SERMON OUTLINE

SERMON TITLE: The Signs of the Times and the Beginning of the End

SERMON REFERENCE: Matthew 24:1-14

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #2454

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1) INTRODUCTION
   a) Mankind always wants to look into the future, but the only book that prophesies the future with complete accuracy is the Word of God.
   b) The next great event that we’re looking for is the literal, bodily return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
   c) The coming of Christ is a major doctrine in the Word of God.
      i) It is mentioned no less than 1,200 times in the Old Testament and 300 times in the New Testament.
   d) Today’s message will focus on the words of Jesus as He leads us on a journey of prophecy as we look to our age and then to His coming.
      i) We will see from the Word of God the fate of planet Earth.
   e) Matthew 24:1-3
      i) This passage contains the setting of the prophecy we will study today.
      ii) The temple was magnificent and the center of the Jewish life, both spiritually and socially.
      iii) The temple sat on Mount Moriah, the temple mount.
   iv) Matthew 23:37-39
      (1) The disciples could not believe that this temple would ever be desolate.
         (a) The prophecy of the desolation did not make sense to the disciples.
      (2) Jesus had prophesied destruction, and it did not seem reasonable.
   f) The Romans were going to destroy Jerusalem, and there was already an increase of rebellion against Roman rule.
      i) Jesus prophesied this, also.
         (1) Luke 21:20
            (2) Forty years later, the Roman army under Titus compassed Jerusalem, just like Jesus had said.
      ii) What Jesus said, that so many thought unthinkable, happened.
         (1) Not one stone of the temple was left upon another.
   g) We do not live by reason; we live by revelation.
      i) Don’t try to explain away the prophecies of the Word of God.
   h) Matthew 24:3
      i) The disciples asked three questions:
         (1) When will this be?
            (a) When will the temple be destroyed?
         (2) What will be the sign of thy coming?
            (a) The Greek word for “coming” in this passage means “His coming in power and glory.”
            (b) They are asking Jesus when He will set up His kingdom and rule and reign.
         (3) What is the sign of the end of the world?
            (a) The word “world” in this passage literally means “the end of the age.”
(i) The disciples thought that they were coming to the end of an old age, and the new age (the Messianic age) was about to begin.

ii) These were Jewish Christians who were asking Jesus these questions, and we're going to see the signs of the times as they relate to Israel and the church.

i) Jesus gives the disciples seven marks of the signs of the times.
   i) The signs of the times are the intervening days and ages between the time the disciples lived and when Jesus Christ is going to come again.
   ii) We will look at these seven marks today.

2) THE DECEPTIONS OF COUNTERFEIT CHRISTS (MATTHEW 24:4-5)
   a) Jesus said that one of the marks of the last days will be a time of great deception.
   b) Many people have been deceived, though the Bible warns us not to be deceived.
      i) 1 John 4:1-3
   c) Two thousand years ago, the spirit of antichrist was already in the world.
      i) “Anti” means “against” and “instead of.”
      ii) The antichrist comes against the true Christ and presents himself instead of Christ.
   d) There have been many false Christs and false messiahs through the years.

3) THE DIVISION OF CONTINUING CONFLICT (MATTHEW 24:6-7)
   a) One would think that by now, man would have solved the problem of war; but Jesus said that will never happen.
      i) Matthew 24:6
   b) In the time since Jesus made this statement in Matthew 24:6, the world has been plagued by war.
      i) Wars are growing in number and in intensity.
         1) In the six-thousand-year recorded history of man, it is estimated that half of all people killed in war have died since 1900.
   c) More wars have been seen by current generations than by other generations.
      i) This includes terrorism, hijackings, bombings, assassinations, war, etc.
      ii) All of this seems to center ultimately in Jerusalem.
         1) Zechariah 12:2-3

4) THE DISASTERS OF CATACLYSMIC CONSEQUENCE (MATTHEW 24:7-8)
   a) Jesus, looking down through time, said that there would be famine.
      i) The problem of famine is two-fold:
         1) The failure of agriculture itself.
         2) The bottleneck of distribution.
      ii) We don't have granaries filled with food like we once did.
      iii) A well-known biologist and sociologist said that with the world population doubling twice in the past century, the world's land is being
worked so hard for food that one-quarter of the soil is turning sterile and eroding away.

iv) Revelation 6:6
   (I) In the Great Tribulation, a quart of wheat (which would make about two loaves of bread) will cost approximately $80 - $100.

b) Jesus also speaks of plagues.
   i) Different plagues like SARS and Ebola continue to come.
   ii) Biological and chemical warfare is a specter that we face, also.
   iii) Plagues are a sign in these days in which we live.

c) Jesus mentions earthquakes.
   i) There has been an increase in earthquakes in the past decades.
   ii) Seismology historians have calculated that megalithic earthquakes have increased over 2,000% since Columbus discovered the New World.
   iii) Jesus said that in the ensuing age before He comes again, there will be earthquakes.

5) THE DEFAMATION OF COMMITTED CHRISTIANS (MATTHEW 24:9-10)
   a) We are going to be defamed if we love the Lord Jesus.
      i) This is one of the marks of the age.
   b) Jesus said that religious persecution will increase at the end of the age, and it’s going to be centered on Christianity.
      i) The world does not mind religion, but it does resent the Lord Jesus Christ.
   c) More Christians have died for their faith in the past century than in all of the other centuries since the time of Jesus’ death upon the cross.
      i) It is estimated that more Christians were tortured and slain in twelve months of World War 2 than died under Rome in all of the early churches.
      ii) Some authorities claim that over 50 million Christians have died in Russia and other communist countries because they named the name of Christ.
   d) Since Jesus’ ascension, no generation has seen such worldwide persecution as is now in progress.
   e) Christians today are widely mocked in media and entertainment.
   f) Persecution in the last days will turn to a white-hot heat.
      i) When this happens, how many Sunday morning church-goers will vacate Bible-believing churches?
      ii) The persecution in the last days will separate those who are true believers from those who are cultural Christians.

6) THE DISTORTION OF CHRISTLESS CULTS (MATTHEW 24:11)
   a) C.K. Chesterson pointed out that when a man ceases to believe in the one true God, it doesn’t mean that he will believe in nothing; it means that he will believe in anything.
   b) Matthew 24:11

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i) The word “prophet” in this passage does not mean a person who is religious but somebody who speaks with authority.
   (I) It could be a philosopher, a college professor, a scientist or statesman.
c) There are people today who want to shape and mold society into their way of thinking, and they will deceive many.
d) Genesis 6:5
   i) The word “imaginations” here does not mean daydreams; it speaks of carefully crafted philosophies.
   (I) It’s the word that was used to describe the molding of a piece of pottery.
   (2) These philosophers that Jesus warned about are trying to fit society into their mold.
      (a) All of this comes down to New Age humanism.
         (i) New Age humanism takes the teachings of all the world’s religions and tries to synchronize them into its own system.
            1. New Agers believe that God revealed Himself in Jesus, but that He also revealed Himself in Buddha and others.

7) THE DISPOSITION OF CARNAL COLDNESS (MATTHEW 24:12)
a) People will be cold-hearted in the last days.
b) The teaching of the false prophets will bring about this cold-heartedness.
   i) These false prophets will take away the moral base.
      (I) When you take away the moral base, it then becomes “alright” to kill babies, to perform homosexual marriages, to euthanize the aged, etc., because you have taken away the fixed standard of right and wrong.
   ii) When you take away moral limits, you destroy the fire and the glow of true love, and you substitute the false fire of lust.
      (I) Theology turns to “me-ology.”
c) Matthew 24:12
   i) The word “iniquity” literally means “lawlessness.”
      (I) When there is a crime wave, we become unfriendly.
         (a) We become afraid to help others, and our hearts become hardened.
d) Our society has replaced Godly love with selfish protectionism and lust.

8) THE DISCHARGE OF CHRIST’S COMMISSION (MATTHEW 24:13-14)
a) Before Jesus ascended and left the Earth, He commissioned us to take the Gospel to all of the world.
   i) We are to go into every nation with the Gospel.
b) Nowhere has the Bible taught that we are going to win everybody to Christ.
   i) The Gospel was not given to save civilization from wreckage, but to save men from the wreckage of civilization.
c) Jesus said that we’re to take the Gospel to the whole world, and it will be done and has been done.
   i) Matthew 24:13-14
ii) From the time of Jesus’ ascension until the time He comes again, there is the proliferation and the preaching of the Gospel worldwide.

iii) The Gospel has been preached in all of the world; not to every person, but into all of the world through radio, television, the internet, books, leaflets, crusades, etc.
   (i) Not every individual, but all nations have heard the Gospel.

9) CONCLUSION
   a) Matthew 24:8
      i) Jesus said that when we see all of these things, they are the beginning of sorrows.
      ii) The word “sorrows” is the word for birth pangs.
         (i) When these birth pangs multiply and intensify, we know that something is about to come forth.
   b) We do not have to wait on any signs for Jesus to come; He could come at any moment.
   c) The wisest thing anyone could do would be to give his or her heart to Jesus Christ, even if Jesus didn’t come back for another thousand years.
   d) We can trust the Word of God.
      i) Some question why there are earthquakes, wars, etc., if there is a God.
         (i) Jesus told us that all of these things would happen.
         (a) If you stand before God unsaved, you cannot say that you never knew or that you never heard.
   e) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
      i) Romans 3:23
      ii) Romans 10:9-10
      iii) Romans 10:13
      iv) Acts 16:31
      v) John 3:16