

Introduction

1. This question always fascinated Bible prophecy students: *Is Today the Day?* (**Show**)
2. Always people think know. Flagrant example of date-setting = Edgar Whisenant.¹
 - a. 88 Reasons Why Rapture Be 1988.² When not happen refigured/predicted 1989.³
 - b. I can stand in front of the Lord & say I gave it my best shot.⁴ 2 books sold 4.5 mil!
 - c. How could so many fall for this age old problem of date setting Bible condemns?
 - d. Many do not understand purpose of Bible prophecy. Do I? Do you? **Show:**
 - e. Purpose of Bible prophecy is not to mark our calendar, but motivate our character.
 - f. Not figure out when Jesus is coming, but know how live because Jesus is coming.
3. That's what I want us to see today in the teaching of Jesus.
 - a. Disciples had same questions we have. Turn in Bibles to Mark 13:1-2.
 - b. This was during passion week. And Jesus knew that leaders of Israel were already plotting to kill Him. As a result of their rejection of their Messiah they would reap horrific judgment as the armies of the Gentiles would destroy their city and Temple and they would be scattered to the ends of the earth for 2000 yrs.
 - c. Now the disciples knew their Bibles. Zech. 14 = when Gentiles attack, Lord deliver.
 - i. Imagine how excited must've gotten! J. predicting end-time events/final victory.
 - ii. In response to J' prediction asked 2 ??s always burned in hearts of believers.
 - iii. When will these things happen? What sign shows they are near? (vv. 3-4).
 - d. In 1 of most spellbinding 3-point sermons ever given Jesus answers questions.
 - e. Lays out whole course of future right up to coming again w/great power and glory.
 - f. Know 1st point? Don't get prophecy fever. Don't get carried away w/false signs.
 - g. Don't lose your head or waste your time. What should we do?
 - h. Understand false signs that are not the end & our priorities until the end.

I. Four False Signs of the End Times (5-13)

A. Deception (5-6)

1. False Messiahs

- a. I am He = ego eimi – Jesus phrase claiming Messiah/God - I am that I am.
- b. So, false messiahs claiming dignity/power of God arise during church age.
 - i. Since time of Jesus 64 men appeared claiming be Messiah.⁵
 - ii. Meet Five Men Who All Think They're the Messiah⁶ (1 = 5000 followers)

2. False Teaching

- Many antichrists, Show 1 Jn. 2:18⁷ & 1 Tim. 4:1⁸ says depart fr. faith in last days.
- Show 1 Timothy 4:1 chart (<http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/churchhi/3-3.GIF>.)

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edgar_C._Whisenant. Accessed 9/21/17.

² <https://crazysunshine.me/tag/88-reasons/>. Accessed 9/21/17.

³ <https://www.amazon.com/Final-Shout-Rapture-Report-1989/dp/B000I3I8NK>. 9/21/17

⁴ False Prophets, *Bible Illustrator Deluxe*, 11/1989.15

⁵ Charles Feinberg quoted in *The Second Coming Of Jesus Christ*, p. 3.

⁶ <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2017/08/new-messiahs-jesus-christ-second-coming-photos/>. 9/21/17.

⁷ <http://images.knowing-jesus.com/i/1-john-2-18-it-is-the-last-hour-white-7262>. Accessed 9/21/17.

⁸ <http://www.jeffrandleman.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/1-Timothy-26.jpg>. Accessed 9/21/17.

- **NFL Star Aaron Rodgers Has Been Greatly Influenced by Rob Bell.⁹ Vry sad.**
- **Bell is well-known for his denials of the Bible's clear teachings. I wrote back:**
- ***It is sad to see the continuing influence of a false teacher like Bell.***
- ***Let's pray for Rodgers that he will recover a true faith in Christ & the Bible.***
- **In this present great apostasy from NT Christianity we could see a sign which will warrant us in believing that Christ's coming may not be far away. There has always been some measure of apostasy & at times that apostasy's been great, but not as it's been in the last [century].¹⁰**
- **No, not a sign that Jesus is coming. This is a sign that we must be very careful.**

B. Disorder (7-8a)

1. *War*

- a. In God's providence wars/conflicts part of human history right up until end.
- b. **War is 1 of the constants of history, and has not diminished w/civilization and democracy. In the last 3, 421 yrs. of recorded history only 268 have seen no war.¹¹**
- c. Easy to think end arrived when war hits us (O. J. Smith said Hitler was Antichrist.)

2. *Moral Decay*

- a. Paul wrote that experience great moral degeneration (2 Tim. 3:1).
 - i. **perilous = stressful (fierce, Mt. 8:28)**—demonized man out of control/dangerous.
 - ii. Moral/social decay that makes society dangerous place to live.
- b. Easy think society so bad Lord must be near. **Am. society is sick & getting sicker.¹²**
- c. Which time period in American history is this article describing?¹³
- d. Society w/o Christ's always been a mess & that's why it needs committed believers.

C. Disasters (8b)

1. *Recent Events*

- a. Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria. Two earthquakes in Mexico. Atrocities of ISIS.
- b. Easy to start counting disasters as signs of the end.

2. *Happened Before*

- a. **During the yrs. between Christ's death and the destruction of the Temple, there was a terrible earthquake in Laodicea, Mt. Vesuvius buried Pompeii, and there was a famine in Rome itself.¹⁴**
- b. Jesus said opposite of what many often say (vv. 7-8).
 - **end is not yet, beginnings of birth pangs**, vv. 7-8. **(Show Illustration)¹⁵**
 - Jesus looked into future saw Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria. Mex. Earthquakes.
 - He could see ISIS committing atrocities. N. Korea threatening nuclear war.
 - Not pointers that the end is imminent. World is in travail like mother giving birth.
 - Every mother knows **beginning of birth pangs** = more coming, maybe long time.

⁹ <http://www.christianheadlines.com/blog/nfl-star-aaron-rodgers-has-been-greatly-influenced-by-rob-bell.html>. 8/31/17.

¹⁰ Pastor Harold Ockenga quoted in Paul Tan, *7700 Illustrations*, #245.

¹¹ Will Durant quoted in Kent Hughes, *Mark*, p. 138.

¹² Dr. Benj. Spock, whose 1946 book *Baby and Child Care* has sold 32 mil. copies, in *The Detroit News*, cf. Personal Illustrations, America, getting sicker.

¹³ "It Happened To America," AFA Journal, April, 1998. Personal illustrations, America, past moral decline.

¹⁴ Hughes, op. cit., p. 138.

¹⁵ <https://heiscomingblog.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/3rd-version-header-graphic-for-bp-report3.png>. Accessed 9/22/17.

D. Distress (9-13)

1. Jesus was preparing the Early Church for persecution
 - a. Fr. beginning early church experienced persecution. (cf. Acts 8:1-3).
 - i. Paul personally all these things - councils, beaten, testified before rulers/kings.
 - ii. Major apostles - James, James, Peter, Paul martyred before fall of Jers.
 - b. Often source was fellow Jews who turned on those became Christians (v. 12).
2. Church History
 - a. Persecution of believers marked course of church history, and is getting worse.
 - i. **More Christians martyred in last [century] than in previous 1900 combined.¹⁶**
 - ii. **160,000 killed [in one year] alone - International Bulletin of Missionary Research.**
 - b. In USA tide turning against biblical Christianity since late 1800s.
 - c. Pres. Joe Stowell said 1st time ministering in thoroughly pagan culture.

II. Three Priorities Until The End

1. **Watch (5, 9). - be on guard, vigilant**
 - a. These are evil days living in. Is an all out attack on truth by forces of darkness.
 - b. We are vulnerable to deception/false living.
 - c. We need to be grounded in faith and taking every opp. to ground children.
2. **Witness (10)**
 - a. Billy Graham: **Prayer/revival alone save us.** Unless, moral decline get worse & worse.
 - b. **We're witnessing decline & fall of every semblance of the decency most us were hoping for and expect. I fear for my children grandchildren.¹⁷**
 - c. Not be so pessimistic. In times of distress people often listen. We have answers.¹⁸
3. **Withstand (13)**
 - a. Endurance is always mark of true Christian. May waver/stumble, but keeps clinging.

Conclusion

1. One day after MCC class young lady approached me. Freshman. Prob. 18 yrs. old.
 - a. **I want to thank you for speaking up.** Fr. Reformed church. 1st time faith really challenged.
 - b. **Lot of others in class agree w/you. We just don't know what to say. You're doing more than know.**
2. When you watch, witness & withstand, you're doing more than you know.
3. **Remember: Purpose of Bible proph not to mark our calendar, but to motivate our character.**

¹⁶ Family News From Dr. James Dobson, September 1997, p. 1-.

¹⁷ Grandfather in letter to USA Today, 12/30/97, Personal Illustrations, TV, networks and moral decline.

¹⁸ **1 young man whose life was far fr. God after just weeks in his church said, I've got more real friends in this church than I ever had before.** He could see the difference Christ made and it attracted him.