

## ***The Beginning of Birth Pains***

### **I. The Two Timeframes Described In The Olivet Discourse**

- a. Daniel's "70th week" marks the final seven years of this age before Christ's return. This period will begin when the Antichrist "*confirms a covenant with the many for one week*" (**Daniel 9:27**), leading to the Jewish people instituting sacrifices on the temple mount (likely with a third temple being built). In the middle of that week, or after 3 ½ years, the Antichrist will put a stop to the Jewish sacrifices and desecrate the temple. The final 3 ½ years of this age referred to as the *Great Tribulation* (**Matthew 24:21**), or Jacob's trouble/distress (**Jeremiah 30:7**), and are characterized by the reign of the Antichrist and his violent assault against Israel, the Jewish people, and the global body of Christ.

***(Daniel 9:27 NASB) "And he [Antichrist] will confirm a covenant with the many for one week [7 years], but in the middle of the week [3 ½ years] he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come the one who makes desolate, until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, gushes forth on the one who makes desolate."***

- *In Daniel 9, The Angel Gabriel tells Daniel that there's 6 redemptive purposes for the 70 weeks (Daniel 9:24): 1) To finish the wrongdoing, 2) to make an end of sin, 3) To make atonement for guilt, 4) To bring in everlasting righteousness, 5) To seal up vision and prophecy, 6) To anoint the Most Holy Place.*
- b. In His Olivet Discourse, Jesus describes significant events and regional/global trends that will function as timing indicators to aid the praying church in discerning the urgency of the hour. He outlines two distinct time frames: 1) The Great Tribulation, which encompasses the final 3 ½ years of this age, and 2) The Beginning of Birth Pains, referring to the decades leading up to the Great Tribulation.

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

***(Matthew 24:8: NASB) "But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pains."***

### **II. Increased Deception**

***(Matthew 24:4-5 NASB) "And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads [deceives] you. 5 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ [Messiah],' and they will mislead [deceive] many people."***

- a. It is estimated that there are between 4,000 and 10,000 religions worldwide, with the five major religions—Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism—accounting for over 77% of the global population. Each of these diverse religions currently follows a different belief system and/or spiritual leader, which we would refer to as a false "christ/messiah".
- b. Over the past century, there has been a surge in the emergence of "new religions" led by cult leaders who claim to be either Jesus himself or a "messiah-like" figure. It is increasingly common for individuals to view leaders and influencers in political, social, and entertainment spheres as "messianic" figures. This phenomenon is not entirely new; even during the 1st century, the "spirit of the antichrist" was at work, deceiving people and diverting them from the truth of the Gospel.

***(1 John 2:18 NASB) "Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour."***

- c. As we approach the end of times and the "birth pains" become more intense, people who don't know Jesus will search for "messiah figures" everywhere. Even now, the "deconstruction movement" reflects that search. This desperate search will make them vulnerable to being deceived by the Antichrist, who will emerge, deny Jesus, and compel others to do the same.

*(1 John 4:3-6 NASB) “Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming, and now it is already in the world. 4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world, therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God. The one who knows God listens to us; the one who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”*

### III. Wars And Rumors of Wars

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

*(Luke 21:9 NASB) “And when you hear of wars and revolts [commotions], do not be alarmed; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately.”*

- a. Approximately 150 million people have died in wars over the last century, highlighting the devastating toll of human conflict. Since 1900, there have been over 100 wars, each contributing to a tragic loss of life and widespread suffering. These wars have not only caused immense casualties but have also disrupted societies, economies, and the overall progress of nations involved
- b. In this pivotal hour of history, it has become nearly impossible to go a single day without hearing about potential warfare between countries. With escalating conflicts around the globe, humanity increasingly yearns desperately for peace and justice. This intense pursuit for stability and hope will lead some individuals towards faith in Jesus, while others may be drawn towards deceptive promises offered by the antichrist.
- c. It appears that many of the wars and rumors of wars Jesus referenced are centered around Israel. While global conflict has generally intensified, it is crucial to maintain a focus on the ongoing tensions in the Middle East, particularly those involving Israel. This region remains a significant flashpoint and warrants our attention and understanding in these turbulent times.

*(Luke 21:20 NASB) “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near”*

*(Daniel 11:40-41 NASB) “And at the end time the king of the South will wage war with him, and the king of the North [Antichrist] will storm against him with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he will enter countries, overflow them, and pass through. 41 He will also enter the Beautiful Land [Israel], and many countries will fall”*

- d. Jesus advised that when we witness an increase in warfare, we should not be alarmed or troubled, thinking it signifies the end. His message was that more conflict is inevitable and must be expected. He described war as an unfortunate "birth pain," emphasizing that "those things must take place."

*(Psalm 112:7 AMP) “He will not fear bad news; His heart is steadfast, trusting [confidently relying on and believing] in the Lord.”*

### IV. Nation Will Rise Against Nation And Kingdom Will Rise Against Kingdom

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

- a. **Nation Will Rise Against Nation (Ethnic Conflict)** – The Greek word for "nation" is "ethnos," which refers to an ethnic group, multitude, tribe, or race. This context implies an increase in ethnic conflicts and race wars. The term "genocide" is used to describe the systematic destruction of an ethnic group. Astonishingly, approximately 50 million people have perished in ethnic

purging efforts over the last 100 years. The Israel-Palestine conflict is a glimpse into what the ethnic wars at the end of the age will look like.

- Syrian Civil War (2011-2020) 650,000+ deaths
- Darfur, Sudan (2003-2007) 400,000 deaths
- Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992-1995) 200,000 deaths
- Rwanda (1994) – 800,000 – 1,000,000 deaths
- Pol Pot in Cambodia: 1975-1979 2,000,000 deaths
- Nazi Holocaust (1938-1945) – over 6,000,000 deaths
- Nanking China (1937- 1938) 300,000 deaths
- Stalin's Forced Famine (1932-1933) 7,000,000 deaths
- Armenians in Turkey (1915-1918) 1,500,000 deaths.

- b. **Kingdom Will Rise Against Kingdom (Economic Warfare)** - In addition to physical warfare, economic conflicts will emerge between nations. Hostility, aggression, greed, and the desire for power will drive the imposition of sanctions and other economic measures.

V. Famines, Earthquakes, Plagues, Terrible Sightings, and Great Signs From Heaven

*(Matthew 24:7b NASB) "There will be famines and earthquakes in various places"*

*(Luke 21:11 NASB) "There will be massive earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrible sightings and great signs from heaven."*

- a. **Famines** - It is estimated that 735 million people globally suffer from malnutrition, with around 9 million dying each year from starvation, despite the fact that farmers produce enough food to feed 1.5 times the world's population. In an environment characterized by deception, conflict, and chaos, the challenges surrounding food production and distribution will intensify.
- b. **Earthquakes** – The Greek word for earthquakes is "*seismos*," which encompasses both seismic events and "tempests" or windy storm systems. Organizations specializing in seismic activity generally agree that there is more seismic activity today than in past centuries. Recent studies also reveal a significant increase in the intensity, frequency, and duration of hurricanes worldwide. Furthermore, the frequency of tornado outbreaks is rising.
- c. **Plagues** - We are witnessing an alarming increase in the rapid spread of various diseases worldwide. Epidemic diseases like the Bubonic Plague, the Spanish Flu, and COVID-19 are becoming more frequent and severe, representing another "birth pain" for humanity. The Spanish Flu alone claimed an estimated 50 million lives, and annually, over 9.7 million people succumb to cancer.
- d. **Terrible Sightings** - Weather patterns and cosmic disturbances are expected to shift dramatically, leading to an increase in natural disasters that will profoundly impact nations around the globe. These "terrible sightings" will instill fear at an unprecedented level. The Greek word for terrible, "*phobetron*," is where our word "*phobia*" originates, highlighting the intense fear these events will provoke.
- e. **Great Signs** – Despite the challenges posed by these "birth pains," Luke recounts Jesus' assurance that "*great signs from heaven*" or "*confirming miracles*," such as cosmic events and angelic activities, will visibly increase. This highlights the faith and expectancy of the body of Christ as they live through the final years of this age.