**The End Times – part 2**

Well, we are coming to the end of our study of the book of Daniel and it is the near the end of Daniel’s long and faithful life and his last vision in chapters 10-12 involves the End Times which we will focus on today. **<Arrow>** Last week, we looked at several specific prophecies that were fulfilled in Daniel’s lifetime. Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesied that it would be the Babylonians who take the remaining Israelites in Judah to captivity, that it would last 70 years before another King named Cyrus would decree to allow the Jews to return to Jerusalem. **<Arrow>** And we studied the visions of the four kingdoms that Daniel prophesied about and which occurred in human history through the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman Empires.

And I am not even going to get into the prophecies of the Messiah in the Old Testament that Jesus perfectly fulfilled including the place where he would be born. How did Jesus pull that one off? God knew and the Bible has many, many prophecies that were made many years before the events and they prove that God exists and that He knows the future as He is the Creator who even created time itself. God is not surprised by world events, so He gives these visions to his prophets so that we can live wisely and be prepared for the future, and know that God is in control.

And this last vision of Daniel involves the End Times, the End of the World as we know it, and a future world leader, the anti-Christ, who will come to power and who will persecute and kill God’s people. Now, as we have seen, if God tells us the future through His prophets, we can be certain that it WILL come true. And it is not only Daniel, but Paul, John, and Jesus himself all give similar views of this End Times. It will take place at some point in the future and many, many people have tried to predict the date of this event without success.

Perhaps you were aware of the latest end of the world prediction, October 7, 2015. It didn’t happen. It is hard to believe that Christians especially continue to try to predict the date even when Christ himself has told us. **<Arrow>**

*“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”*

Jesus says that He himself doesn’t know the timing. It is hard to fathom how that is possible, but I think if Jesus doesn’t know, I doubt anyone on earth is going to figure this one out. **<Arrow>** Jesus repeats this to his disciples just before He is taken up to Heaven, but He also gives us some clues as to how this will come about.

*Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”7 He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

*9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. 10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”*

This is after His resurrection and it’s the last words that Jesus will speak to His disciples before He is taken up to Heaven. And it starts with a reasonable question from His disciples, “Is the time now?”, but Jesus says, “you won’t know the time”, but then we get a few clues about His Second Coming in this passage.

He also says that they be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. And some people believe that this perhaps has finally been fulfilled in our day and age. It is impossible to know for certain if all people groups have heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but there are more missionaries today than ever before. One thing is for certain, the world is getting smaller with global travel and global communication and information. I’ll come back to that in a moment.

We learn in verse 11 that He will come back in a miraculous way in the sky. And in Matthew 24, Jesus tells us about that event. **<Arrow>**

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

You will not miss Jesus’ second coming. No one on earth will miss this event. And Jesus warns us not to believe it when people say He is here or there, for in verse 27, he says, *For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man*. And this gathering of his elect is what some call the Rapture, when Christians will be taken up to Heaven. Jesus described it this way. **<Arrow>**

*That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.*

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

The 2nd Coming will be universal and dramatic and the beginning of the End of this World, so be ready. And I think this call to be ready is why so many people have tried to predict His 2nd coming, along with some of the signs that it occur before His return.

I mentioned one of those with the Gospel being spread to all the nations of the earth. Another sign is mentioned in the passage from Daniel 12 that we read today verse 4. **<Arrow>**

*But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.*

Now, in several sources, I read that these words ‘here and there’ in the original Hebrew give a clear description of travel between countries. And today in the age of jet travel, we can jump on a plane and fly across the globe in the matter of hours. And for sure, the Internet has issued in the age of knowledge. We have more information available to us that ever before. So, these are two signs of the End Times.

The passage in verse 1 also says that it will be a time of distress such as not happened in the world. Jesus also says that in Matthew 24. **<Arrow>**

*You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.*

If you look back at the 20th century, you will certainly call it the century of war. We had both the 1st and 2nd world war, but there has been more or less constant fighting which remains to today. Of course, you could say that that has always been true, but perhaps not on the scale and especially if you think about the shear loss of human life which would be in the hundreds of millions if you count the genocides in Communist lands like Russia, China, and Cambodia. And now today, we have mass migrations of people from the Middle East into Europe due to war.

Earthquake statistics are easy to show that we have many more than were ever recorded and even in the modern times when people would have felt and recorded major earthquakes, but still this is hard to prove. However, when you put it all together, you wouldn’t say we are moving in the opposite direction.

And you see this even in Sweden. I have never seen this type of advertisement during my 13 years in Sweden. It says, Are you prepared to handle 72 hours? When a huge catastrophe or other crisis hits, it can take 3 days for normal community services to flow again like water, electricity, and delivery of food. And they tell you how to become prepared in the case of an emergency. They have a checklist. To be honest, we are not prepared and I doubt many people are because it is so far from our minds that this could happen. But the leaders of our government are looking at the world and they are seeing so many catastrophes and wars and terrorist events, that they know sooner or later, it will happen in Sweden. And I think they are correct.

I can tell you from the Business World, for the first time in my career, I see this kind of thing being openly planned for. Business leaders also know that these types of unpredictable events and especially terrorist attacks will continue to happen and they need to have business plans that can handle this instability that we see in the world. Would you have ever imagined this kind of thinking in the modern Western world? Something has definitely changed in the last few years, but again, it says these are the beginnings of birth pains and not the End.

Another sign is the increase of wickedness as Jesus put it in Matthew 24:12, but Paul also mentions this in 2 Timothy 3. **<Arrow>**

*But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God*

Do you think this describes the times we live in? Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. I saw this article in CNN a few weeks back. **<Arrow>**

Playboy, the magazine that ushered in nude pictures of women for public consumption with Marilyn Monroe in 1953 is giving up showing nudity. Isn’t it ironic to think that the very nudity that Playboy pioneered has been "overtaken" by the Internet where you are "one click away from every sex act imaginable for free." For some of us, this cycle has played out within our lifetimes. Isn’t this amazing how fast things are changing?

**<Arrow>** Do you think the human race is making progress? Do you see it here in Sweden? And I think in the West, we have created this environment when God and some ultimate ethics have been replaced by situational ethics and the end justifies the means. People pretty much compare themselves to others and look for approval from their friends which tends to lower the bar on ethics quite a lot. And if there are any ultimate values, it might be that murder is still a no-no and perhaps harming the environment. Besides that, it’s pretty much up to each person. I am sorry to say that I am not very hopeful about the future. Time will tell, but I think the Bible is correct.

Perhaps another reason that many people have been saying the End is near has been the establishment of Israel as a nation in 1948. There are a number of prophecies about this from Amos, Ezekiel, and Isaiah that I don’t have time to get into, but you can google it if you want. I think this event really ushered in the era of people making predictions of a specific date. And I think that you can agree that the birth pains have started at least. It is not unreasonable to understand that Jesus could come at any time. And, of course, that is the message that Christians have understood from the beginning of the Church. But I think we are getting much closer.

In fact, there are two prophecies in Revelation that could not have been possible to fulfill until our age. One has to do with two prophets that will eventually be killed and it says in chapter 11:9, *For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language, and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial*. This has only been possible in the last 50 years since we have had global satellite video communication. Never in the past could all nations and tribes see this in the span of 3 days.

Another prophecy in Revelation 9 involves an army of 200 million men. The entire population of the world was around 200 million people when John wrote this. It has only been in the last 100 years that this could even be conceivable in the world and it is a stretch today, but still possible.

The last prophecy that I want to mention is from our text today v11. **<Arrow>**

*“From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days.*

This phrase the abomination that causes desolation occurs a few times in the Bible and they each refer to a time when an abomination of the proper worship of God occurs in God’s temple in Jerusalem. One occurs in 168 B.C. when Antiochus Epiphanes sacrificed a pig to Zeus in the temple. But the Bible points to a future time when the Anti-Christ will replace the daily sacrifice with worship to Himself.

Now this prophecy has not occurred yet. What I want to say is that the temple will have to be rebuilt first. And if you have been watching the news lately about the terror attacks in Jerusalem. It has to do with the temple mount, **<Arrow>**where the Jewish Temple used to sit and was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70 and today it is where the Muslim Al Aqsa Mosgue and Dome of the Rock sit. In recent weeks, the Israelies have restricted muslim men from the Temple mount and this has led the Muslims to think that the Israelies plan to take over the Temple mount. Today, no Jews are allowed there and that is why they go to the Western Wall to pray.

But you need to understand that there are many Jews who have been making plans to rebuild the temple. In fact, the Temple Institute has been working since 1987 to remake all the utensils and items necessary to perform the sacrifices again. And they are close to being complete. The only thing they need is to rebuild the temple on the temple mount.

Now, with the current state of affairs, it is unlikely to happen, but some people speculate that it will be the anti-Christ who makes a deal that brings peace in this area and allows the temple to be rebuilt and the sacrifices to start again. The only reason I say this is that if you see this happening in real life, know that we are in the last 7 years of human history. I imagine that things will continue to get worse to a point where this world leader can step in at the right time and bring peace and stability. But it won’t be so for Christians who will oppose him and many will be killed for their faith according to the prophecies in Revelations about the Great Tribulation. Keep an eye on the Temple Mount in the news. **<Arrow>**

In the end, Daniel is given a promise that he will rise at the end of days and receive his inheritance. This is good news to us, God promises us a wonderful future with Him as the center of our world and worship.

Group Discussion

What do you think? Do you believe we are in the End Times? Ok to disagree.

Do you see any other signs that I didn’t mention?

What does this mean for us now? Matt 24-25 1 Thess 4 2 Peter 3:10

* Keep watch
* Be faithful: there will be rewards and punishments
* If you knew for certain that the temple would start to be rebuilt 10 years from now and that the Jewish sacrifices would start again; that Jesus would come again 7 years later, how would you live your life differently?
* Final judgment depends on how you treat those in need.

Lead into Communion

It is frightening stuff. You won’t have control of much at these times, but you can put your faith in God who is in control. He knows the outcome and you want to be on God’s side. The problem is that none of us are holy and pure. We have all sinned and gone our own ways. No one deserves Heaven and so we have a problem.

But God understand this and He loves us, so He sent His One and only Son into the world, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. Our sins were put on Jesus and He paid our penalty with his life by dying on the cross. No greater love is there than this, that you lay down your life for a friend. Jesus is your friend and He proved it that day on the cross. All we need to do is to put our faith in Him and not in ourselves. You can do that this morning during Communion.

**Daniel 12:1-13**

*1 “At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. 2 Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. 4 But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.”*

*5 Then I, Daniel, looked, and there before me stood two others, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank. 6 One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, “How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?”*

*7 The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, “It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.”*

*8 I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, “My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?”*

*9 He replied, “Go your way, Daniel, because the words are rolled up and sealed until the time of the end. 10 Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.*

*11 “From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. 12 Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.*

*13 “As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.”*