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CFBC... "Perfect Ending" (Matthew 24-25)

"SIGNS OF THE LORD'S RETURN: PART 2" Matthew 24:9-14

On October 25, 2010, a massive earthquake ripped through tectonic plates and unleashed tsunamis that leveled whole villages in the region of Indonesia. Deaths could have been avoided or at least minimized had the tsunami warning system worked properly.

A tsunami early warning system uses seismic networks and ocean sensors to detect potential tsunamis. It analyzes the data to assess risk, and then broadcasts warnings via radio, TV, sirens, and text messages to inform at-risk communities and to turn awareness into readiness. Smithsonian Magazine, "Did Broken Buoys Fail to Warn Victims of the Mentawai Tsunami?" (October 28, 2010)

As followers of Christ, the disciples were certainly aware of His coming and of His kingdom. That's obvious based on the questions they asked Him

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that day (24:1-3). This was a teachable moment. In an effort to turn AWARENESS INTO READINESS, Jesus proceeded to teach them about His second coming and the future of His kingdom.

There is no reason for anyone to be caught flat-footed by our Lord's return. He has included in His Word some signs that indicate that His return is near. How many of you are AWARE that Jesus is coming again?

- He wants to turn your AWARENESS into READINESS (Matthew 24:42,44; Luke 21:34-36)
- He wants to turn your READINESS into EAGERNESS (Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8)

Here is a good way to think about the Second Coming. . .

We plan as though Jesus isn't coming for 1,000 years, but we live as if He is coming in the next 10 minutes. What you believe will happen tomorrow determines how you live today.

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1 John 2:28... Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.

In Matthew 24:4-14, the Holy Spirit inspired Matthew to include 7 early warning signs. These signs will increase and intensify as the Lord's return draws near. It's the Lord's will that you:

**GET READY AND STAY READY
FOR THE LORD'S RETURN!**

Here are the first 3 signs that we examined last week. . .

1. SPIRITUAL DECEPTION

Matthew 24:4–5, 11, 24... And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. 5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many.

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2. GLOBAL CONFLICT

Matthew 24:6–7... "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for *those things* must take place, but *that* is not yet the end. 7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom....

3. NATURAL DISASTERS

Matthew 24:7b... and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.

Okay these are the three early warning signs we looked at last week. In verses 8-14, I want to point out four more signs that should alert us to the nearness of our Lord's return.

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Verse 8 is sort of a hinge verse...

Matthew 24:8... "But all these things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs.

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The metaphor of *labor pangs* sheds a lot of light on these signs. A woman does not go into labor when she conceives a baby, and she does not go into labor as the baby develops in her womb. She goes into labor just prior to giving birth.

Jesus taught that there will be a steady increase in the frequency and the intensity of these signs as His return approaches.

If our awareness of our Lord's return is going to translate into readiness, we've got to pay attention to what's going on in the world! Today, we are going to look at four more signs. These include:

4. CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION

Matthew 24:9... "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name."

As we approach the time of our Lord's glorious return, we can expect a rapid increase in both the

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frequency and the intensity of persecution. Dr. Rogers said. . .

This world doesn't mind religion, but it resents Jesus Christ. More Christians died for their faith in the 20th century than all other centuries since Calvary. More Christians were tortured and slain during World War 2 than under the Roman Empire. Some authorities claim that over 50 million Christians were slaughtered in Communist countries for their faith in Christ.

No one can accuse Jesus of pulling off a "*bait and switch*" by removing from the gospel the price true believers will pay for their commitment to HIM. . .

Matthew 5:10–12... "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **11** "Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. **12** "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same

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way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Here are the top 10 countries that persecute Christians—North Korea (communism), Somalia (Islamic Oppression), Yemen (Islamic Oppression), Libya (Islamic Oppression), Sudan (Islamic Oppression), Eritrea (Dictatorial Paranoia), Nigeria (Islamic Oppression), Pakistan (Islamic Oppression), Iran (Islamic Oppression), Afghanistan (Islamic Oppression).

Right now, more than 380 million Christians are suffering high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith.

The type of persecution ranges from government-inflicted to violence carried out by terror groups.

5. MASSIVE APOSTASY

Matthew 24:10–11... “At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. 11 “Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many.

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The pressure of persecution will cause many professing believers to turn their backs on Jesus and on their own family and on their brothers and sisters in the church.

Mark 13:12... "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death.

This last days apostasy will be the result of *having to pay too high a price and the lure of false teaching that will explode across the world.*

MacArthur stated— **"A person who genuinely belongs to Christ may sometimes falter and be disobedient, but he will never reject His Lord. The person who belongs to Christ continues to confess Him, to serve Him, and to suffer for Him. He does not endure because of his own strength and fortitude but because he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who never fails to give sustaining grace to God's children."**

Hear this word of warning. . .

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Hebrews 3:12... Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.

GET READY AND STAY READY FOR THE LORD'S RETURN!

Here are the first 5 signs of our Lord's return... spiritual deception, global conflict, natural disasters, Christian persecution, and massive apostasy. Here's the sixth sign. . .

6. BLATANT LAWLESSNESS

Matthew 24:12–13... "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. 13 "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

"Lawlessness" means to deliberately behave with complete disregard for the laws or regulations of God and government. Our nation has deliberately rejected God's moral law by legalizing abortion,

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by affirming the LGBTQ+ agenda, and by re-defining marriage.

Today, lawlessness is reaching epidemic proportions as respect for men and women who work in law enforcement are coming under increasing lack of respect and outright attacks. This is a failure at the core level of government.

This description of lawlessness strikes a parallel to Paul's description in his letter to Timothy. . .

2 Timothy 3:1–5... But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. **2** For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, **3** unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, **4** treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, **5** holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

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The antichrist will be the personification of this lawlessness. . .

2 Thessalonians 2:3–4... Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, **4** who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

What does Jesus mean when he says, "love will grow cold?" The main highlights the relationship between lawlessness and loss of love among unbelievers in the world during the last days.

7. GOSPEL PROCLAMATION

Matthew 24:13–14... "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. **14** "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come."

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How will the gospel ever be preached to the world? John MacArthur stated...

"By both natural and supernatural means. The 144,000 (Jews) who are sealed in Revelation 7 will proclaim the Gospel. Later two witnesses will given amazing power to proclaim the Gospel and verify their authority with great signs and wonders (Revelation 11:3-6) and ultimately they will even rise from the dead before a watching world (Revelation 11:11). And in Revelation 14, just prior to the pouring out of bowl judgments, God sends an angel from heaven with 'the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.'"
(Revelation 14:6-7)

The gospel will be preached to the whole world before Christ comes back!

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CONCLUSION

GET READY AND STAY READY FOR THE LORD'S RETURN!

Here are the signs of our Lord's return... spiritual deception, global conflict, natural disasters, Christian persecution, massive apostasy, blatant lawlessness, and gospel proclamation.

Are you ready for Jesus to come? Will you make a commitment to stay ready?

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