

CHAPTER 2

SIGNS OF THE LAST DAYS AND THE COMING OF MESSIAH

Sign 6: Increase in knowledge

In the prophecy of Daniel written some 2500 years ago, we find a word about the ‘time of the end’:

‘But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall increase.’

(Daniel 12.4)

This implies that in the last days of this age there will be a huge increase in knowledge and travel. Go to an airport in a major world city and you will see people ‘running to and fro’ as they take journeys around the world. Technology has developed at an incredible rate over the past hundred years. Switch on a computer and open up the Internet and you can tap into an almost infinite source of knowledge on whatever you want to know. We are all witnesses of the fulfilment of these words of Daniel as we see a huge increase in travel and technology shrinking the world to a global village.

Today’s world is full of incredible inventions which our forefathers could not even imagine existing. Television can bring pictures into our homes of events taking place on the other side of the world at the moment they are happening. We can speak to people thousands of miles away instantly by telephone and send messages via email and the Internet. Computers have opened up whole new worlds of information, entertainment and communication. We can make journeys in a matter of hours by car, train or plane, which previously would have taken days, weeks or months. Our lives are made easier by different labour-saving devices around the home – the fridge, the washing machine, central heating etc. Technology has brought enormous advances in transport, medicine, agriculture, entertainment, communication, etc.

However, technology also has its down side. For vast numbers of people technology is not available at all or only in very limited forms. This creates a great gulf between those who have it and those who do not. Another problem is that all technology requires energy. The main sources of energy used today are all finite, and burning coal and oil is blamed for carbon emissions causing

climate change. A recent UN report on the environment said the speed at which man-kind has used up the Earth's resources has put 'humanity's very survival at risk.'

The increase in knowledge helps to explain prophecies which previous generations thought to be impossible to be fulfilled literally. In Revelation 6 we read of a quarter of the earth's population being killed in war, which was inconceivable at the time of writing when wars were fought with swords and spears, but is not at all inconceivable in our time with weapons of mass destruction. In Revelation 13 we are told about how the false prophet creates an image which people are told to worship:

'He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.' (Revelation 13.15)

In previous times the idea that an image could speak seemed impossible. Not today. In fact most people spend their time watching a speaking image on TV screens. Now we find scientists working on projects using nanotechnology, robotics and genetics which could create a humanoid robot able to speak and move as in the film 'Avatar.'

The next verse reads:

'He causes all both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.' (Revelation 13.16-18)

When John wrote Revelation, buying and selling was done by coins or barter and it was hard to imagine any kind of system whereby you could use a number or a mark to do this. Today it is not so hard to imagine. The technology now exists to uniquely identify every person on earth and bring in biometric ID systems able to digitally identify their citizens using fingerprints, face, and iris scans. Cash is being replaced by credit cards which have a number unique to the person they belong to.

We are now seeing developments in the area of RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) tags, which transmit identifying information using radio signal

waves by using a microchip assembly. It is possible to put data into this microchip and insert it under the skin. A chip as small as a grain of sand can be injected into the right arm between the elbow and the shoulder. Experts working in this field foresee a day when ATM cards and credit cards will be replaced by these new devices and are actively seeking partnerships with banking and credit companies to team up and develop commercial applications using the chip. No longer would a person need to swipe a card to buy or sell goods, but would rather simply agree to the business deal and let the RFID technology complete the transaction.

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