

Henry M. Morris

CREATION

and the Second Coming



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I am especially grateful to Dr. Woodrow Kroll, both for reviewing the manuscript and for writing the foreword. As general director of the worldwide ministry of the Back-to-the-Bible organization, Dr. Kroll is one of the key Christian leaders of our day. With a ThD degree from St. Albans theological seminary in Geneva, plus further training at the PhD level at Harvard, Gordon-Conwell, and the University of Virginia, he is both a brilliant scholar and a warm-hearted practical teacher of God's Word. It is a privilege to count him as a personal friend and strong colleague in the defense of our Christian faith.

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FOREWORD

The casual reader of the Bible may believe that prophetic events yet unfulfilled are addressed only rarely in Scripture (e.g., Daniel, Matthew, Revelation). But the Word of God is a unified whole, depicting history as moving toward a cosmic catastrophe and the creation of a new heaven and a new earth.

To understand this climax and the prophecies that relate to it, we must begin at the beginning — the Book of Genesis. We cannot hope to understand the work of God at the climax of history unless we understand His work at the beginning of history. Thus, any meaningful discussion of the establishment of a new world order requires an understanding of how and why God established the present world order.

Why would a renowned creation scientist write a book on prophecy? The answer is that, while most such books focus solely on future events, this one fits the future into God's program for the original creation. Dr. Henry Morris shows that future events are part of Satan's long war against God. The original perfect world order was corrupted by Satan and those who joined his rebellion against God. That war has continued throughout history and is most graphically seen today in the programs of Darwinists, occultists, and other evolutionists.

Not many treatments of end-time events relate Daniel's prophecy to the science of Newton or the philosophy of Voltaire,

but this one does. Not many show that the need for a new world order is entirely consistent with the second law of thermodynamics, but this one does. That is not to say that the author does not also address all the usual themes of biblical prophecy — the beast, the false prophet, Gog and Magog, etc.; he does. But added to these is the breadth of Dr. Morris's understanding in science, history, and of course, creationism.

Creation and the Second Coming places the future in the context of God's original world order, tarnished by Satan's rebellion and man's Fall. Anyone who wishes to understand the futility of man's attempts to establish his own world order will appreciate the unique insights of this book.

Woodrow Kroll, ThD
General Director
Back to the Bible, Inc.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been much talk about a coming “new world order.” Many people, in every nation, have longed for a world where peace, prosperity, and freedom prevail. Americans had hoped that World War I would “make the world safe for democracy,” and the League of Nations was formed to try to secure this result. Predictably, it failed, because human nature had not changed, and the Darwinian philosophy (“survival of the fittest” and “might makes right”) that had led to the Great War was still being taught in the schools and colleges of the world.

The Second World War had a similar cause. Hitler and Mussolini, as well as the Chinese Communists and Japanese militarists, all operated on the basis of evolutionary and anti-Christian premises. On the other side, President Franklin D. Roosevelt eloquently championed the goals of freedom in a new world order — freedom from fear and poverty, freedom from war and oppression, as well as the traditional American freedoms guaranteed in our Bill of Rights (freedom of speech, freedom of religion, etc.). After this war, the United Nations was established, amid much propaganda assuring the world of future global peace. Sir Julian Huxley, the world’s leading evolutionary scientist, was appointed first director general of its United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), with the purpose of implementing his dream of a global culture based on what he called evolutionary humanism.

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Huxley and his fellow evolutionary globalists, especially the French paleontologist/priest Teilhard de Chardin, stimulated what has come to be called the “New Age” movement among scientists and other intellectuals, especially the baby-boom student generation of the sixties. This “Aquarian Conspiracy,” as Marilyn Ferguson, one of its leaders, has called the movement, now embraces a wide spectrum of beliefs, practices, cults, and organizations — all promoting what is essentially a revival of some form of ancient pantheistic paganism. They call it “New-Age,” but it is as old as the world’s rebellion against its Creator. All such groups believe in evolution, and all are promoting a “new world order,” as they call it. By this they mean a world government, world culture, and world religion centered in evolutionary humanistic pantheism.

In recent years, even President George Bush has been calling again and again for a new world order. No doubt he is sincere in thinking this can be achieved by political efforts, and he (hopefully) means something quite different from what the New Age globalists have in mind, but human nature *still* has not changed, and there can never be *true* world peace and freedom until the world’s Creator returns to set it up Himself.

The fact is, however, that He is going to do just that, and indications abound that He will do it very soon! For the Creator of this world was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, and after He paid the price on the Cross for our redemption, He promised to return in the “last days” to complete the actual “redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:14).

Jesus Christ will, indeed, soon establish His own new world order here on earth. The details of its accomplishment constitute a prominent theme in the Word of God. Many signs of His imminent return to begin this work are given in the prophetic Scriptures and are being fulfilled today with ever-increasing clarity.

INTRODUCTION

There have been many books published on biblical prophecy, but these books have largely ignored the significance of the first days of the world and God's purposes for the world in the understanding of the last days. The basic message of creation, in opposition to the false concept of evolution, seems to me to be vital if we are really going to understand the ultimate consummation of God's purposes in this world.

After all, we are considering the imminent return of Jesus Christ to the earth, and He is the one who created it in the first place! Once, long ago, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not" (John 1:10). Now, after 2,000 years of Christianity, His second coming is very near, yet He is still mostly unknown to this world He created. Looking forward to these times, with deep sadness, He asked rhetorically, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). Paradoxically, even this widespread indifference of the world to its Creator and the pervasive rebellion of its leaders against the very concept of divine creation constitute evidence that His return is near, for all this is given in Scripture as one more sign of the last days. Many of the evidences of the last days, as outlined in chapter 1, are directly related to God's purposes in creation and our rebellion against these purposes.

Perhaps the most eloquent and obvious sign of His coming is the boiling Middle East. These lands of the Bible, long more or less ignored by the rest of the world, have become the center ring of the great world circus. What goes around comes around, and it almost seems as if the very stones of the "waste howling wilderness" (Deut. 32:10), which characterize so much of this region, are crying out for the return of their Creator to make things new and right again. Accordingly, chapter 2 will survey the biblical prophecies of these latter-day conflicts in the Middle East.

Chapters 3 and 4 will focus on Jerusalem and Babylon, respectively, and the roles — both actual and symbolic — the world's

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two key cities, the city of God and the city of Antichrist, will play in the last great events of this present age. They are both getting ready now, and this is still another indication that God is almost ready to step down into His rebellious creation once again.

The great climactic period of Satan's long war against God, along with God's final judgments on him and his followers, with the accompanying cleansing of the whole creation, are described in chapters 5 and 6. Finally, the last chapter places all these future events in proper focus for believers today, anticipating the very near return of the Lord Jesus Christ to implement and complete God's plan of the ages.

Since the future is much more difficult to know than the past, and since there are wide differences of opinion among Bible scholars on how to interpret the prophetic Scriptures, my own analysis is not intended to be dogmatic. Where the Bible speaks plainly, however, we do well to take it plainly, and it surely does speak clearly concerning the reality of primeval special creation and the urgent importance of the creation message in the last days. The Lord Jesus Christ is both the Creator of the world (Col. 1:16) and the Redeemer of the world (Col. 1:20). Very soon now, He will finally be acknowledged as King of the world (Rev. 17:14). Therefore, like the coming angel, we must call on men to "worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea" in these closing days before "the hour of His judgment is come" (Rev. 14:7).

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Harbingers of His Coming

The evolutionary worldview (i.e., that the universe has organized itself into its present complexity by *natural* processes) that has opposed the biblical worldview throughout history assumes that the universe has existed for great ages in the past and will continue along its evolutionary path for ages yet to come — if not on earth, then perhaps on other planets circling distant stars. Many have assumed that these endless processes occur in repeated cycles of life, death, and reincarnation. Others have assumed slow development of complex life out of the primordial chaos, perhaps out of a shapeless water mass or else a plasma of energized particles, or even some cosmic thought-field. Evolutionism has taken many forms over the ages but has always assumed endless ages and has denied any act of real creation by a personal, transcendent God.

The Bible, on the other hand, clearly teaches that the universe was created *supernaturally*, not over long ages of evolutionary development but very quickly in a brief series of creative acts associated with the Creator's omnipotent Word. "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (Ps. 33:6). "Through faith we understand that the

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worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb. 11:3).

Just as it did not take long ages of evolution for God to develop His created world, so it will not take long ages for Him to prepare His redeemed world for its divinely ordained purpose in that perfect world that is to come. These thousands of years of human struggle and suffering and dying, nations rising and falling, days and years and centuries passing into forgotten history, may seem ever so long to us, but “a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night” (Ps. 90:4). This is how it is in God’s sight and how it will also seem to us in eternity.

From the very beginning of human history, God has been promising a consummation of human history. His purposes in creation, interrupted and seemingly thwarted by human rebellion, will finally be accomplished through God’s great plan of redemption and salvation. This plan required God to become man; our Creator also had to become our Redeemer. He next had to die for our sins and defeat death by His resurrection. Then, after remaining for a brief interval in heaven, He has promised to return to earth to make all things new again. The renewed earth will serve thenceforth as the eternal home of redeemed men and women. They will have been prepared on the old earth to serve their great Creator/Redeemer forever in the earth made new again.

Furthermore, just as He has recorded promises of His return in His written Word, He has included with them all needed guidance for life in our temporary abode in this present world. For we who are living in the brief interval between His first and second comings to this world, He has even recorded many indicators in His Word to let us know when we are nearing the end of the age. The exciting truth is that all these signs are coming more clearly into focus every day, so believers everywhere are excitedly looking for their Lord’s return.

We need to be careful here, of course. During the almost 2,000 years since Christ first came into the world, believers in each

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generation have been looking for His second coming. Faulty interpretations by careless Bible students have led to setting dates for His return, and the predicted dates have all come and gone without His appearing. We are not surprised at these failures, for Christ clearly warned that “in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. . . . Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Matt. 24:44, 25:13).

Nevertheless, the Scriptures *do* give us many signs of the approaching end, and these must be there for our understanding and guidance. In fact, Christ Himself said concerning them, “When ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors” (Mark 13:29).

Thus, even with all allowances for possible doubtful interpretations and with all due caution against sensationalism and date-setting, these signs seem to have become so numerous and so evident all around us today that we would be foolish not to take them seriously, looking up with great joy and anticipation for the imminent return of our Lord.

The signs have been increasing in clarity for many years now. I remember my grandmother quoting an evangelist she had heard talking about Mussolini and other supposed signs of that day, predicting that Christ would return in 1933. When the atomic bomb exploded in Japan in 1945, even though I knew better than to set dates for Christ’s coming, I was certain His return was so near that I almost decided not to go to graduate school. I have kept a plaque reading, “*Perhaps today!*” on my office wall for almost 50 years now and have noted that the signs that seemed so obvious 50 years ago have continued to grow in intensity with each passing year. Surely the *Lord* is coming soon!

It is vital, of course, that we continue to obey His command to “occupy till I come” (Luke 19:13), working in His vineyard faithfully until He *does* come. It is also vital that we “abide in him; that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be

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ashamed before him at his coming” (1 John 2:28). At the same time, we must continue daily to watch and be ready, for “unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:28). Paul has promised a “crown of righteousness” to all those who “love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8).

In this chapter, therefore, I want to survey and summarize the most significant of the many signs God has graciously provided in His Word to signal that Christ is coming soon. Many readers may already be familiar with these, but others may not, and it is refreshing to all of us to look again and again for that “blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). Here, then, are some of the reasons for this quickening of our hope.

Worldwide Evolutionary Humanism

Perhaps the most important sign, though commonly neglected by other writers on prophecy, is the rise to worldwide dominance of the philosophy of evolutionary humanism. One form or another of this worldview has characterized all the ancient pagan religions as well as the modern ethnic and pantheistic religions of the world (Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.), so this is nothing new. What is new is its intellectual conquest of those nations that previously have had a monotheistic worldview (Christianity, Judaism, Islam). In the last chapter written by the Apostle Peter, he foresaw this situation developing even among professing Christian nations.

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 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 (2 Peter 3:3–4).

The last-days scoffers are obviously self-centered humanists, “walking after their own lusts” instead of desiring the will of God

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for their lives. They are also either nominal Christians or at least people who know about the “fathers” of the Christian Church and “the promise of His coming” (therefore, living in a Christian environment where such things are taught). They have repudiated these teachings, however, and now even ridicule them.

The basis of this scoffing rejection of God’s Word is their commitment to evolutionism. Since “all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation,” they will say, therefore, “creation” is still being accomplished by these natural processes that “continue” in the present just as they have throughout the past. “The creation” was not “finished,” as God had insisted after His six days of creation (Gen. 2:1–3) but is still continuing and will continue in the future, so “where is the promise of His coming?” Since there was no supernatural creation at the beginning, there will be no supernatural consummation at the ending. This is how people in Christian cultures in the last days will try to rationalize their scoffing rejection of the Word of God. “No deity will save us — we will save ourselves!” was the challenge uttered against the God of creation in the infamous Second Humanist Manifesto (1973).

This prophecy began to be fulfilled with the rise of the Lyell/Darwin evolutionary worldview in the mid-19th century and now completely dominates the schools, the colleges, the news media, the political establishment, the entertainment industry, the business world, the professions, the courts, and even the mainline churches in every nation in the so-called “Christian” world. This assertion has been thoroughly documented in my book *The Long War against God* (Master Books, 1989) and will be stated here simply as a known fact.

This is also true in Israel and in all the Jewish communities throughout the world, with the exception of a small minority among the Orthodox Jews. The same is true for the most part in the Muslim world, again with the exception of a minority of orthodox Muslims, and even they have a grossly distorted view of the relationship between the Creator and His redemptive promises.

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There can be no question that this 2,000-year-old prophecy is being explicitly fulfilled today. There has, on the other hand, been a significant revival of creationism in recent decades in many nations, but this has been a drop in the bucket compared to the tidal waves of evolutionary humanism that have engulfed the world, especially among its leaders. Even though the real scientific, historical, and other objective evidences all strongly support creationism and refute evolutionism (see the books *Scientific Creationism* and *What Is Creation Science?* for example), they either ignore or distort these evidences. As Peter prophesied, they are “willingly ignorant” of the overwhelming testimony in nature and Scripture of two great supernatural worldwide events of history, the special creation of all things by the Word of God and the cataclysmic destruction of “the world that then was” by the great Flood (2 Peter 3:5–6). The evidences in the complex structure of all systems and the physical laws that govern them all clearly speak of special creation. The great geological formations and their fossil graveyards testify plainly of the great Flood. Everywhere we look, we see evidence refuting the evolutionary belief that “all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” Yet these last-days scoffers remain willfully ignorant, just as predicted. Surely this is a convincing proof that we are in the last days, and Christ is coming soon!

Worldwide Moral Disintegration

Now, if God’s Word is rejected when He tells us about creation, it is not surprising that His commandments also are ignored. If there is no divine Creator, or if He is so far removed from His creation in time and space as to be oblivious to it, then there is no reason why we should order our behavior by His divine standards. The worldwide capitulation to evolutionary humanism in the world’s thinking has been the root cause of the worldwide collapse in moral behavior. This also is given in Scripture as a sign of the last days. In Paul’s last writings, he warned us as follows:

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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, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (2 Tim. 3:1–7).

This graphic last warning of Paul's perfectly describes the self-centered humanistic behavior of the last days, just as Peter's last warning described the self-centered humanistic philosophy of the last days — the one arising naturally out of the other.

Furthermore, just as the prophetic significance of Peter's prophecy focused especially on the rise of humanistic philosophy in *Christian* nations, so Paul's prophecy notes especially the rise of humanistic behavior in those same Christian nations. In fact, the description here of these humanistic attributes (e.g., self-love, pride, blasphemy, etc.) in those who have a form of religion but no power (that is, those who profess, but do not possess, the genuine experience of saving faith in Christ) is strikingly similar to the description by Paul of the characteristics of the ancient pagans (Rom. 1:29–31). That is, one of the key signs of the last days would be the capitulation of Christendom not only to pagan humanistic beliefs but also to pagan humanistic lifestyles.

This is, indeed, the deplorable situation in the so-called Christian nations of the world today, and it has been growing worse year by year. Note just a quick rundown of the listed characteristics, with only a comment or two on each (one could easily document a whole volume of illustrations of each).

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1. *“Lovers of their own selves.”* Think of the widespread emphasis among Christians today of the importance of a high “self-image” and other self-oriented studies.
2. *“Covetous.”* How about the “yuppie generation” and its desire for material goods, an attitude very prevalent even in many evangelical churches with their “prosperity gospel”?
3. *“Proud.”* This primeval satanic sin of pride is surely evident today more than ever before in almost everyone.
4. *“Blasphemers.”* The names of God and of Christ are now being taken in vain continuously in literature, the movies, music, television, etc., not to mention the “demythologizing” of the deity that is so common among liberal “Christians.”
5. *“Disobedient to parents.”* Obedient teenagers, even in Christian homes, seem to have become an endangered species today in a society rife with drugs, riotous music, immorality, etc.
6. *“Unthankful.”* Affluent American Christians and others rarely thank God for their blessings and almost totally ignore their role as stewards of these blessings.
7. *“Unholy.”* Godlessness and worldliness are more fitting descriptions of people in Christian nations than holiness, a lifestyle largely ridiculed today.
8. *“Without natural affection.”* Witness the sudden rise in respectability and promotion of abortion and homosexuality, not to mention the increasing prevalence of child abuse and general family violence.
9. *“Trucebreakers.”* Treaties between nations, contracts between people, and promises in general are broken at

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will, and litigation is reaching astronomical heights. The Greek word also means “irreconcilable.”

10. “*False accusers.*” Defamation, character assassination, libel, slander, as well as everyday malicious gossip are heard and read everywhere today.
11. “*Incontinent.*” Widespread divorce, immorality, promiscuity, marital infidelity, and even homosexuality characterize Europe and the Americas today, with even higher statistical frequency than among pagan nations. The term also suggests the widespread addiction to drugs and alcohol.
12. “*Fierce.*” The Greek word implies physical brutality, suggesting the modern rise in crime and violence, including especially the murder of millions of unborn children.
13. “*Despisers of those that are good.*” What once was considered evil (e.g., homosexuality, pornography) now are considered civil rights, whereas former virtues (e.g., teaching Christian character in school) are now considered dangerous.
14. “*Traitors.*” This word applies not only to political treason, of which there is an abundance, but to betrayal of trust in any relationship, of which there are countless instances today, with loyalty almost a forgotten concept even among Christians.
15. “*Heady.*” The implication here is carelessness and recklessness, with reference to the rights and feelings of others, doing whatever one pleases with little regard to consequences.
16. “*High-minded.*” The same term is elsewhere translated “puffed-up” and refers to personal conceit, a characteristic especially common among both Christian and anti-Christian intellectuals and other people of influence today.

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17. *“Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.”* Count the number of people in church on any Sunday versus those on pleasure outings, even in our own “Christian” country, not to mention the abysmal statistics in Europe, Australia, and Latin America.
18. *“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.”* Our nation and others may still be called “Christian,” but even most mainline churches, as well as the schools, news media, etc., have repudiated creationism and other supernatural aspects of Christianity.
19. *“Ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”* This is essentially a definition of modern education, supposedly involved in a perpetual “search for truth” while flatly denying the existence of any absolute or final truth.

While it is true that individuals with these attributes have lived in every age and every place, the combination has never been as universal as now. And the unique aspect is that these now characterize Christian nations as much as, if not more than, pagan nations.

The pagan nations of antiquity, like those humanistic cultures in once-Christian nations today, founded their culture on their evolutionary philosophy, and “worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator” (Rom. 1:25). This is exactly the situation today, even in once-Christian cultures, and it all surely constitutes a powerful sign that we are in the last days when “perilous times shall come,” because our people have rejected their God.

Social Darwinism, Slavery, and War

There are also important sociopolitical and economic-industrial signs of the imminent consummation. We have looked at the last words of Peter and Paul. Now look at those of the Apostle James.

Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted,

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and your garments are moth-eaten. . . . Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth. . . . Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you. Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. . . . stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh (James 5:1–8).

Here is a graphic prophecy of social unrest in the last days. The eternal conflict between rich and poor, capital and labor, and master and slave was evidently going to become more intense than ever in the last days, finally erupting in weeping and howling and miseries and in a great “day of slaughter.”

This prophetic sign began to be fulfilled in the Industrial Revolution, which generated great technological advances but also brought great misery to the laboring classes, who were exploited mercilessly in the factories and fields of the rich owners — perhaps never more so than in the slave plantations of the Americas. All of this resulted in the bloody French Revolution and then later many even more horrible Communist revolutions in Russia, China, and other countries, not to mention America’s unspeakable Civil War.

While these days of slaughter may to some degree have mitigated the lot of the laboring masses, they also resulted in many cases in even more wealth and power for the great and mighty, as well as ruthless new dictators in many nations. In many cases, in fact, it is known that the revolutions — supposedly of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie — were actually instigated and financed by certain international bankers and leading merchants of Europe and America, with the aim of producing greater riches and power for themselves. These war millionaires actually nourished their hearts in days of slaughter!

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Once again, it is noteworthy that wars and slavery, exploitation of labor, capitalistic imperialism, and similar practices have been justified by their promulgators on the basis of evolutionism — especially the type of evolutionism promoted since the Industrial Revolution by such clichés as “natural selection,” “struggle for existence,” and “survival of the fittest.”

This system came to be known as Social Darwinism, and it was especially promoted in England (by Spencer, Malthus, Darwin, and their followers) and in Germany (by Nietzsche, Haeckel, Bismarck, “Kaiser Bill,” and eventually Hitler), but also became strong in France (e.g., the Rothschilds) and the United States (through such “robber barons” as John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, and others). All of these were ardent evolutionists and perhaps thought their methods were for the long range good of society, but they resulted in great misery for the masses of people exploited. The evolutionary background of laissez-faire capitalism, communism, Nazism, racism, imperialism, and the great World Wars is persuasively documented in the book mentioned previously, *The Long War against God*.

In these verses, however, James is telling people not to look to revolutions or legislation for their deliverance but to “the coming of the Lord,” which all these signs foretell. Today, the lot of multitudes of the poor is perhaps worse than ever (think of the poverty-stricken populations in Ethiopia, India, Sudan, and many other nations, including those recently escaping from Communist exploitation — perhaps even of the increasing numbers of homeless people and ghetto populations in America), and this sign of the last days becomes more poignant than ever. The real hope, James says, is that “the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”

Apostasy, Rationalism, and Occultism

We have noted key latter-day prophecies of the Apostles Peter, Paul, and James. These have dealt primarily with worldwide

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philosophy, morality, and economics especially, though each had overtones of religious apostasy as well. The other two writers of New Testament epistles also refer to the “last times,” in both instances focusing directly on religious issues.

John says: “Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time” (1 John 2:18).

Jude says: “But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit” (Jude 17–19).

Thus John warns that the last times will be characterized by “many antichrists” as well as one final “Antichrist,” and Jude warns that they will be characterized by unregenerate mocking schismatics. The implication in both cases is that these men will somehow be involved in the Church as professing Christians but will actually be subversives, intending to undermine and destroy the ministry of the Church if possible — satanic plants, as it were.

The original language in John’s comment actually says that “we know that it is a last hour,” rather than “the last time.” The historical Church has gone through many crises, usually brought about by the activities and teachings of unregenerate leaders in their membership, so that it could be said that any such time is “a last time” — that is, a critical hour — for that church or Christian ministry. It must therefore also be true that in the last time, there will be many antichrists — that is, not men who claim to be Christ (these are called “false Christs”), but men who seek to oppose the true revealed nature of Christ and His work.

Such men might be liberals, seeking to humanize the deity of Christ by eliminating or explaining away those parts of His Word that emphasize His miracles, His virgin birth, and His Resurrection. On the other hand, they might be cultists or occultists, seeking to

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deny His humanity by distinguishing between the man Jesus and the divine Christ, usually by adding to the written Word some new “revelation” supposedly received from the “Christ-spirit of the cosmos” or something of the sort. The one leads to rationalism, ultimately to atheism. The other leads to mysticism, occultism, and pantheism. Both types of false teachers must base their apostate, schismatic notions on some form of evolution — either evolutionary naturalism in the one case or evolutionary pantheism in the other. Both reject the God of the Bible, the true Creator, and Jesus Christ.

Churches are full of such antichrists these days, far more than ever before, and these have, in fact, “caused divisions” (the actual thrust of “separate themselves” in Jude’s prophecy) innumerable. John warns against both in the closing verses of his last book:

If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life (Rev. 22:18–19).

In modern times, there has been an explosion — all over the world — of new cults that claim to have new revelation and a new concept of Christ. At the same time, practically all of the traditional denominations (which developed in the past from different interpretations of Scripture, but not from differences regarding Christ or the truth of Scripture) have gone through turmoil and division because of liberals undermining the true divine/human nature of Christ and the inerrant authority of Scripture.

If such things are a sign of the last times — and they are — their proliferation to a degree never seen before in the history of Christianity certainly indicates this sign is being fulfilled today. There are many other Scriptures that forewarn us of this latter-day apostasy, and some will be discussed later, but these suffice to make the point once again that Christ is coming soon.

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The Age of Science and Technology

The Old Testament includes many prophetic books, but the Book of Daniel contains the most detailed description of the end times of any book in the Bible, except for the Book of Revelation. In Daniel's last chapter, after most of the prophetic portions of his book had been revealed, the mighty angel conveying all these revelations to Daniel closed with the following significant sign by which to recognize the imminence of their fulfillment:

But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased (Dan. 12:4).

Some expositors have taken this to mean that Bible students in the last days, diligently searching back and forth through the Scriptures, would finally understand Daniel's prophecies.

The expression "run to and fro," however, is a most unlikely way to say "search the Scriptures," and "knowledge shall be increased" is an incomplete way, at best, to say "understanding of these prophecies will be increased." This can hardly be the primary meaning of the prediction.

Instead, we are being told that near the time of the end, people in large numbers would be "running" — not merely "traveling," but (literally) "racing" — from one location to another and back again. At any rate, it is profoundly true that travel and speed have increased in our times to a degree that could never have been predicted at all except by supernatural inspiration. In Isaac Newton's day — no less than in Daniel's day — about the fastest a man could travel would be on a swift horse. But Newton, who was probably the greatest scientist of all time, as well as a diligent student and believer of Daniel's prophecies, claimed on the basis of this verse that men would someday be able to travel as fast as 50 miles per hour, even from country to country. A century later,

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Voltaire, the French anti-Christian deist, ridiculed this statement, suggesting that Newton's Christianity had affected his reason.

The fact is that the scientific era that Newton, as much as any one man, introduced saw — just in the past century or a little more — invention of the steam locomotive, then the automobile, then the airplane, and now the spaceship hurtling through space at incredible speeds. This prophecy could hardly have been fulfilled more explicitly than it is now being fulfilled in this “time of the end.”

The other half of the prophecy — “knowledge shall be increased” — could well be translated “science shall be increased,” for the two words are synonymous in meaning and derivation. The scientific and technological advances in just the past generation are legion — radio, television, electrical appliances to do almost everything, super-highways, nuclear power, computers, automation, radar, plastics, microchips, robots, and on and on. Less than two centuries ago, all the scientists in the world probably could have convened in one large auditorium; now there are millions of them, working in hundreds of scientific disciplines. Not surprisingly, the founding fathers of our scientific age — men such as Newton, Kepler, Boyle, Pasteur, Pascal, Faraday, Joule, Galileo, Euler, Maxwell, etc. — were almost all Christian creationists. On the other hand, the study of evolution — whether in astronomy, biology, anthropology, or any other field — has contributed nothing whatsoever to these scientific discoveries and technological inventions that have so advanced human longevity, productivity, and standards of living. It is noteworthy that explosive advances in both true science and the numbers of scientists committed in their philosophy (if not in their practice!) to false science are both given in Scripture as signs of the last days.

Once again we marvel at the prophetic insights of the writers of the prophetic Scriptures of the end times, each stressing a particular worldwide sign of the end near the very close of his own contribution to the canon of Scripture. Note, in review:

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1. Daniel noted the great advances in science and rapid travel and communications near the time of the end.
2. Peter stressed the worldwide dominance of a naturalistic philosophy of evolutionary humanism in the last days.
3. Paul foresaw the universal moral and spiritual decay of the last days, with the rise of humanistic behavior based on the world's humanistic philosophy.
4. James predicted global industrial and economic conflicts in the last days, leading to great wars and revolutions.
5. John and Jude both emphasized the great religious apostasy of the last time, with both atheism and pantheism diluting true Christianity.

Finally we come to the great prophecy given by Christ Himself, as recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke in the closing pages of their writings. Except for His intimate teachings to the disciples the night before His arrest and crucifixion, this “Olivet discourse” was His final formal message, and it does incorporate many signs of His second coming.

The Great Sign Given by Christ

Just before His crucifixion, the disciples asked Christ: “Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (Matt. 24:3).

He had been talking to them about the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and also told them several times about His coming substitutionary death and Resurrection. They were unable to fit all this together, especially when they had also been thinking in the past that, as their promised Messiah, He would soon expel their Roman rulers and set up His own kingdom in Jerusalem, hence their question. His answer is given in part in Matthew 24, part in Mark 13, part in Luke 21. There is much

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overlap, but each writer also includes a portion not found in the other two. Thus one should study the three accounts simultaneously to get the complete answer to the disciples' questions. There were actually three questions: (1) When will the temple be destroyed? (2) What is the sign of Christ's return? (3) When will the end of the world (or "end of the age") occur?

First, the Lord indicated that certain events that might be taken as signs really were not signs but normal occurrences throughout history prior to the end:

Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them. But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions [Matthew and Mark say "rumors of wars" here], be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by (Luke 21:8–9).

There have, indeed, been many pseudo-Christ and wars and rumors of wars and various types of commotions all through the centuries since His ascension, so this particular prophecy has been explicitly fulfilled, thus increasing our confidence that the rest will be fulfilled as well.

Then Christ paused before continuing, indicating that He was now about to answer their specific questions.

Then said He unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences [Mark says "and troubles"]; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven (Luke 21:10–11).

In other words, the sign of His coming, as requested by the disciples, would be a multi-faceted sign. The first component would be a great multi-national war, not just a two-sided war. At

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least two nations and two kingdoms would be fighting; actually, the expression is an idiom denoting a general war involving many nations, especially the world's major nations.

Then, following that, there would be great earthquakes, famines, pestilences, and troubles in various places around the world, as well as fearful sights in the heavens. This combined sign is evidently the sign the disciples requested. Since the parallel passages (Matt. 24 and Mark 13) do not mention signs in the heavens at this point, the reference in Luke probably applies only to the later stages of the great sign.

There have been many, many wars since Christ spoke these words, as well as many earthquakes, famines, plagues, and other calamities. But the first time a great multi-national war occurred was the First World War in 1914–18. And this war was, indeed, followed by tremendous earthquakes in China, Japan, and other places, as well as tremendous famines in China, Russia, and other nations, along with what was probably the deadliest plague of history, the great influenza epidemic of 1918. It does seem possible — even probable — that this was truly the asked-for sign of His approaching return.

But then Jesus said this was merely the “beginning of travail,” comparing the coming of His kingdom to the birth of a child. There must be a number of similar labor pains, occurring at intervals before the sign would be complete. World War I was only the first birth pain.

It was soon followed by others, however. Beginning with Japan's invasion of China, then Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia and Hitler's Blitzkrieg into Poland in 1939, soon the whole world was at war again. The end of World War II in 1945 was then followed by the establishment of the United Nations, which the nations all hoped would prevent future wars.

It did not, of course. Soon came the Korean “conflict,” then after that the Indo-China wars, culminating in the Vietnam

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disaster. These wars also involved many nations. Very recently (1990–1991), the world witnessed practically the entire United Nations at war against Iraq, followed by still further turmoil in the Middle East, all affecting nations in all parts of the world.

Along with these multi-national wars there have been scores of local wars in every part of the world, as well as “terrible famines, and pestilences and earthquakes in divers places” scattered throughout the 70+ years since the first birth pang. It may not be clear yet how many more are still to come, but we surely must be nearing the end. The “fearful sights from heaven” possibly involve the supposed UFO phenomena during this period, or the variety of spacecraft that have been launched into the heavens. More likely, the great signs in the heavens are still to come in the near future.

Following the giving of this first great “sign of His coming and of the end of the [age],” Jesus then turned His prophecy back again to the general characteristics of the immediate apostolic period. But before all these He said, “They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you. . . .” (Luke 21:12). This initial wave of persecution was to continue until the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews. “They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles. . . .” (Luke 21:24). This portion of His prophecy will be discussed in chapter 3. It was specifically fulfilled in A.D. 70, when the Roman general (later emperor) Titus did, indeed, destroy the temple; then, later, Hadrian’s armies destroyed the city itself, sending the Jews off in A.D. 135 into their 1,800-year dispersion among the nations.

There are still other significant signs in this key prophetic message of Christ, also known as the Olivet discourse, but these will be discussed later.