

## Cultural Signs

Welcome to Harvest Community Church

Series: Signs, Times and Seasons

**Text: Matthew 24:9-10, 2 Timothy 3:1-7**

The Bible mentions signs that will be normalized in the culture of the last days. The apostle Paul lists 19 characteristics that will dominate society prior to the return of Christ.

Just like in Noah's day people will be going about life as normal. **Matthew 24:37-39**

This "normal" was a society so filled with wickedness that God decided to flood the entire earth.

**Genesis 6:5-6,11-12**

### Materialism

Materialism is defined as preoccupation with or stress upon the material rather than the intellectual or spiritual things. Never in history have people been able to enjoy or possess as much wealth as in our day. The poorest person in America is among the wealthiest in the entire world today.

Materialism is the result of a love for money. **1 Timothy 6:10-11** Loving money means that we measure our life, our value and the value of others by their net economic worth. It is striving to always achieve, possess and control. It is accumulating enough wealth and things that we find our security and comfort in what we have.

Money is not the root of all evil, the love of money is the root of all KINDS of evil. Money is simply the currency of exchange and can come in many forms. Today the love and pursuit of wealth has become an idol at the center of most of society. Jesus made it clear that this would be a sign of the last days and that this desire for money and things would take many from their love for Christ. You cannot serve two masters. **Matthew 6:24,**

**2 Timothy 3:1-2** Notice the change in the younger generation on how much significance is given to brands, styles and cost over form and function.

*~ Donagh O'Shea – Money is God's greatest rival... it is much more than the paper or metal or plastic... It is our love of things, it is our escape from dependence on people, it is our effort to control life. It is much easier to love things than to love people. If you can't love people you will begin to love money. Money is neutral but an extreme attachment to it is not neutral; it is an opposite kind of religion. The religion of God is to love. The instinct of love is to share, to give away. The instinct of Mammon is to accumulate.*

At the heart of materialism is the love of self. Remember the root of satanism is not loving the devil, it is loving self above all. The motto of satanism is "do what thou wilt". This is without regard for God or how what we do affects others. Paul warns Timothy that people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of pleasure and lovers of money.

When God is no longer in His rightful place of our lives, as both Savior and Lord, self will move in to replace Him. It is said that witches pray the Lord's prayer backwards. They start out with "give us this day our daily bread and end with hallowed be your name." This simple twist makes all the difference in the world in the correct way of praying. Today the modern church puts an emphasis on prosperity over worship.

Those who are lovers of themselves will then become lovers of money. Money provides the means of pleasing one's self. Just as Peter shows us how a love and desire to please God builds our maturity, a love for self then promotes immaturity. Remember without faith it is impossible to please God. Look at the contrast in these two portions of scripture.

### **2 Peter 1:5-10, 2 Timothy 3:1-7**

The antidote to materialism is generosity. The philosophy of the world is get all you can, can all you get and then sit on the can. The Bible tells us that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

To combat the love of money we must change the way we think about money. First, we must come to understand that since Jesus is our Lord, our money is not ours. Many Christians equate money the way the world does they see it as treasure.

### **Matthew 6:19-21, 1 Timothy 6:17-19**

One of the problems with the love of money is that we always see ourselves and life through the lens of a poverty mentality. In Christ we are rich in what matters. We are joint heirs with Christ. In the book of Revelation, the church at Laodicea describes much of those are part of the church today in these last days. **Revelation 3:15-20** In America we are blessed. As a matter of fact, according to Forbes, the typical person in the bottom 5% of American income is still richer than 68% of the worlds people.

Another key way to combat materialism is to truly be thankful and grateful for all that we have. A sign of a poverty mentality is that enough is never enough; self is never satisfied. There is always more. A true sign of spiritual maturity is contentedness. Remember, one of the signs of maturity is to truly love people; love gives - self takes.

## **Immorality**

At the heart of immorality is the idea that anything goes.

Moral - concerned with the principles of right and wrong behavior and the goodness or badness of human character.

- holding or manifesting high principles for proper conduct. Virtuous, good, righteous, fairness, honesty, high-minded, principled, honorable, proper, noble, just, pure, law-abiding, blameless, chaste

Many assume that immorality deals mainly with sexual issues, but it really deals with having a sense of integrity concerning right and wrong in all of our relationships. Morality is not limited to romantic relationships but to friendship, business, family and sexual.

The culture of the last days will be one of anything goes. Just as in Noah's day where people were going about their lives, there will be unbridled weakness in the last days.

### **Genesis 6:5**

If you watch what is shaping our culture you will see the depravity of man on full display. Depravity is simply Godlessness. Our moral compass in society does not have a true north. Instead of pointing to God's ways we decide that morality is anyway we see it. Again, the heart of immorality is the result of a love of self over our love for God and people. Because of the rise of technology and its easy accessibility we have become a profane people. What was at one point only seen by a few is now revealed to many, from murder, rudeness, profanity, perversion and pornography. Our minds are assaulted with wickedness from movies, to TV shows the internet and music. Common courtesy, politeness, kindness and decency are no longer the hallmarks of good taste.

The moral decline we are seeing in the world today began in England and France in the late 1800's during the "Enlightenment" or "Age of Reason". This was the rejection of God and the elevation of man. The age of enlightenment embraced the idea that there is no absolute truth. Moral relativism became the theme of our education and was ingrained in popular culture from the 1920's – the sexual revolution of the 60's-80's.

According to the Bible, moral collapse starts with the rejection of God.

### **Romans 1:18-20**

~David Jeremiah – *“The bottom-line reason for humanity's rejection of the obvious evidence is that the existence of a Creator implies His authority over His Creation. If we are subject to a Maker, we are not autonomous, for morality is intrinsically rooted in His holy character. We cannot live how we would like, nor should we. God's personal purity supplies a moral baseline for the universe and provides the guidelines by which we live healthy and holy lives.”*

The Book of Romans describes the steps a culture takes in its moral slide into depravity:

- The rejection of God and an ungratefulness for who He is and all He has done.  
**Romans 1:21**
- God created the human heart to be filled with His love. When we reject God, we reject the only One that makes us complete. We will find something to fill that void; this is called idolatry. **Romans 1:22-23** An idol is whatever comes first in our lives. It is anything that has our affections, drives our priorities and comes before Jesus. When we reject God, we will try to find a substitute.
- The third step in the decline is immorality. **Romans 1:24-25** When we give up the true God of heaven all other gods lead to an erosion of morality, to sensuality, to sexual sins and to lust driven lives. **1 John 2:15-17** The things of the world never satisfy because they are not eternal.

- From immorality the next step down is **iniquity**. Any society that denies God will eventually become lust driven and overly sexualized. God allows people to be driven and overcome by their passions. This is not punishment it is the natural consequences of sinfulness. **Romans 1:26-27** The downward spiral of indecency leads to moral collapse.
- The inevitable result of the downward slide is eventually **Hell** itself. Hell is a literal place that is reserved for Satan, demons and all of those who reject God and His ways.

The way we stop this downward slide into sin and Hell is repentance and a reliance on the **grace** (unearned, undeserved favor) of God. To speak of grace without sin is to trivialize the cross of Jesus Christ. The grace of God always comes to us with **blood** on it. Grace was paid for with a price. The blood of Christ was the price to purchase our freedom from sin and with it the penalty for our sin which is death and receive forgiveness from God for our sin.

### **Spiritual Warfare – Daniel 7:21, 2 Corinthian 2:11**

In the last days God’s people will be under continual **attack** from the enemy. We are in a war and we must continually **resist** the devil. **James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8-9,**

The attacks on believers will come in many ways with the desired result to **wear** us out and to wear us down. **Daniel 7:25, 1 Timothy 4:1**

In “The Art of War”, Sun Tzu said that one of the keys to winning a war is to **know** your enemy. Satan is a fallen angel and the enemy of God. He is in no way God’s equal because Satan is also one of God’s **creation**. In the end God will triumph over Satan.

**Revelation 20:10** His ultimate end is already determined but until then he will seek to undermine and destroy all that God has created.

There are several ways Satan will wage war against us in our culture.

- We will have to **endure** the constant worldliness, wickedness and utter foolishness of the society we live in. **2Peter 2:7**
- We will deal with Satan’s **deception**. **John 8:44, 2 Thess. 2:3-4, Matt. 24:24**
- Satan will seek to **divide**. Satan is sowing division in families, nations, churches and among Christians. One of the surest ways to victory is to divide and conquer. United we stand divided we fall. **1 Corinthians 1:10, Romans 16:17-18**
- Satan **destroys**. **John 10:10** During the Tribulation period, actual demons will leave hell to invade the world. They are led by a demon whose name is in the Hebrew- Abaddon or in the Greek- Apollyon, both mean **destroyer**. Satan’s intent is nothing like Christ’s. He seeks to destroy our peace, safety and ultimately our life and eternity itself. Satan doesn’t preserve or increase he destroys and lessens. He doesn’t give life he takes it right out of us.