

CHAPTER 2

SIGNS OF THE LAST DAYS AND THE COMING OF MESSIAH

Sign 2: Increase in wars and conflict

Yeshua said:

'And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.' (Matthew 24.6-8)

In the end times there will be an increase in conflicts between nations and within nations (civil wars). This will be the 'beginning of sorrows.' The word used for 'sorrows' here is 'odin', the Greek word which is also used of the travail of a woman in labour. The image of the 'woman in labour' or the birth pains is used in many parts of the Bible of the troubles, which come upon the world in the last days (see Isaiah 13.6-10; Jeremiah 30.5-7). When a woman goes into labour she experiences a series of shocks / contractions, which become more intense the nearer she gets to the birth of the child. Once the process has begun it cannot be reversed until the birth takes place. This means that once this process has begun it will continue and become more intense until the coming of the Messiah. Also when you see these things begin to happen it will mean that the rest of the end time prophecies are about to take place. Interestingly, the 'Bereshit Rabbah', a collection of rabbinic writings on the book of Genesis, states:

'If you see kingdoms rising against each other in turn, then give heed and note the footsteps of the Messiah.'

Over the last 100 years we have seen an increase in wars. The 20th century saw conflicts claim around 160,000,000 lives. About 8-9,000,000 died in the First World War and about 55,000,000 in the Second World War. During this time the most terrible calamity fell on the Jewish people with the Nazi Holocaust in which 6 million died. In addition to these there have been civil wars, massacres of people because of racial or religious origin and purges of opponents of totalitarian regimes. Examples include the Turkish massacre of the Armenians, the civil war, famines and purges following the Communist revolution in Russia, the partition of India and Pakistan, the Chinese Communist revolution

and subsequent events — Mao’s ‘Great Leap Forward’ and Cultural Revolution, the Korean War, Pakistan–Bangladesh civil war, Ethiopian civil war, Khmer Rouge massacres in Cambodia, Sudanese civil war, Rwanda civil war, Yugoslavia’s civil war, Afghanistan, Gulf wars and subsequent civil war within Iraq, the ‘Arab Spring’ bringing conflict to Libya, Egypt and Syria, various conflicts in Africa including Congo, Somalia, Sudan, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Mali.

In recent years we have seen a vast arc of conflict and violence from the western Sahara through to the Philippines as a result of Islamist insurrections and battles between rival Muslim groups. The latest conflict in Syria has already cost around 170,000 lives and created over two million refugees. It has now spilled over into neighbouring Iraq and is developing into a regional conflict between Sunni and Shiite Muslims, and also between radical Islamists and moderate Muslim or secular rulers. The goal of Islamists fighting in Syria and Iraq is to set up an Islamic Caliphate in the region. They also wish to destroy Israel and subjugate or kill Christians. Jihadis are also being encouraged to rise up against Europe and America with an aim of overthrowing ‘Christian’ civilisation and imposing the world-wide rule of Islam.

According to the Bible, in the days before the return of Jesus the world will experience the shocks of global conflicts. In the book of Revelation we read of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse:

‘Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.’ (Revelation 6.4)

This will result in famine and the death of a quarter of the world’s population. Finally armies will gather for Armageddon, the last war of this age:

‘For they are spirits of demons performing signs which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world to gather them together to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. ... And they gathered them together in the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.’

(Revelation 16.14-16)

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