the Jewish Seder are

unleavened bread and bitter herbs, but also eaten are such things as fish, roast chicken or turkey, and beef brisket. But no lamb! The rest of the ceremony consists of washing hands, drinking wine (four cups), various blessings, and reading of Scripture and Jewish tradition.

The Scripture says that “it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lev. 17:11). John the Baptist testified that the Passover Lamb pictures Jesus the Messiah (John 1:29). But “blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in” (Romans 11:25).

And the greatest evidence that Israel remains in the condition of spiritual death is the fact that she persists in rejecting her own Messiah, Jesus.

Preparation for Building the Third Temple

Another sign of the end times is the preparation for the building of the Third Temple, which is mentioned in prophecies pertaining to the Antichrist.

“And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate” (Daniel 9:27).

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)” (Matthew 24:15).

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

The First Temple was built by Solomon and the second was built by Nehemiah and later enlarged by Herod the Great.

A visitor is reminded of the Temple on every hand in Israel today. It is even on their coins. The 1/10 shekel features a menorah. The 1/2 shekel has a 7th-century lyre of the type that was used in the Temple. The menorah is also the symbol of the Israeli Knesset or Parliament. There is a large one right outside the Knesset's main gates and another one in a little garden at the entrance from the main road.

Since the 1980s, the idea of building the Third Temple has gained rapidly in popularity among Jewish citizens in Israel. In 1986, David Shipler wrote, "During my five years in Jerusalem [1979-84], the idea of building a Third Temple in place of Al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock evolved from a wild notion held by a very few fringe militants into a goal embraced and legitimized by parts of the established right wing" (*Arab and Jew*). By 2003, a poll by the *Jerusalem Post* found that 80% of Jews in Israel want to see the Temple rebuilt.

Since 1994, the Women in Green movement has organized a march around the Temple Mount in recognition of Risha B'Av, the day of mourning over the temple's destruction. The march begins with the reading of the book of Lamentations in front of the American Consulate and then proceeds to circle the walls of the Old City. Thousands joined in the march in July 2012. Nadia Matar, the leader of Women in Green, told Arutz Sheva TV, "We walk around the Old City to say that Jerusalem is ours. The Temple Mount is ours. Like a bride going around the groom we go around the Temple Mount, showing our loyalty and our love to Jerusalem. ... Altogether we are saying the land of Israel is ours, Jerusalem is ours, and we pray for the day that Tisha B'Av will turn from a fast day into a day of holiday when we can all dance to the Temple Mount."

In March 2010 posters calling for the building of the Third Temple appeared on buses plying eastern Jerusalem routes. The posters, sponsored by Our Land of Israel, featured a depiction of the Temple occupying the place of the Dome of the Rock mosque and a Hebrew phrase that translates, “May the Bais Hamikdosh [Jerusalem temple] be rebuilt speedily and within our days.” A leader of Our Land of Israel, Baruch Marzel, said, “We’re representing the truth, in front of everyone, and saying out loud what every Jew believes. That the Third Temple needs to be built immediately on the Temple Mount and that the mosque should not be there” (*Jerusalem Post*, May 29, 2010). Predictably, the posters caused a storm of protest from Muslims and were removed after a couple of days.

In the late 1960s the Temple Mount Faithful (the full name is the Temple Mount and Land of Israel Faithful) was established to rebuild the Temple. Its leader, Gershon Salomon, is a descendant of Rabbi Avraham Shlomo Zalman Zoref, who in the early 1800s was one of the pioneers of the modern movement to prepare for the rebuilding of the Temple. Zoref even sent one of his sons overseas to locate the “ten lost tribes” of Israel, but the rabbi’s life was cut short when he was assassinated by Arabs. The great grandson Salomon is a military officer who has fought in most of Israel’s modern wars, beginning with the War of Independence. During a battle in 1958 on the Golan Heights, a battle in which his company of 120 Israeli soldiers was ambushed by thousands of Syrians, Salomon was run over by a tank and seriously injured (he claims he actually died). When the Syrians were about to shoot him to make sure he was dead, they suddenly ran away, leaving the battlefield in the hands of the little company of Israelis. The Syrians later reported to UN officers that they had seen thousands of angels around Salomon. He says that during that experience he saw the light of God and he knew he still had work to do, which was the rebuilding of the Temple and the preparation

of the “coming of Messiah ben David.” Salomon was one of the soldiers that liberated the Temple Mount in 1967.

Since 1989, the Temple Mount Faithful have been trying to place a large stone on the Mount as the cornerstone of the Third Temple. (The first stone was stolen and was replaced in 2001 by two stones.) Each year they parade the stones through Jerusalem on a truck to stir up support for their objective.

In 1986, the Temple Institute was founded with the goal “to see Israel rebuild the Holy Temple on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem.” The founder and director of the Temple Institute, Rabbi Yisrael Ariel, was a member of the paratrooper unit that liberated the Temple Mount.

Like the Temple Mount Faithful (but with competing plans), the Institute is preparing articles to be used in the new Temple. At much expense (tens of millions of dollars have been donated) and based on extensive research, they have fashioned priestly garments, the high priest’s golden crown costing \$30,000, the high priest’s breastplate with its 12 precious stones inscribed with the names of the tribes of Israel, a copper laver, an incense altar, silver trumpets, gold- and silver-plated shofars, harps, and many other things.

Of special interest is the large menorah that has been fashioned from 95 pounds of pure gold, valued at about \$2.5 million. In December 2007 the menorah was moved to a location on the Western Wall Plaza across from the Temple Mount. Prior to that it had stood in the old Roman Cardo. The plan is to move the menorah ever closer to the Temple Mount itself and ultimately to place it in the Third Temple. The Temple Institute compared the 2007 dedication of the menorah in its new location to the dedication of the Arch of Titus in Rome 1,900 years ago. Then, the menorah was moving away from the Temple, whereas today it is moving back toward the Temple.

The Temple Institute is constructing a full-scale model of the Temple (covering 269,000 square feet) near the Dead Sea to use for training priests.

In July 2012 the Temple Institute published a video entitled “The Children Are Ready,” depicting children building a model of the Third Temple on an Israeli beach.

Both the Temple Mount Faithful and the Temple Institute have received support from Christians, particularly from charismatics. The Temple Mount Faithful, for example, has been heavily promoted by Pat Robertson’s 700 Club. Even though the Bible says it is the Antichrist who will occupy the Third Temple, these gullible, emotionally-led Christians have given millions of dollars toward the project. The Apostle Paul was persecuted by the Christ-rejecting Pharisees, but these modern Christians join hands with the descendants of the Pharisees in spiritual projects. We believe that Christians should bless and not curse Israel, but this does not mean that we should support their apostasy. The best way to bless the Temple Institute is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to its members.

In Jewish tradition, the rebuilding of the Temple is associated with the coming of the Messiah. According to Maimonides (also called Rambam), the highest rabbinical authority, any Jew that starts rebuilding the Temple is a potential Messiah. Shimon ben Kosiba was considered a Messiah in the second century when he led a revolt to recapture Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. He was named *Bar Kokhba* (“Son of the Star”) based on the Messianic prophecy of Numbers 24:17, and a coin was struck depicting the Temple with the Ark of the Covenant inside and the Messianic star on the roof.

By this tradition, it is simple to see how the Antichrist will be looked upon as the Messiah.

How Should We React to the Signs of the Times?

The signs of the end times are everywhere, and the strange thing is that believers often react to them the very opposite of how God intends for us to react.

As we witness such things as the spread of globalism, the building of a one-world church, the increase of wickedness, the breakdown of the traditional family, the destruction of that priceless bastion of liberty called America, the normalization of homosexuality, the callous murder of babies, the filthy pop culture, the breathtaking increase in governmental surveillance, we become fearful, uncertain, frustrated, angry, and discouraged, but this is because our minds and hearts are too focused on things of this world rather than things above. Too often we have the same short view that “conservative” unbelievers have rather than the long view that comes from the light of Bible prophecy.

Doubtless there *will be* frustration and discouragement, because we aren't spiritual robots who are unaffected by our environment, but our response should be tempered by the truths of God's Word. We should respond to the times in a dramatically different way than our unsaved friends and neighbors.

When we consider what is happening in the world, we should respond in at least the following ways:

First, we should rejoice greatly in our salvation.

“But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1 Pet. 4:13).

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:17-18).

No matter what we suffer in this present world, it is but for a moment in light of eternity with Christ. Every day we should walk in the joy of the gift of blinded eyes opened and salvation bestowed through Christ's great Sacrifice.

Second, we should be comforted that Christ's return is drawing near.

“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Lk. 21:28).

“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words:” (1 Th. 4:15-18).

Each day brings us closer to the Rapture of the New Testament saints, and in this light, the signs of the times, though they are grievous for this present life, should be a cause of rejoicing for the believer.

Third, we should be encouraged that God is in control.

“For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way” (2 Th. 2:7).

I love this verse at many levels. It explains why we cannot know the time of the Rapture, no matter how dark the situation gets and no matter how many “signs” are evident. I have often heard people say, “The Lord MUST come soon. It just CAN'T be much longer.” The fact is that we cannot know. We can't know the hour, the day, or even the year or the decade. This is because the Spirit of God WILL let or restrain until He is taken out of the way. He came into the

world in a special sense at Pentecost to empower the churches for world evangelism to call out a people for Christ's name from among all nations, and He will continue to restrain the devil's program until He is finished and not a moment before.

The devil is the god of this world, and his handiwork is everywhere evident, but he is not God and he is not in control of the times and the seasons.

“Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding” (Dan. 2:20-21).

At one level, it is frustrating to see the mystery of iniquity on a fast track in these days, but at the same time we must not despair in any sense. To despair is the position of unbelief.

Fourth, we should stand in the confidence that the present evil is exceedingly temporary and will soon be cut down.

“Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace” (Psa. 37:7-11).

Instead of fretting, God wants us to rest in Him and in His promises. When we do this we can be a powerful witness to the unbeliever who has no such source of comfort.

Fifth, we must do more praying.

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1 Tim. 2:1-6).

Desperate times call for more praying, but we are witnessing a dearth of prayer in the typical Bible-believing church. There is lots of partying and lots of activities and fun but not a lot of praying.

No wonder there is no spiritual power to change things. No wonder we have to adopt carnal methods and pursue pragmatism and mess around with “church growth” techniques.

1 Timothy 2 ties prayer together with living a quiet and peaceable life and the liberty to preach the gospel, the very things that we want.

We need to get back to having a real “gather in little groups, get down on your knees” mid-week prayer meeting that consists of a serious time of earnest and effectual prayer rather than merely adding a five minute prayer to a regular service.

We need to get back to having prayer meetings before Sunday services.

We need to get back to having all-night prayer meetings.

We need to get back to having a series of “cottage prayer meetings” before special meetings and conferences.

We need to get back to having a private prayer closet for daily intercessory prayer.

We need to get back to having a family altar time of prayer.

We need to get back to having prayer partners with whom we regularly meet for prayer. It is a powerful and effectual thing to agree together in prayer before the Lord for particular requests.

I am convinced that the reason why it is so difficult to get the Lord's people to attend real prayer meetings is that so few of them have an effectual intercessory prayer life.

Sixth, we must understand the times.

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed” (Rom. 13:11).

We need to know the time, and we can only do that by a literal interpretation of Bible prophecy.

A literal interpretation teaches us that we cannot return to the 18th century when America was created or even the 19th or the 20th. That was a different time. The 21st century America cannot be re-created as something that existed in the past. It is obvious that the prophetic hour is very late. Israel is back in the land. The spirit of ancient Sodom is spreading across the face of the earth. Globalism rules in commerce and culture and politics in preparation for the rise of the man of sin. The nations are aligned against God and His anointed in fulfillment of Psalm 2. The apostasy of 2 Timothy 3-4 has spread with breathtaking speed. Even a large percentage of “evangelicals” today worship a false christ (as we have documented in *The Collapse of Separatism*, which is available in print and as a free eBook from Way of Life Literature).

What every IFB church needs to do is stop listening to unscriptural voices and pursuing pipe dreams, and focus rather on doing exactly what God has told us to do. Our job is not to build Christian nations; our job is to build godly, Bible-believing churches. We need to occupy ourselves with building a strong foundation in the knowledge of God's Word, building godly, separated individuals and families,

marking and avoiding the budding apostasy even among those who profess to be “fundamentalists,” and fulfilling the Lord's Great Commission, and that commission is not about saving America or transforming the culture.

This will do far more to help America or Canada or wherever than pursuing the misguided and heretical "cultural activism."

The root problem with America's moral and social ills is the apostasy and compromise in the churches. This is the teaching of 2 Chronicles 7:14, which also states that the moral and social problems can be healed only by the repentance of God's people.

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

We have witnessed 40 years of intense cultural and political activism on the part of sincere but misguided people led by the likes of Jerry Falwell and D. James Kennedy. The result has been the exact opposite of the goal. The objective was to bring America back to God, but the result has been a precipitous deterioration of the nation's moral condition. This is for the simple reason that such activism does not address the root problem and, in fact, it is part of the problem by producing further spiritual compromise in the churches through the heresy of ecumenism and illicit associations.

It has been said that a definition of insanity is trying the same thing over and over and expecting different results.

Finally, we should be busy in the harvest fields.

“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. 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 Pet. 3:8-9).

The Bible plainly says that Christ is waiting because He wants to save souls.

He isn't in a hurry. He isn't shortsighted like we are, because He dwells in eternity. If a thousand years is as a day, then 41 years would be a mere hour. Actually, I am praying that God would give our mission field of South Asia another 41 years to hear the gospel, to have an opportunity to be saved (but at the same time there are so few doctrinally sound workers that it seems almost in vain).

Instead of fretting at the signs of the times, we need to rededicate ourselves to proclaiming the gospel to every person in every nation and building sound Bible-believing churches where God's people can be protected, edified, trained, disciplined, and where godly Christian homes can be built and children can be prepared as arrows in the hand of the Lord to go out and do battle against the forces of evil.

It is my personal dedication to this task that keeps me from despairing and being angry and frustrated and discouraged at the signs of the times, such as the destruction of America, though I know as much about these things as most people and though I study them in order to publish *O Timothy* magazine and *Friday Church News Notes*.

At age 52 we returned to the “mission field” in one of the darkest parts of the world, where we had already spent more than 10 years preaching the gospel and planting churches, and at 63 we are still here and are more committed to and excited about missionary work than ever.

It is strange that at the very time when God's people should be doubling down to fulfill the Great Commission, in a time when even in the midst of great turmoil we still have much freedom and many resources, the number of missionaries is decreasing, and the few who do go to the most spiritually needy parts of the world don't have the

commitment to stay by the stuff any more, but instead seem to find any excuse to rush back to the land of comfort and plenty, the land where spiritual light is still shining brighter than any other part of the world, the land where full-time Christian workers abound, while so much of the rest of the world sits in unremitting darkness.

At the very time when we should be living like the pilgrims God's Word says we are and focusing on God's business rather than our own, so many are putting down the same roots as their unbelieving neighbors, trying to lay up a large nest egg, fretting about the stock market, wanting to build a bigger home or buy a fancier car, not being generous in missions giving, not spending even an hour a week in gospel work, not maintaining a daily intercessory prayer closet, not being faithful and fruitful members of Bible-believing churches, not encouraging their children to surrender to Christ's Great Commission.

You say, "Our foolish leaders are bankrupting our nation and what will we do?"

The best thing to do is to believe the Psalmist when he says,

"I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psa. 37:25).

That's what my godly grandparents did during the Great Depression, and they found God to be true to His Word.

Friends, let's wake up while we still have the opportunity! It is a joy to sell out to the Lord, and we should never be afraid of His perfect will, but there is going to be a lot of regret one of these days when we look back on hours, days, weeks, months, and years wasted on vanity while God's work was left undone.

"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the

harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest” (Lk. 10:2).

The Apostasy

A major theme of New Testament prophecy is the apostasy that will leaven the churches, beginning even in the days of the apostles and increasing throughout the church age. We looked at this briefly in the previous chapter, but here we will examine the apostasy in a more extensive manner.

1. “Apostasy” means to turn away from the true New Testament faith.

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

Apostasy happens among those who profess Christ. Apostasy is not in the world; it is in the churches. The world has never cared about the truth of God’s Word one way or the other, so the passage in 2 Timothy 4 is not talking about the world of unbelievers. We see the same thing in 2 Timothy 3. The apostasy that is described in this chapter is something that happens among those who “have a form of godliness” (2 Tim. 3:5). This refers to professing Christians.

Apostates “turn away their ears from the truth” because they don’t like the truth. Apostasy is not a problem of ignorance; it is a problem of the will. It is a willful rejection of the truth of God’s Word.

Apostates turn from the truth because they want to live according to their own lusts (2 Tim. 4:3). This is their motivation. They want a new kind of Christianity that doesn’t put undesired restrictions on how they live.

When professing believers turn away from the truth, they are “turned unto fables.” This describes how the devil blinds the minds of those who reject the truth and leads them into error. The devil can only blind those who refuse to believe

God's Word (2 Cor. 4:4). Men give the devil permission to blind them, in a sense, by their rebellion against God.

2. The Bible says the apostasy will increase throughout the church age.

“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13).

In light of this prophecy it should not be surprising that the vast majority of churches today are apostate.

3. The Lord Jesus described the increasing apostasy in the parables of the mystery of the kingdom in Matthew 13.

In these parables Christ revealed the “mystery” period of the kingdom (Mat. 13:11). This refers to the course of the church age. It is called a “mystery” because it was not described in Old Testament prophecy. The Old Testament prophecies of the kingdom stated that Christ would suffer (Isa. 53) and would reign (Isa. 9:6-7). We see both aspects mentioned in Zechariah 9:9-10. But the Old Testament prophecies did not reveal the church age in between these two great events during which God would set aside the nation Israel and build the church composed of both Jews and Gentiles.

“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Romans 11:25-26)

“For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days” (Hosea 3:4-5).

Each of the parables in Matthew 13 describes some characteristic of the church age:

The Sower (Mat. 13:1-23). The gospel is preached worldwide and falls upon different types of soil, which signify people and nations. Only a small part of the seed of the gospel falls on good soil and brings forth good fruit.

The Tares (Mat. 13:24-30). Satan sows false Christians and false churches in the world among the true.

The Mustard Seed (Mat. 13:31-32). The “church” experiences abnormal growth and becomes the abode of evil things. A seed intended to produce a vegetable plant becomes a tree. The birds are revealed as evil in verse four. They are demons and apostate Christians controlled by demons. Compare 1 Timothy 4:1 and 2 Corinthians 11:13-15. This is exactly what has happened in Christianity. The simple New Testament church that Christ established, with its sound doctrine and holy living, grew into great false “churches” such as the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox and large Protestant churches, filled with heresies and unholiness.

The Hidden Leaven (Mat. 13:33). Christianity will gradually increase in error until it is entirely apostate. “Till the whole was leavened.” As we will see, the final apostate “church” is pictured in Revelation 17 as the Great Harlot.

4. Throughout the New Testament, there are many warnings about false teachers and the apostasy.

In the Gospels, Jesus warned about the coming of false teachers (Matthew 7:15-23; 24:4, 11, 24).

The book of Acts warns about the coming of false teachers (Acts 20:28-30).

Most of the Epistles warn about this (e.g., Romans 16:17-18; 1 Corinthians 15:12; 2 Corinthians 11:1-4, 12-15; Philippians 3:17-19; Colossians 2:8, 16-19; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 3:1 - 4:4; Titus 1:9-11; 2 Peter 2; 1 John 2:18-23; 4:1-6; 2 John 7-11; Jude 3-19).

In Revelation 2-3 Jesus warned about false teachers in His messages to the seven churches (Rev. 2:2, 6, 14, 15, 20-23).

The Religious Harlot “Church” of Revelation 17

The Bible teaches that the apostasy will increase until a “one world church” is formed. This is signified by the religious harlot of Revelation 17.

1. The pure Bride of Christ becomes a wicked fallen woman.

This downfall started even during the days of the apostles when some of the churches were committing spiritual fornication with the world (James 4:4). Demas was one of those who turned from the truth because he loved the world (2 Tim. 4:10).

The doctrine of Balaam and Jezebel was operating in the early churches.

“But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication” (Rev. 2:14).

“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols” (Revelation 2:20).

According to this false doctrine, Christians have liberty to participate in the wicked things of the world.

The doctrine of Balaam and Jezebel has increased throughout the church age and is the doctrine that prevails among professing Christians today.

2. The harlot “church” is already taking shape.

Though it won’t be complete until the time of the Antichrist, the harlot “church” is already growing rapidly in the world.

It is being built through the unity movement. Throughout Christianity there is a call for “unity.” We are told that unity is more important than doctrine. We are told that we should not create divisions among Christians. We are told that we should not judge other Christians, but that we should join them in fellowship and ministry. We are told that the different denominations are like ice cream. There are many different flavors of Christianity--Roman Catholic, Anglican, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Methodist, Pentecostal, Charismatic, Evangelical, Baptist, Church of Christ, etc.--but we cannot say that only one is right and the others are wrong. We are told that we should learn from one another and not condemn one another.

This ecumenical philosophy is creating the one-world church, but the Bible teaches us to earnestly contend for the one true faith that was revealed during the days of the apostles (Jude 3). Paul taught that we are not to allow any other doctrine, which is the most narrow approach to doctrinal purity that one can conceive (1 Tim. 1:3). We are to separate from those who teach different doctrine (Rom. 16:17).

The harlot “church” is also being built by contemporary worship music. This music merges the things of Christ with the world’s party music. The Christian rock philosophy is a Balaam/Jezebel philosophy. Contemporary Christian Music creates an appetite for the things of the world. It builds bridges to the world and to apostasy so that the churches that use it become corrupted in doctrine and practice. There is a close association between contemporary worship music and the Roman Catholic Church.

See 1 Corinthians 15:33, which warns that wrong associations corrupt good manners of Christian living. (See the book *The Directory of Contemporary Christian Worship Music* and the video presentation *The Foreign Spirit of Contemporary Worship Music*, which are available from Way of Life Literature.)

The harlot “church” is being built by many other things, including the social gospel, kingdom building, the positive philosophy (don’t speak about “negative,” controversial things), contemplative prayer, and the heresy of “non-essential” doctrines. (See *What Is the Emerging Church?* from Way of Life Literature.)

3. The harlot “church” will take its final form after the Rapture.

We see an outline of this timeline in the book of Revelation.

In Revelation 2-3 Jesus addresses the seven churches, and we can see in these chapters a description of the apostasy that began small in the days of the apostles (signified by the church of Ephesus losing its first love, Rev. 2:4-5) and grows through the age until most of the churches are apostate (signified by the church of Laodicea, Rev. 3:15-17).

In Revelation 4 the true churches are taken out of the world to heaven’s throne room to be with Christ. Just as John was called up to heaven in Revelation 4:1, so will all of the New Testament believers be called up to heaven at the Rapture (1 Th. 4:15-17). See Jesus’ promise to the faithful Philadelphia church (Rev. 3:10-11). This church signifies the true churches that still exist at the end of the age. They are weak but they keep God’s Word (Rev. 3:8).

In Revelation 6 the judgments begin to fall on the world of unbelievers for seven years. During this time, the Antichrist will come to power and the harlot “church” will reign with him for a brief time.

4. Consider the characteristics of the harlot “church” of Revelation 17:

Mystery Babylon descends from ancient Babylon (Rev. 17:5).

The apostate harlot “church” descends from the false religion established at Babel during man’s early history (Gen. 10:8-10; 11:1-9). Babylon is “the mother of harlots and

abominations of the earth” (Rev. 17:5), meaning that the world’s dark religions had their evil beginning with her. At Babel the devil organized the first idolatrous religion. The Tower of Babel was preeminently an act of idolatry. It was the beginning of the mystery religions that eventually permeated the world. It represented mankind united against the Creator and His holy laws. At the heart of Babylonianism is the worship of self, which is based on the ancient lie that Satan uttered to Eve, “ye shall be as gods” (Gen. 3:5). Babylon is the devil’s world kingdom, with all of its religious, political, and commercial aspects. The head of this dark kingdom is called “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4) and “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2).

The Babylonian religion spread throughout the earth. Idolatrous towers were built all across Mesopotamia. These were devoted to the worship of the sun, moon, and stars. Goddess worship was also prominent. The idolatry was practiced by the Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persian, the Greek, and the Roman. It spread from the Middle East to Africa, Europe, North and South America. (We deal with this in the section on Babylon in the apologetics course *An Unshakeable Faith* and in the PowerPoint/Keynote presentation on Babylon that accompanies that course.)

The Roman Catholic Church is a Christianized Babylonianism. The Papacy, the Mass, Mariolatry, the Rosary, the Priesthood -- all of these were borrowed from the idolatrous Babylonian religions. The ancient Babylonian mother-goddess worship was the basis for Rome’s doctrine of Mary. In the Bible, Mary is never called Queen of Heaven or the Mother of God, but the old mother-goddesses had these titles. The images of the goddess Isis and her baby Horus were the models for the Madonna and child. (Evidence for this can be found in the section on Babylon in the apologetics course *An Unshakeable Faith* and in the PowerPoint/Keynote presentation on Babylon that accompanies that course.)

“Babylon the great” in Revelation 17 is the final form of Satan’s world religion and government. It is taking shape today and will come to power with the Antichrist during the Tribulation and will be destroyed before Christ returns (Rev. 19:1-3). (For a detailed study of Revelation 17-18 see the *Advanced Bible Studies Series* course on Revelation, which is available from Way of Life Literature.)

Mystery Babylon is worldwide.

“Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: ... And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues” (Rev. 17:1, 15).

The “many waters” are “peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.”

Mystery Babylon’s headquarters is in Rome.

“The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth” (Rev. 17:9).

Rome is famous for her “seven hills.” Rome, of course, is the headquarters for the Roman Catholic Church, which is at the center of the great harlot religious system.

Mystery Babylon will probably be ruled by the pope. On August 7, 1977, Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury in the Anglican Church, said: “We should like to see the churches of England, Scotland, the United States and any other countries, bound together in one body. If the pope would like to come in as chairman, we should all welcome him” (*Why Were Our Reformers Burned?*). Our books *Evangelicals and Rome* and *The Directory of Contemporary Worship Music* document the back-to-Rome movement within practically every segment of Christianity.

Mystery Babylon is filled with blasphemy.

“I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy” (Rev. 17:3).

This is true of the Roman Catholic Church. The titles of her popes are blasphemous (e.g., “holy father,” “his holiness,” “vicar of Christ”). Rome’s mass is blasphemous. It is blasphemous to claim that bread actually becomes Jesus and it is blasphemous to worship the bread when it is put into a box called a tabernacle in Catholic churches. Rome’s doctrine of Mary is blasphemous. Rome has created fables about Mary’s sinless birth, her bodily assumption into heaven, her coronation as queen of heaven, her intercession for sinners. Consider Santa Maria Maggiore Church (Saint Mary Major) in Rome, which was built to honor Mary as the “Mother of God.” It features a large mosaic on the ceiling depicting Mary sitting with Jesus on His throne and being crowned by Him as Queen of Heaven. Another image of Mary in this church is titled “Mary Queen of Peace,” which is blasphemous because peace only comes through Christ. Outside of the St. Mary Major Church, Mary is even depicted hanging on the cross with Jesus! The Saint Stanislaus Kostka Catholic church in Chicago has an image of Mary sitting on the ark of God and surrounded by worshipping angels. This is a great blasphemy, as the ark was the place where Jehovah God abode in the tabernacle (Ex. 30:36). (For photos of these things see “Rome’s Mary on the Cross” at the Way of Life web site -- www.wayoflife.org.)

The blasphemy is not limited to the Roman Catholic Church. It is spreading throughout Christianity. It is blasphemous, for example, to mix the holy things of Christ with the unholy party music of this world. The emerging churches even go further in their blasphemy, by performing wicked secular rock songs in their church services. For example, NewSpring Church in Florence, South Carolina, performed “Highway to Hell” by the vile rock band AC/DC for Easter service 2009, and Northpoint Church of Springfield, Missouri, performed “Sympathy for the Devil” by the Rolling Stones for Easter service 2011. It is also blasphemous to say that God accepts the moral perversion of

homosexuality, which many evangelicals are saying. (See *The Treacherous Waters of Evangelicalism*, which is available as a free eBook from Way of Life Literature -- www.wayoflife.org.) It is blasphemous to say that the God who sends sinners to hell is a mean God, but this is what some in the emerging church are saying. (See the book *What Is the Emerging Church?*)

Mystery Babylon is clothed in purple and scarlet.

“... the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour” (Rev. 17:4).

The apostles and Christians of the early churches lived simple lives and built simple churches, but apostate Christians love impressive cathedrals, flowing robes, ritualism, candles and incense, and expensive clothing.

Revelation 17:4 describes exactly how Rome’s bishops and archbishops and cardinals and popes are clothed even to this day. In 2003 I witnessed a mass in St. Paul Without the Walls basilica in Rome in which the bishops were clothed in scarlet. When Pope John Paul II died, the cardinals who met to elect a new pope were clothed in scarlet.

Many of the emerging churches are moving in the direction of Rome by adopting things such as candles, incense, dim lighting, ambient music, labyrinths, icons, prayer stations, art, dance, meditation, chanting, and contemplative prayer. (See *What Is the Emerging Church?* from Way of Life Literature.)

Mystery Babylon is immoral.

“... the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: 2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication” (Rev. 17:1-2).

She is described as a whore. This refers both to spiritual and physical fornication.

The apostasy has always been associated with living after “the lusts of the flesh” (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

The Roman Catholic Church has been immoral throughout its history. After Martin Luther visited Rome he observed, “If there be a hell, Rome is built over it.” He was referring to the wickedness that he found in that city. Many of the popes, who were supposed to be “celibate,” committed fornication. Pope John XII (955-63) is described by the *Catholic Encyclopedia* as “a coarse, immoral man, whose life was such that the Lateran palace was spoken of as a brothel.” Pope Benedict IX (1032-1045) lived a “dissolute life.” Pope Sixtus IV (1471-84) erected a house of prostitution in Rome. Pope Pius II (1458-64) and Pope Innocent VIII (1484-92) each had at least two illegitimate children. Pope Alexander VI (1492-1503) had at least four illegitimate children whom he made rich through church positions. Alexander held unspeakable orgies in his palace and kept married women as mistresses. Pope Julius II (1503-13) had at least three illegitimate children. Throughout the world, Roman Catholic priests are infamous for homosexuality and child abuse. In Northern Ireland they are called “filthy beasts” by the Protestants. According to Roman Catholic bishop Pat Buckley, studies have shown that 80% of the Catholic priests in Ireland have broken their vows of celibacy (“500 Irish Priests Having Regular Sex with Women,” *London News Telegraph*, Jan. 21, 2006). In America, Rome has paid over \$1 billion to settle court cases against child-molesting priests. Most of these are homosexuals. A 2004 study found that 5,148 priests had been charged with committing this wickedness.

The rock & roll Christianity of these last days is filled with immorality. Rock & roll Christians live almost the same as the world. They love the world’s wicked movies and television programs and the world’s music and the world’s immodest dress fashions and the world’s vain sports stars and the world’s strange video games and the world’s Internet

sites. Even homosexuality is widely accepted among the rock & roll churches. (See *The Treacherous Waters of Evangelicalism*, a free eBook available from Way of Life Literature.)

Mystery Babylon is wealthy.

“And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand...” (Rev. 17:4).

This is an accurate description of the wealth of the Roman Catholic Church. The crown of Pope Paul II (1464-1471) was “set with diamonds, sapphires, emeralds, chrysolites, and jaspers” (Ouseley, *A Short Defence*, 1821, p. 230). The wealth of the Catholic Church is vast. In the 1970s, the Vatican was the third wealthiest “nation” behind America and Japan.

The wealth also describes the Protestant denominations and “evangelicalism” and the charismatic movement today. Like the church at Laodicea, they are rich and increased with goods (Rev. 3:17). Evangelical and charismatic churches are large and prosperous. Evangelical and charismatic colleges and publishing houses are rich and influential. Their radio and television ministries are heard by millions. Some of the evangelical and charismatic leaders own multiple mansions and fly around the world in their own luxury jets. In 2006, churches in America spent \$8.1 BILLION just on audio and projection equipment (“High Tech Churches,” *Christian Post*, Sept. 26, 2007). An article in *Christianity Today* in October 2006 entitled “Let’s Improve the Public Perception of Evangelicalism,” described “evangelicalism” in the following terms: “We now have institutional resources and influential churches to a degree barely hoped for 50 years ago. Our people are better educated and more affluent. Our global networks are connecting believers like never before.” This is more representative of the apostate church of Laodicea and the harlot “church” of Revelation 17 than the simple churches founded by the apostles.

Mystery Babylon is ecumenical.

“the Mother of harlots...” (Rev. 17:5).

She has many daughters who share her character. This refers to the ecumenical movement that is joining together all branches of Christianity: Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Protestant, Baptist, Pentecostal, evangelical, charismatic, etc. The ecumenical movement is even bringing “Christians” together with pagan religions.

The emerging “harlot church” was seen at the 1983 World Council of Churches’ (WCC) General Assembly in British Columbia, Canada. The WCC is made up of more than 340 denominations representing roughly 500 million professing Christians. The opening ceremony was led by North American nature-worshipping Indians who burned fish and tobacco in a fire to their pagan gods. Three Hindus, four Buddhists, two Jews, four Muslims, and a Sikh participated in the Assembly. There were readings from Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim scriptures. A Hindu woman from South India performed a pagan dance to the earth mother goddess. Philip Potter, General Secretary of the WCC, said that it is God’s will “to unite all nations in their diversity into one house.” Dirk Mulder, moderator of the WCC interfaith dialogue program, said that a Buddhist or Hindu can be saved without believing in Jesus (*Foundation*, Vol. IV, Issue III, 1983). There were also “evangelicals” who participated in this abominable conference. Clearly this is the “church” of Revelation 17.

The emerging “harlot church” was seen on January 24, 2002, when Pope John Paul II led the Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi, Italy. The interfaith prayer gathering featured some 200 religious leaders, including representatives of “Christian” denominations (Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Reformed, Baptist, Lutheran, Mormon, Mennonite) as well as representatives of Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Bahai-ism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Hinduism, Jainism,

Zoroastrianism, etc. Prominently featured were 29 Muslim leaders from such countries as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, and Libya, all of which persecute Christians to various degrees.

The emerging “harlot church” is seen in the contemplative prayer movement which is spreading quickly throughout Christianity. This movement borrows practices from the old Roman Catholic monasticism system, which in turn were borrowed from pagan Babylonian religions. The contemplative prayer movement promotes the writings of Roman Catholic mystics such as Teresa of Avila, Catherine of Siena, John of the Cross, Ignatius of Loyola, Francis of Assisi, and Madame Guyon. Many within the contemplative prayer movement are openly promoting Zen Buddhism and Hindu yoga, which are Babylonian religions. The late Thomas Merton, one of the most influential men in the movement, was both a Buddhist and a Catholic monk. Jesuit priest Thomas Clarke admits that the contemplative movement has “BEEN INFLUENCED BY ZEN BUDDHISM, TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION, OR OTHER CURRENTS OF EASTERN SPIRITUALITY” (*Finding Grace at the Center*, pp. 79, 80). The contemplative prayer movement puts professing Christians into communication with the demons that are the powers behind the ancient Babylonian idolatry. Many of the most influential evangelical leaders are recommending contemplative prayer, including Rick Warren, Bill Hybels, Chuck Swindoll, David Jeremiah, Beth Moore, Max Lucado, Philip Yancy, Lee Strobel, and Charles Stanley, as we have documented in the report “Evangelicals Turning to Catholic Spirituality,” which can be found at the Way of Life web site -- www.wayoflife.org.

Thus, there is already a harlot “church” taking shape and sitting upon many waters.

Mystery Babylon is a persecutor.

“And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus...” (Rev. 17:6).

It has been estimated by reputable historians that during the Roman Catholic Inquisition 50 million people were killed for the crime of “heresy” between A.D. 600 and A.D. 1850. This is the number cited by John Dowling, who published *The History of Romanism* in 1847 (book VIII, chapter 1, footnote 1).

From A.D. 1160-1560 the Waldensian Christians who dwelt in the mountains in northern Italy and France were visited with 36 terrible persecutions because they refused to submit to the Roman Catholic Church (Thomas Armitage, *A History of the Baptists*). They were almost completely destroyed. For example, in 1209, Pope Innocent III called for a war against the Waldenses. Anyone who volunteered to join the war was promised forgiveness of sin and many rewards. Tens of thousands took up arms for the pope and marched against the Waldenses. Some 200,000 non-Catholic Christians were killed within a few months. Two large cities were destroyed, together with many smaller towns and villages. The Christians were thrown from high cliffs, hanged, disemboweled, pierced through, drowned, torn by dogs, burned alive, crucified. In one case, 400 mothers fled for refuge with their babies to a cave in Castelluzzo, which was located 2,000 feet above the valley in which they lived. When they were discovered by the rampaging Catholics, a large fire was built outside of the cave and they were suffocated. Thousands were made homeless and were forced to wander in the woods and mountains to escape the persecutors. “In this manner, the war was carried on for twenty years. Town after town was taken, pillaged, burnt. Nothing was left but a smoking waste” (John Christian, *A History of the Baptists*).

This is but a tiny sampling of Rome’s Inquisition.

During the Great Tribulation, terrible persecution will be unleashed against those who refuse to submit to the

Antichrist, and the harlot religion will be intimately aligned with him.

“I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them” (Dan. 7:21).

“And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people” (Daniel 8:24).

“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. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another” (Mat. 24:9-10).

“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? 11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled” (Rev. 6:9-11).

“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; 10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. 11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, 12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. 13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? 14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which

came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:9-14).

“And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed” (Rev. 13:15).

The New Testament describes two types of churches: true and false. There will be true churches in the world until Jesus takes them away through the Rapture. But false churches will outnumber true churches by far and will eventually be formed into the great worldwide harlot “church.” This “church” will rule with the Antichrist for a short season and will then be destroyed.

The way of spiritual victory in the time of apostasy

1. Separate from those who are apostate.

“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Tim. 3:5).

“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Revelation 18:4).

Separation from apostasy is the only effective solution to the problem of error. False teaching is likened to leaven (Gal. 5:9) because it spreads, and the only protection is separation. Separation is despised in the ecumenical climate of these last days, because separation hinders the unity that is required to build the one-world church, but it is God’s prescription against the disease of false teaching.

2. Hold to sound New Testament doctrine.

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them” (2 Tim. 3:14).

Christians in every century are to follow the doctrine and practice that was given by divine revelation in the New Testament. We do not have the authority to create new doctrines or new kinds of churches. We are to fight to preserve the true teaching of the Bible (Jude 3). We are not to allow *any* false doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3).

3. Remain confident in the Bible as the divinely-inspired Word of God.

“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

From the beginning of history, the devil has attacked the Word of God and tried to get men to doubt it. This is what he did in the Garden of Eden when he lied to Eve about God’s Word (Gen. 3:1-5). The attack on the Bible has never been more fierce than it is today. Not only is the Bible attacked from without by unbelievers in the world and evolutionists and by pagan religions, but it is also attacked by professing Christians. The Bible is attacked by Roman Catholicism (which claims that its own religious traditions are equal in authority to the Bible), by theological liberalism (e.g., Moses didn’t write the Pentateuch and Jonah is a myth), by the multiplicity of conflicting Bible versions which has greatly weakened the authority of God’s Word, and by the cults (such as the Mormons who add the writings of Joseph Smith to the Bible).

Paul urged Timothy to remain confident in the Bible. Note some of the important lessons from 2 Timothy 3:15-17:

The nature of the Bible -- It is a holy book. “Holy” means “set apart,” referring to the fact that the Bible is unlike any other book. It is God’s Book.

The perfection of the Bible -- It is from God in its entirety. The Greek word translated “inspiration” literally means “God-breathed.” The Bible, though written by men, was breathed out from God through holy, chosen, prepared prophets. Compare 2 Peter 1:21. “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

The purpose and power of the Bible -- It produces salvation (2 Tim. 3:15) and sound Christian living (2 Tim. 3:17).

The sufficiency of the Bible -- It is able to make the man of God perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. Obviously, then, nothing else is necessary. God’s people don’t need human tradition or other “holy” books. We don’t need extra-biblical visions and prophecies. The completed canon of Scripture (Genesis to Revelation) is the sole authority for faith and practice.

4. Make sure of your salvation.

“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15).

The Lord warned that many will minister in His name who will not be genuine Christians (Mat. 7:21-23). A major reason why churches become apostate is that they become careless about receiving members. They aren’t careful enough in looking for evidence of the new birth. When this happens, the churches become mixed multitudes of saved and unsaved and there is no spiritual conviction and power. The head of the Bible Society in Calcutta, India, told me in the 1980s that he was a “third generation Christian.” In other words, he claimed to be a Christian simply because he was born into a Christian home and grew up in church, but Jesus said that if an individual is not personally born again he will not see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).

5. Preach the Word of God.

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; 2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:1-2).

Here we see the necessity of preaching and its role in the protection during apostasy. Paul’s command for Timothy to preach the Word of God is right in the midst of his warnings about end-time error.

Here, too, we also see the characteristics of sound preaching.

Preaching is a solemn charge from God (2 Tim. 4:1). Every preacher will stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and give account for his preaching. It is this truth that keeps the preacher straight and keeps him preaching the whole truth regardless of the attitude of his hearers. He must fear God more than man.

Preaching is to be done in season and out of season: when it is convenient or inconvenient, lawful or unlawful, popular or unpopular, culturally acceptable or unacceptable, believed or not believed, resisted or not resisted.

Preaching involves “negative” as well as “positive” proclamation. The first two aspects of sound preaching referred to in 2 Timothy 4 are “negative”—reprove and rebuke! “Reprove” means to convince of sin or error. “Rebuke” means to warn. “Exhort” means to encourage, to appeal. We do well to remember this when we are told on every hand to “keep it positive” and “avoid controversy.”

Preaching is to be practical (“reprove, rebuke, exhort”). It is to reach down to where people live. The preacher is not merely to *read* the Bible; he is to “preach” it. He is to apply it to every area of life so that waywardness is exposed and God’s people are kept fenced in to the good but narrow way by God’s holy precepts on the right hand and the left.

Preaching is to be done in the proper attitude (“with all longsuffering”). Christ and the apostles show us the example of godly preaching, which is forthright, uncompromising, yet compassionate. God is patient with us, and we must be patient with others, though there is an end to His patience and there must be an end to ours, as well, when people persist in impenitence.

Preaching is to be doctrinal. Sound preaching builds God’s people up in biblical truth and equips them to understand and rightly interpret the Bible for themselves. Sound preaching does not create believers who are dependent on man but who are dependent on God, who can stand on their own feet spiritually and walk in God’s perfect will.

6. Be on guard against sin and error.

“watch thou in all things” (2 Tim. 4:5).

Churches that become careless in the last days will be devoured by the devil and led astray into his false and deceptive paths.

“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3).

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8).

7. Continue to preach the gospel to all men.

“But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (2 Tim. 4:5).

The Lord’s Great Commission is the main work He has given to the churches (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:17; Luke 24:44-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8), and He has promised to be with us to the end of the age as we do this work (Mat. 28:18-20).

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