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In Luke’s account of the “fig tree” analogy, Jesus adds this important exhortation: “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:36).

In Mark 13, Jesus privately tells Peter, James, John, and Andrew of events and conditions that will lead to the end of the age. He tells them of many future events, some of which would happen in their lifetimes. Yet, none of them realized it would take many centuries before the prophecy would run its course.

We must remember that the relationship of time and prophetic events that are portrayed in our Bibles are often seen from God’s perspective and concept of time as the standard. Therefore, remember a thousand years is as one day to Him (2 Peter 3:8), making it understandable as to why Peter would say, as he did on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, “Ye men of Judea, ...hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day [approximately 9 a.m.]. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:14-16). Then Peter proceeds to take a quantum leap and quote Joel 2:28–30, which says, “And it shall come to pass in the last days.” Peter further explains about the sun turning to darkness and the moon turning blood red right before the notable “Day of the Lord.” And yet this happened two thousand years ago! How can this be? Keep in mind; as far as God was concerned, it was only about two days ago. In other words, if you were to ask Peter if we were in the end times, based on his initial presentation two thousand years ago, it’s fair to say he would have told you unequivocally, YES! “Never Before...”

As much as the early New Testament apostles thought they were in the end times, little did they know how many centuries would pass before mankind would achieve the capability to completely destroy all of civilization around the world. Jesus said, “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows” (Mark 13:8).

However, since many of these mentioned events have occurred regularly over the passing centuries and humanity’s legacy is one of war, multiple calamities and assorted natural disasters, many modern day pundits scoff at the thought that mankind’s days are now conclusively numbered. Even the apostle Peter saw this cynicism coming in his time when he described the attitude of some during the last days (2 Peter 3:3–10).

So, if these modern times are indeed any different, what is it that makes them that way? Are these the final days and times Jesus was talking about? And if they are, how are they any different from the many times before? Why shouldn’t we consider it just another cycle of violence, unrest, calamities, and more war and destruction?

It would do us well to consider the terminology of the Apostle Peter when he said, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night...” (2 Peter 3:10). This is an interesting characterization. The notion you’re given is that some of us will be caught off guard and taken by surprise when Jesus returns and the heavens and earth begin to pass away. This is why Jesus explains to us that we should learn the parable of the fig tree. He warns us to WATCH! Why? So we will be prepared physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Committed to never giving or letting up! We should be like the good man of the house, who if he had known what watch the thief would come, he would not have suffered his house to be broken into. In other words, BE PREPARED because we are living in a day and age unlike any other time in the history of mankind; and if we become complacent, we could suffer loss. So watch and consider the following “buds of the fig tree.”

Never before has there been a time when the world has been so tightly knitted together by the “cyberspace highway.” It is indeed a global community and growing world economy! Exports and imports are shipped throughout most of the world in what can almost be characterized as a developing “seamless” social order. Even China, a country espousing a completely opposing political ideology with the West, is now one of the largest trading and/or investment partners with North America, Europe, and South America. Never before have the economies of China, Korea, India, and many of the Asian countries exploded into such a frenzy of social commerce. The consumption of goods and services has become a force to be reckoned with in the last decade, even causing shortages of raw materials in some areas. Additionally, the competition to acquire raw materials is becoming more acute. The labor force in some of these countries has grown hundreds of percentage points producing trade deficits in the West that appear to be insurmountable due to this cheap available labor.

Never before has there been such international turmoil of the magnitude we have today over culture, politics, religion, energy, environment, and terrorism. “Nuclear energy management” is a central issue for much of the world’s paranoia regarding the security of the global community. Despots in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, parts of Africa, and South America continue to “saber rattle” and hold the world hostage while they periodically use the United Nations to forge their policies of nuclear development and uranium enrichment under the guise of domestic energy needs. It is a precarious situation at best among the G-8 nations to attempt to manage this extremely hot issue and find any sincere and truthful mutual concessions. Everyone seems to have his own agenda. It is impossible to satisfy all concerned. God’s Word says, “The way of peace they know not.”

Never before has Europe ignited into such a global powerhouse! Today, heralding the union of twenty-five nation states (and growing!) under a common European Union (EU), it is attempting to aspire to a level of geopolitical influence it hasn’t experienced since the days of the Ottomans, Hapsburgs, or Napoleon. Today, the EU is brokering peace accords in the Middle East and negotiating with both Palestine and Israel. It is also actively developing its own constitution so it can operate and construct policies more uniformly, along with a strike force and a common currency. Currently, the EU has interfered with corporate mergers belonging to the United States that were hoping to do business in Europe, while at the same time setting industrial standards for corporations around the world, and continuing to gain additional economic leverage throughout the globe by virtue of its currency, the euro.

The euro, presently worth more than the dollar, has acquired a prominent role as the world’s accepted back-up currency behind the dollar. As a matter of fact, that may change very soon as the dollar continues to lose confidence around the world and the OPEC nations seriously consider the euro as the preferred currency for oil. This potential shift stands to create far reaching worldwide economic effects that will impact many of the economies around the world, if and/or when it happens. Europe persistently maintains being the driving force behind the globalization of the world’s community of nations. It is no secret that many of the European leaders intend for the EU to become a type of “United States of Europe,” functioning in the role of a resurrected Roman Empire. Even the Catholic Church has recognized the emergence of this “Euroclydon Power” and is attempting to influence European opinion for its accepted place and role going into the future.

Never before have these European geopolitical “assimilated conditions” come together in such modern times, with technologies in place, political, economic, and religious prowess in line, and a grass roots acceptance from the populace. The potential of fulfilling what Daniel said is fast becoming a practical matter. Notice: “And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully [by wonderful works] and shall prosper, and practice, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people [people of the holy ones]. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace [prosperity] shall destroy many: he shall also

stand up against the Prince of princes [Jesus Christ]; but he shall be broken without hand” (Daniel 8: 23–25).

Remember, Daniel also prophesied that “the judgment shall sit, and they [Jesus Christ and His resurrected immortals] shall take away his [a king of fierce countenance, the beast] dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions [earthly rulers] shall serve and obey him” (Daniel 7:26–27). This is very good news! It is at the heart of the Gospel!

Never before have Israel and its neighboring countries been so outspoken about their intents to protect their own territories and policies. Though this area of the world has been a “lightning rod” of strife and animosity affecting the world since the inception of Israel as a legitimate nation state in 1948, recently the intensity appears to have turned a corner for the worse. Terrorism has exacerbated the conditions, causing them to become extremely volatile, with potentials of endangering the rest of the world. The nuclear policies and intents of surrounding Arab countries continue to agitate much of the world’s community of nations with concerns of potential reactionary violence erupting from terrorist groups or irrational government military action. It wouldn’t take much to encircle Jerusalem with foreign armies (Luke 21:20).

Never before has there been an Israeli Sanhedrin in place driving ahead to construct a Temple. Currently, though without Israeli government recognition, this Sanhedrin is moving ahead to assemble engineers and architects for the development of detailed working plans to bring this project to an operational stage. The Sanhedrin is presently calling upon the Jewish people to contribute towards the acquisition of materials for the purpose of rebuilding the holy Temple!

As described in the Daniel 12, it is clear that “daily sacrifices shall be taken away” (Daniel 12:11). That, of course, presumes the fact that there must be a sacrificial system in place that will be stopped. We understand that this happens around the time when “he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished” (Daniel 12:7). It is further clarified that these things happen at the “time of the end” (Daniel 12:9).

Additionally, with a temple built and the daily sacrifices stopped, conditions conducive for “the abomination that makes desolate” can be set up (Daniel 12:11; Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14). Remember, at some point even the apostle Paul recognized that a man would come along “Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (1 Thessalonians 2:4).

Never before has there been such an explosion of anti-Christ sentiment. Christian persecution, even among Sunday-keeping Christians, is on the increase around the world. The humanistic, secular culture of the West, especially throughout England, the United

States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, has reduced and/or diminished the name of Jesus Christ from any public influence and/or display except in the area of the Church. Currently, there are movements trying to rid the educational systems of any Christian influence, as it is in politics or on government buildings. Today lawsuits are targeted in many instances to confront Christian values with the growing humanist “value system” within our culture. The abandonment of the God of our Bible and Judeo-Christian values is fast becoming evident to many throughout the West.

Islam is advancing around the world today and enjoys the prominence of being the fastest growing religious faith in the world. If it continues at the current pace of growth, some have said, it will exceed Catholicism in Europe by the year 2015. Islam is an “anti-Christ” religion, as are many faiths around the world outside of Christianity. This, too, has never occurred in a day and age when science and technology have produced weapons with mind-boggling destructive potential.

Never before has there been such an outpouring of anti-American rhetoric throughout the globe. In today’s world, many nations want what the American economy and market, resources, and military have to offer. There are literally multiple millions of people immigrating to the United States, legally as well as illegally, attempting to share in the “American Dream.” However, at the same time they will criticize, ridicule, and deride anything they can about the exercise of its power or political influence and the freedoms American culture enjoys.

Never before has the United States enjoyed such exclusive role recognition, identified among the community of nations as the last remaining superpower of the “Cold War Era.” While the British had enjoyed their dominance, controlling at one time fourteen million square miles of planet Earth, it is apparent, like never before, the sun is finally setting on the British Empire.

However, today the United States is enjoying the apex of its material, political, and military prowess, serving in the prominent role as a balance of power among many terrifying conditions that could rapidly deteriorate into a massive global conflict. Many of us don’t understand just how fragile and dangerous these circumstances really are. Yet, it seems for many throughout the world, there is nothing they would like more than to see the United States failing in its role and attempting to be the counterbalance of an endangered world, threatened by so much irrational anger and militant behavior. Unfortunately, trends are beginning to indicate those gainsayers repudiating the United States will ultimately get what they are hoping for.

Never before has the United States been so vulnerable to collapse. There is the proverbial “handwriting on the wall.” In so many areas there are trends that, if they continue, will definitely conclude with the same result the northern ten tribes of Israel experienced. In 2 Kings, the record of why God took Israel down and allowed their land to be destroyed is clear. “Yet the LORD testified against Israel and against Judah by all the prophets.... And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant...and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them.... And they left all the

commandments of the LORD their God.... Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight...also Judah kept not the commandments of the LORD their God...And the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel...the LORD removed Israel out of his sight...so was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day” (2 Kings 17:13–23).

The United States is morally bankrupt. Corruption runs rampant throughout politics, religion, and business. Private interest groups are tearing at the very fabric of the American culture. Families are in disarray. Divorce runs in excess of 60 percent of all marriages. And marriage itself is under attack, being redefined according to the homosexual agenda, while at the same time, the United States allows approximately two million unborn human beings to be murdered by legalized abortion. It’s a sad state of affairs—and God is not amused!

The United States of America was indeed framed by imperfect men God used who viewed this new homeland of “the free and the brave” through the paradigm of God’s Holy Word, both Old and New Testaments of the Bible. God has blessed the United States of America with so much wealth in so many areas—in spite of our national transgression; He now owes our nation nothing! The promises made of material wealth and affluence to the ancient patriarch Abraham and his descendents have been fulfilled. When properly understood, this is a most frightful truth!

The proof of this daunting realization of our current geopolitical distinction is: NEVER BEFORE has the United States enjoyed the exclusive role as the dominant WORLD POWER! And regrettably, America has been weighed against God’s Word and has been found miserably wanting. As the people of the United States stand before God, this nation is viewed to be in the process of “giving up” on Him and becoming more Epicurean and hedonistic in their ways as never before. As the nation moves away from God, so God will remove Himself. And along with His departure, so goes His protection as with ancient Israel. The pattern is the same, and God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. History has proven this to be true!

Much More Could Be Said

So much more could be said about geopolitical conditions, and much could be said about the weather, about the potential for major droughts and famines, earthquakes and volcanic activity, and deadly disease pandemics; but it’s apparent to those who have eyes to see that the “fig tree” is indeed beginning to bud! It is vitally IMPORTANT that we do not underestimate the perilous times we’re living in! We are consistently reminded that we know not the hour when our Lord will come. We are also reminded that the days will be shortened for the elect’s sake, because if they weren’t, no flesh would remain alive. God has assured us He won’t let that happen.

We need to consider there are conditions that could easily erupt into a rapid progression of circumstances igniting the world into catastrophic chaos. The book of Revelation explains that “power was given unto them [the four horsemen] OVER THE FOURTH

PART of the earth, to kill with the sword [second horseman], and with hunger [third horseman], and with death [fourth horseman], and with the beasts of the earth” (Revelation 6:8).

The apostle John is warning us that 25 percent of the population of the world will be destroyed by the effects of these four horsemen contained in the FIRST FOUR SEALS (Revelation 6:8)! Then following right on the heels of these first four seals, is the fifth seal describing a horrific Christian martyrdom. Quickly following is the sixth seal, describing heavenly signs in the sky, with the seventh seal opening up thereafter to announce the “seven trumpets,” outlining the great day of God’s wrath (Revelation 6:17).

With that said, all true believers need to realize the prophetic events we know are scripted to happen in the Bible may occur by circumstances and conditions that are not necessarily detailed in our Bible. Remember, World Wars I and II are not listed, yet they have had major influence in setting the current geopolitical stage. So have oil, economics, terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and the vast cultural malaise and the rise of computer technology and the Internet, none of which are detailed in the Bible.

However, all of these items are factors contributing to the massive trends catapulting the world toward a “new world order” that will position three major powers to face off with each other in the latter days: the King of the North, the King of the South, and those powers to the northeast of Jerusalem (Daniel 11:40–45). Sadly, it is obvious the influence and military might of the United States and Britain will have been previously neutralized, eliminating them from any involvement as a nation during these latter day conflicts.

With the United States and Britain out of the way, a “times of the Gentiles” will ensue. Events leading up to and causing the downfall of God’s birthrighted cultures, resulting in enormous casualties and the death of thousands of Christians (Revelation 6:9–11), will certainly cause a mammoth geopolitical shift that will lead to the fulfillment of many end-time events prophesied in Scripture.

The point is, we are living in volatile times that are unlike any time before. Today, one terrorist, through one mindless act of violence, can kill thousands! Think of what mayhem a team of well-organized terrorists could cause, especially if they were able to acquire weapons of mass destruction! Indeed, a series of terrorist attacks could quickly send the global community into a tailspin, throwing it headlong into the abyss of chaos and confusion. Beware, and WATCH (Luke 21:29–36)! Global turbulence continues to escalate; a storm is brewing! Indeed, the “fig tree” is putting forth “buds”!

The apostle Paul reminds us, “But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of the darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep

sleep in the night; and that that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do” (1 Thessalonians 5:1–11).

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