

THE MOST EVIDENT SIGN OF THE LAST DAYS

“And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to *him* for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, **Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.**” Matthew 24:1-5

Birth pains begin when an expectant mother’s body experiences a biological sensation of pain that the birth process has begun. These birth pains increase over time from slight to intense, with a shortening of the pain intervals from hours to minutes as the birthing proceeds—finally concluding in the actual birth.

“Beginning of birth pains” is the expression used in Matthew 24:8 (KJV “beginning of sorrows”) to denote how the specific indicators signal a time known as “the last days.” These “last days” will climax with the second coming of Jesus Christ. Like the expectant mother, there will be an ever-increasing intensity of signs accompanied by a shortening of time intervals between the signs as “the day” approaches.

While there are numerous “signs” of the Last Days described in various scriptural references, yet it is seen that one sign stands out from the rest as the most evident sign of the Last Days. Jesus’ answer to His disciples’ question, “what shall be the sign of your coming?” was not one that spoke of dramatic signs in the heavens or on the earth; no, His reply was one of stark conciseness, “Take care that no man deceives you.”

The most evident sign in the last days is one of deception. Notice the repetitive usage of the word “deception” and its variances in Matthew 24:4-5; 24:11; 24:24; Mark 13:5-6; Luke 21:8; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-6, and Revelation 13:14; 19:20, and 20:3. Just as the “birth pains” increase in intensity and shorten in time intervals, so shall the workings of deception, and at the forefront of this flood of deception will be religious deception.

Satan’s chosen army is an army of liars. What more sinister advantage could Satan desire than to have his demonic soldiers equipped with weapons of deception?

Satan works more readily behind a cleric's collar than from behind a saloon keeper's apron. Religious deception is satan's *magnum opus*. "Many" false prophets and false christs shall arise and deceive many (Matthew 24:11; 24).

The Greek word for deception is *planao*. This Greek word, *planao*, means "not fixed to a point, wandering, drifting." In the ancient world, when men had begun to study the heavens with just the naked eye, they learned that there were stars that were fixed, holding their positions faithfully, and there were stars that they called "*planao*" because they wandered. So, there were fixed stars, and there were wandering stars of the night. Later, with the invention of the telescope, those wandering stars were identified not as stars but as planets (from *planao*). Deception, therefore, is the unfixed, wandering, and drifting about false luminary, while truth, the true luminary, is fixed in place and abides in its place faithfully.

To "receive a love of the truth" is not only preferable, but it is necessary for salvation. We are told to "buy the truth and sell it not." The world argues that doctrine is decisive – indeed it is, and it was meant to be! We live in a world filled with "wandering stars," where they insist that everyone's "truth" is relevant to the person ("my truth" and "your truth"). Is it no wonder then that chaos is king? In a world without absolutes, there is absolute confusion! "Running to and fro" is the hallmark of this present generation.

Jesus rejected relativism. In Matthew 7:13-14, He stated, "One can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for many choose the easy way. But the gateway to life is small, and the road is narrow, and only a few ever find it." Many resent the fact that the New Testament has only ONE plan of salvation—Acts 2:38; they want a multi-plan salvation (just as they resent the fact that there is ONE and ONE ONLY living God— Jesus Christ).

In other words, all belief systems are not equally valid. As far as Jesus was concerned, there was only one way to find life—His way. Every other path, every other religion, philosophy, or belief system leads to destruction. Few find the way to real life.

If there is no absolute moral standard, then one cannot say, in a final sense, that anything is right or wrong. By absolute, we mean that which applies to all people at all times, that which provides a final or ultimate standard. There must be an absolute if there are to be morals, and there must be an absolute if there are to be real values. If there is no absolute beyond man's ideas, then there is no final appeal to judge between individuals and groups whose moral judgments conflict.

We are merely left with conflicting opinions. Buying into the idea of no absolutes opens a Pandora's box of stupidity in our lives. Without moral anchors, we drift over the waterfalls of sanity.

Biblical illiteracy, according to certain research, is on the rise. Researcher and author George Barna reported as he surveyed people who considered themselves to be "Christians":

- Less than half of all adults can name the four gospels.
- A majority of professing Christians struggle to identify more than two or three of the disciples.
- 60% of Americans cannot name even five of the Ten Commandments.
- 40% of Americans believe that when Jesus Christ was on earth, He committed sins.
- 50% believe that anyone who is generally good or does enough good things for others during their life will earn a place in Heaven.
- 40% believe that the Bible, the Koran, and the Book of Mormon are all different expressions of the same spiritual truth.

(Seeing that Barna's research is now several years old, it is obvious to most that the so-called "Christian" of today's chaotic society has continued to only deepen their Biblical illiteracy.)

Psalms 9:17 says, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and* all the nations that forget God."

It is understood that the word "hell" can be interpreted as the "grave," or "Sheol," or "hades" [underworld] depending on the setting; however, the rendering does little to change the real meaning of the verse. It doesn't only speak of a future "hell" into which the wicked and those which forget God shall inherit. It also means that the wicked and nations that forget God will BECOME hell, not just individuals but a nation as a whole! We are witnessing this becoming more and more a reality! "Forgetting God" is always the case in the absence of Truth!

"To be turned into hell" means that the nature of hell (not the fire and brimstone) but the misery, agony, and corruption that hell represents will become the prevailing nature of the wicked and those who forget God. This is what we are seeing in this untoward nation as the depth of evil and deception continues its rise, and we as a nation are drowning in it.

2 Thessalonians 2:7-12, “For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and **lying wonders**, and with **all unrighteous deception** among those who perish, **because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved**. And for this reason God will send them **strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.**”

At the end of days, satan’s masterpiece, the antichrist, will be revealed. In a very short time, almost all the earth will follow him! Rev. 13:14, “And he **deceives** those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived;”

Revelation 19:20, “Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he **deceived** those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone;”

Revelation 20:3, “And he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should **deceive** the nations no more, till the thousand years be fulfilled.”

Revelation 20:10, “The devil, who **deceived** them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever.”

Canaries, at one time, were notably used in coal mines to detect the presence of carbon monoxide. The bird’s rapid breathing, rare, small size, and high metabolism, compared to the miners, led birds in dangerously high carbon monoxide-filled mines to succumb before the miners, thereby giving the miners time to take action.

The idea of using canaries is credited to John Scott Haldane, known to some as “the father of oxygen therapy.” His research on carbon monoxide led him to recommend using the birds. He suggested using a sentinel species: an animal more sensitive to the colorless, odorless carbon monoxide and other poisonous gases than humans.

If the animal became ill or died, that would give miners a warning to evacuate the contaminated mine.

What made carbon monoxide so dangerous to miners, who were enclosed within the confines of a mine, was its lethal effect that was undetectable by the human senses of sight and smell. Consuming carbon monoxide was done by simply breathing—a needed respiratory function of life. Deception can only be detected by the presence of truth—a truth that is loudly and continually proclaimed!

It could be said when the canary's chirping ceased, the danger was increased—the silence was a loud warning!

“Behold the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.” Amos 8:11-12

In today's dangerous climate of rampant sin, chaos, and hardness of human hearts, someone needs to listen and see if the sound of gospel preaching is still being heard! Has anyone checked on the canary?

The birth pains are now intense, and the intervals of the pains are now coming swiftly—surely, He is even at the door!

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:32

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