

# **WHAT IS THE SIGN OF THE END**

## **Part II of “ANOTHER LOOK AT THE BEAST”**

**By Don E. Haney**

As covered in Part I of this article, we saw that the Holy Scriptures clearly do not say that the beast power of Revelation will be made up of ten nations – only that the beast will be joined by ten additional nations. (10 + the beast = more than 10. See part I for further explanation.) Further, the ten nations join with and submit to the beast power only for the last “hour” of the great tribulation – therefore they are NOT a time marker of the beginning of the tribulation, but of it’s nearing end. (Rev.17:9-14) To focus upon a beast that is made up of a union totaling ten nations as a time marker of the nearing tribulation is erroneous. It is the result of “pre-packaged ready made knowledge” taught as doctrine, when it is merely the traditions and teachings of men (Mark 7:7). Worse than that it deceives us, as it is NOT what Jesus said we are to look for to know when the end is near! What did Jesus say were the signs of the end that we are to watch for? Do you know? Are you sure? Are you able to grow in Biblical understanding, even if your church or minister has not come to understand the same way as you do? If not, the reader may be less inclined to believe the plain words of their Bibles, as most view God’s word only in light of the slant they have been taught to view it through! My beloved brethren, can we see that this hinders growth in the individual to what he or she is told to believe?

Should not a shepherd and teacher of God’s word teach God’s people to THINK, instead of telling them what to think? Should not a true ministers teaching better ENABLE God’s flock to rightly divide God’s word of truth for THEMSELVES? (2 Tim.2:15) God’s word says each member of God’s body is to learn for themselves how to study the scriptures (Acts 17:11), even to the point of being able to teach it to others! (Heb.5:12-14) Paul said if we are fearful and trying to please men, we cannot be faithful servants of Christ. (Gal.1:10) But Satan truly has deceived us and limited growth in truth, by bringing many church organizations into a cultish gentile governmental system based upon blind following of men and fear to grow beyond that system, instead of a healthy and free, joyful personal hearty study of God’s word. Let’s not let this happen to us,

Now let’s see the special awesome encouragement that God gives His faithful saints in the end time; and what God says are the signs we are to watch for as a time marker for the end of this age. Let’s begin in Matthew 24.

Notice these words of Christ are in response to His being asked about the sign of His return and of the end of the age – verse 3. Jesus begins by warning the disciples of many false religious teachers and of many wars and rumors of wars – but then He says “the end is not yet” (verse 6). Jesus said we should not allow ourselves to be troubled by wars and false teachers as if they were a sign of the end time, for they are NOT! This is true, regardless of all the warnings some of our religious teachers give us every time our nation is involved in another war! God said when we see these false teachers and wars “the end is not yet.” From there Jesus goes on to detail many other things in the world that will also span the time from the apostles to the time of the end, so that we would not be confused by them either. He tells us of famines and diseases and earthquakes and ethnic or racial wars (Gk ethnos = nation) and wars by alliances of nations or kingdoms, in verse 7, but again, in verse 8, He says these things are the “beginning of sorrows” – but not yet the sign of the end, as there have always been wars, diseases and earthquakes etc...

Next Jesus warns that some will suffer tribulation (trial) and martyrdom as a testimony. This began to happen very soon after Jesus’ death. In verse 14, Matthew says that the preaching of the gospel to all nations will also precede the end, and He mentions this as happening before the abomination of desolation which he discusses in the next verse. Now let’s go to Luke’s account for greater clarity.

Time and space prevent us from covering this topic in the kind of detail it deserves. But scholars who study Matthew have noticed that Matthew's accounts are accurate but not always listed in a step-by-step sequential manner. For a more sequential timeline, one must compare Matthew with Mark and especially Luke. Matthew was an eye witness who was interested in accurately listing as many of the words, teachings and acts of Jesus as he could, but some times he listed them categorically, and not always sequentially. This can be easily seen in the sermon(s) on the mount, and elsewhere – and even to a degree in Matthew 24. Matthew's is a larger more complete synoptic gospel, and for that reason, probably more widely used. Matthew is an accurate account, but it was not intended to always be a perfectly sequentially consecutively ordered narrative. Matthew also wrote addressing primarily the Hebrew reader; this is seen in the use of Hebrew names that may not be recognized by a gentile reader, among other things. Thus, because of the nature of the book, the student must look carefully at the CONTEXT of Matthew's account, and compare it to the other gospels, for the a complete and accurate sequential account. The oldest known papyri fragments of Matthew date to the mid 70s A.D..

Mark's account is taken largely from Peter's eyewitness account, with Mark acting like Peter's scribe. Mark is more helpful sequentially, but it does not have as much detail as Matthew's account. Mark was also the first gospel written. Papyriologists have verified papyri fragments of Mark dating to 60 A.D., so Mark was likely written only a few years after Christ's resurrection. Luke leaned heavily upon Mark in his writing. Mark is sometimes more sequentially accurate, but Mark is the shortest summery version of the gospels. Mark seems to have been written with both the Hebrew and gentile reader in mind.

Luke on the other hand, wanted to complement the foundational gospel of Peter's eyewitness accounting via Mark, but he wanted to put a more technically detailed sequential step-by-step emphasis to his narrative. It is a complete historical account, carefully compiled and organized in a consecutive order soon after the events happened, from many eyewitnesses. (See the sermons on our website <http://www.GodsLawIsLove.org> about the Differences Between the Synoptic Gospels to Better Understand Prophecy.) These facts are seen in the writers own words. Notice:

Luke 1:1 *"Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, 2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word have handed them down to us, 3 it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus;"*(NAS)

Therefore, if we want to understand better the sequential consecutive nature of events leading up to the return of Jesus and the timing of the actual sign of the end time and of His return, we need to read carefully Luke's account, then with the extra information Matthew provides and the foundation of the first Gospel from Peter's account, we get the clearest picture. Let's now notice the parallel account of Matthew 24 in Luke 21.

Luke 21:5 *"Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, 6 "These things which you see-- the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down." 7 So they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?"* (NKJ)

Notice the time order of the question in verse 7 was in response to the conversation about the stones that adorned the temple. Putting Matthew and Luke together we see that Jesus was NOT ONLY ASKED about the sign indicating the end times and His return, but also about the destruction of the temple which took place in 70 AD. **Jesus was asked about the events from 70 AD up to His 2<sup>nd</sup> advent!**

This makes much more sense, given the context and answers Jesus gave. Now we can see, that **not all of Matthew 24 or Luke 21 is detailing end time prophecy!** It is a prophecy that spans the time of the destruction of the temple to the end. Can you accept this? It is what you Bible teaches.

Luke's account shows Christ's answer begins with the perversion of the gospel of Christ (a false Christianity) and with the wars that would bring about the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem which happened in 70 A.D.. No wonder He told us not to be troubled, for the end is not yet!

Luke 21:10 also details the ethnic wars or wars between ethnic nations as well as alliances and kingdoms at war, earthquakes in various places, famines, pestilence, and fearful sights. But notice the words of your Bible in verse 12. **BEFORE** all these things – **BEFORE** the famines, **BEFORE** the fearful sights, **BEFORE** the disease or pestilences, they will lay hands on some of the saints delivering them up to the leaders of the synagogues and bringing them before kings, so they could give testimony to them (verse 13)! The prophecy of the saints being persecuted for their religious beliefs was to take place **BEFORE** the tribulation – not as part of it – **BEFORE** the signs of the end time, not as part of it. This persecution is now a historical fact. This fact is also born out in the verbiage of all three of the synoptic gospels. Notice the terms “you” referring to the saints, and “those” referring to the unconverted in Judea. The verbiage detailing the persecution of the saints is long before the end time. Then the verbiage changes, to those who suffer as “those” – not the saints. This ought to be a very encouraging truth. Sadly, many have taught that God is going to allow His punishment to harm the righteous with the unrighteous in the coming tribulation. Many even believe that God would not have you go back to your home for your children or wife, when the time to flee these trials comes. That too is not what the Bible says, but many have believed it because it is what they have been led to believe by their teachers. But notice the verbiage:

Matt 24:17 “Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take **any thing** out of his house: 18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take **his clothes.**”

**The clear verbiage is any THING – not any person!** This is about not being greedy, about not having time to worry about clothing or physical positions. It is not about being a calloused selfish irresponsible and unloving mother or father or husband etc., seeking only to save their own lives! Of course God would expect a mother to come back for her child! God Himself did the same! Read the account of how God sent the angels to save Lot AND his family, before they fled God's wrath! God is not cruel and unloving, and He expects us to all learn to be loving parents and loving people who have a concern for others equal to that of themselves (Lev.19:18 & Mark 12:31). To do otherwise would violate God's Statues! Notice further the verbiage:

Matt.24:19 “And woe unto **them** that are with child, and to **them** that give suck in those days!  
20 But **pray you** that **your flight** be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day:” (KJV)

WOW! Notice the difference in verbiage from “**them**”, those would suffer in Judea, to “**you**” when God is talking about those who would escape! God is love and HE REWARDS THOSE WHO LOVE AND SERVE HIM – you must believe this to please God! (Heb.11:6)

Many or most have confused the persecution of the saints with the end time as they have not paid close attention to the verbiage. Further, most do not seem to understand the difference in the time line, ie they do not understand that Christ's answer was in response to what would happen at that time prior to and especially in 70 A.D. – up unto His return and the time of the end. Even when a Christian is persecuted today, they are not hauled before a Jewish synagogue. That persecution was for a different time! Study your Bible. It is an awesome source of knowledge and encouragement.

After Jesus' resurrection, the temple did fall in 70 A.D., just like God detailed in Luke, Matthew and Mark. That part of the prophecy was not about the end time, but about the soon coming destruction of Jerusalem and persecution of the saints while the synagogues still stood as symbols of authority in Judea. As we saw, **Jesus was not only asked about the end, so His answer was not only about the end.** Later Luke gets to the prophecies that are specifically concerning the end time and return of Christ in verse 20. Notice again the verbiage of "you" – the saints and "those" in the world.

Luke 21:20 *"But when **you** see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. 21 "Then let those in Judea flee to the mountains, let **those** who are in the midst of her depart, and let not **those** who are in the country enter her. 22 "for these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled."* (NKJ)

That little word translated "but" or "and" in verse 20 is known as an "adversative" in the Greek, meaning adversely, but, or the antitheses. The previous things listed were not the sign of the end time, "but" or "adversely" the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel, i.e. the surrounding of Jerusalem by the armies AFTER these other things have already happened IS THE SIGN!

**The sign of the end time and of Jesus' soon return is WHEN JERUSALEM IS SURROUNDED BY THE ARMIES OF THE KING OF THE NORTH, and the taking away of the daily sacrifice. (Dan.11:31-45)** Matthew and Mark call it "the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel of the prophet." It is the power of the armies, that cause the "daily" offerings and sacrifices to cease! (Dan.8:11-13) Luke shows us it is the gentile armies of this king of the north (the Beast system BEFORE the 10 nations appear on the scene) – standing where it ought not – that CAUSES the desolation in and around Jerusalem. **THIS IS THE SIGN GOD GIVES US OF THE END TIME AND OF JESUS' RETURN** – not those things that span the time from before this event clear back to 70 A.D.! Neither is a European beast of 10 nations listed as a sign of the beginning of the tribulation!

Now notice Mark's account of the same events listed in Matthew 24 and Luke 21, for more clarity yet.

Mark 13:9 *"But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. 10 "And the gospel must **first** be preached to all the nations."* (NKJ)

Notice again, Mark, like Luke, connects the preaching of the gospel as being part of the testimony before the gentile kings and the rulers of the synagogues, and says it is something that must happen "FIRST", ie "BEFORE" the end time of the great tribulation. It is FIRST, before the sign Jesus gave of the coming tribulation. The sign of the end time is not listed for four more verses. Mark 13:14 *"so when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand), **then** let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."* (NKJ)

**Thus the preaching of the gospel as a testimony is not listed as a sign of the end time, but is mentioned as something that happens long BEFORE the sign of the end takes place.** By comparing Luke's consecutive narrative with Mark and Matthew, we are able to make these important distinctions – which clarify for us which things are for the end time, and which are not. They help us, as they teach us what the real sign is to look for, identifying when the end time tribulation is. It is the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel, standing where it ought not! It is NOT a 10 nation beast power in Europe. Nor are our important efforts in preaching the gospel given as a sign.

This fact does not alter our commission to preach the gospel (good news) unto the end. That is detailed in Matthew 28 and Mark 16, as the ongoing commission of the church. Nothing can change that. But that is not listed as part of the sign of the end times, nor is the coming of the end “dependant” upon our efforts today to first witness. We are dependant upon God, not Him upon us. Further, the Bible shows the testimony referred to in Matthew 24, Luke 21, and Mark 13 has now already largely taken place. We need not exalt our own importance by trying to read into the scriptures that our efforts today are part of the sign of His return or that WE must reach the whole world or the end cannot yet come.

Remember it was in the context of those listed events surrounding Judea, that Jesus said WATCH. Watch Judea for the real sign of the end and of the soon to follow great tribulation. Europe, the church’s efforts in preaching the gospel and this worlds wars and rumors of wars (threats of war) are not given as the sign to identify the end times that we are to watch for. Watch Jerusalem. Watch for the daily sacrifices to be set up in Jerusalem again, and later stopped; and watch for the abomination of destruction in Judea that Daniel spoke of. Study God’s words and watch world events in light of prophecy – especially those affecting Israel. WATCH. And please remember, this writer’s words are not important, nor that of any man. I am only a man, a teacher and fellow servant, trying to simulate you to study, pray and think! Only God’s words can be relied upon as truth. Learn to study God’s words for yourself, love God deeply and learn to be kind, humble and loving to your neighbor and fellow Christian – even if they are in a different fellowship, as Christ and His truth is more important than the organizations we set up. And pray always for God has promised us a way of escape! (Luke 21:36) Let’s do it!