



therefore, keep watch!

Therefore, watch

for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. (Mat 24:42)

The pandemic of recent years (COVID-19 and its variants) has shaken populations around the world and influenced society in many areas. In addition, a war has been raging in Ukraine for a year now, which has had a considerable impact on the economic and political situation in Europe. And instead of seeking a diplomatic solution, European countries, including Switzerland, are arming themselves in a conspicuous manner (Swiss-Community, 5.8.22). The European peace project (EU), which was even awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012, is turning into a gigantic war machine, composed mainly of weapons from the United States and European countries. This was confirmed by the European Commission's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Josep Borrell, when he stated that this war 'will shape European policy for years and decades to come' (Tagesspiegel, 28.3.23).

Of course, this development also causes concern and uncertainty among many Christians. Many are convinced that we are living in the 'last days'. Others, however, suggest that the 'last days' already began with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and that these events therefore repeat themselves cyclically (Acts 2:14-21). Opinions differ considerably. While some are preparing for the rapture, others continue to live their daily lives as if nothing had changed.

The end of time from a biblical perspective

In fact, wars, famines and diseases have caused many more victims in the last 2,000 years. But what does Jesus say about this? In Matthew 24:1, he announces the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. His disciples then ask him: 1) when will the Jewish temple be destroyed, and 2) what is the sign of his return and the end of this age (eon). These questions led Jesus to deliver his discourse on the end times on the Mount of Olives, opposite the Temple Mount. It is from this mountain that he ascended to heaven and to where he will return (Zechariah 14:1-5).

Regarding the date of the destruction of the Temple, which took place in 70 AD, Jesus gives the following sign:

- Beware that no one deceives you! (Mt 24:4).
- Many false messiahs (Christians) will appear and deceive many (Mt 24:5, 23).

This became a reality in an impressive way between 30 and 70 AD. Gamaliel, the famous doctor of Jewish law, already mentions some false Christs in Peter's defence (Acts 5:34-37). The Jewish historian Josephus also mentions several 'Christuses' who arose before the destruction of the Temple. But even after the year 70, numerous messiahs arose, whom John calls antichrists: "*Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, now many antichrists have arisen; therefore we know that it is the last hour*" (1 Jn 2:18).

The apostle John calls these pseudo-messiahs “antichrists” because they want to take the place of the true Messiah and deny the divine sonship of Jesus:

'Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? The one who denies the Father and the Son is the antichrist. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; whoever confesses the Son has the Father also' (1 Jn 2:22-23).

The denial of Jesus' divinity spread mainly at that time through the heresy of Gnosticism (knowledge). This held that Jesus was only a man or that he had only appeared as a spirit. These two conceptions erase Jesus' redemptive work on the cross. As a man, Jesus could not have borne or forgiven our sins and burdens (Col 1:12-20). And as a spirit, he could not have paid the price for us or represented us before God as high priest (Heb 4:15). Therefore, the Gnostics taught that salvation is only attained through knowledge acquired by each human being. Parts of Gnostic teaching are found today among Muslims, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses, among others, as well as among Christians who deny the divinity of Jesus (Arianism).

Numerous biblical verses confirm the divinity of Jesus and thus invalidate the heresy of Arianism. The prophet Isaiah (59:16-17) recounts that God sought among men for someone to help him fight evil on earth. However, he found no one. Therefore, his own arm helped him and upheld his justice. This statement can only apply to Jesus, his Son. Below, I would like to quote some biblical passages that confirm the divinity of Jesus:

- On salvation and judgement: Isa. 59:16-17
- A Redeemer will come: Isa. 59:20
- God became man and is among us (Emmanuel, עִמָּנוּאֵל Elohim with us): Isa. 7:14; 9:15; Matt. 1:23; John 1:1, 14; Phil. 2:2-11.
- Jesus acknowledges his divinity: Jn 8:58; 10:30-31; 13:32; 17:5.21; Mt 26:63-64
- God himself pays the debt for our sins: Jn 1:29; Col 1:15-20; Heb 9:24-26; 10:5-12; 1 Pet 1:19f.
- Jesus receives worship: Matthew 14:33; Luke 5:8; 24:52; John 9:38; 20:28
- God the Father and the apostles recognise him as God: Hebrews 1:1-10; Colossians 2:9; 1 Timothy 3:16; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1, etc.

Therefore, let us be cautious in distinguishing truth from error.

The disciples associated the announcement of the destruction of the temple at that time with the fulfillment of the time predicted by Daniel 9:24-27.

But although the temple was destroyed in the year 70, the “devastator” mentioned by Daniel was not destroyed, and the end did not come. This caused fear and uncertainty among the early Christians. Before the destruction of the temple, many Christians thought that Jesus had already come or that his return had been delayed. The apostles then gave an overview of the chronology of events (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 2 Peter 3:8-14) and reassured the communities. After the destruction of the Jewish temple, it became clear that the time of the Church of Jesus, as God's witness in the world, was not over, but had only just begun. However, the time of the Church was not revealed to the prophet Daniel, even though he saw the death of the Messiah and the devastation of Jerusalem (Dan 9:26). This is because his prophecy is addressed to the people of Israel and the city of Jerusalem. When the time of the Church of Jesus has passed or (after the rapture) has ended, the time for the nation of Israel will continue.

The angel Gabriel (Dan. 9:21) announces to Daniel a period of 70 weeks, that is, 490 years, which will be dedicated to the people of Israel and Jerusalem. According to Daniel 9:24, this period planned by God for Israel must bring six important things:

- 1) Iniquity will be destroyed.
- 2) The power of sin will be annihilated.
- 3) Guilt will be atoned for.
- 4) Eternal justice will be established.
- 5) The time of vision and prophecy will be sealed.
- 6) The Holy of Holies or the Holy among the saints will be anointed. Translated with DeepL.com (free version)

The first three events are fulfilled through the redemptive work of the Messiah on the cross and his resurrection. Here the following things are fulfilled: the destruction of iniquity; the end of the power of sin (cf. Col 2:13-15); and the atonement for sins (cf. Heb 10:8-14). The other three events have not yet been fulfilled. The eternal righteousness accomplished by Jesus Christ certainly applies to all who believe in him, but since the prophecy refers primarily to Israel, it has not yet been completely fulfilled. This people is still waiting or is not yet ready for the time of endless righteousness and peace. The time of vision and prophecy is not yet over, either for the Church or for Israel. Many prophecies remain open for Israel, and they

will undoubtedly be fulfilled. Similarly, the rapture and the return of Jesus are yet to come for the Church. And the last event mentioned here, the anointing of the Holy One among the saints, is, in my opinion, related to the ascension to the throne and the taking of power by Jesus Christ in the millennium. Only then will he make his enemies his footstool (cf. Ps 110:1; Dan 7:13-14; Mt 22:44; Lk 21:27; 1 Cor 15:24-28; Rev 11:15-19).

Daniel 9:26 begins with “and after these 62 weeks” (וְאַחֲרֵי שְׁבַעִים וּשְׁנַיִם) which means that the death of the Messiah took place after the 69th week (v. 25). It took place at the end of the year (7 weeks (v. 25) + 62 weeks (v. 26) = 69 weeks). But in the following verse 27, the 70th week is described after the death of the Messiah. Therefore, he died before week 70. In the end-time calendar, there are seven years left to be fulfilled, which will see the end of the reign of the nations and the establishment of eternal justice and the reign of Jesus Christ on earth. The disciples refer to these last seven years as “the fulfillment of time” (Dan 9:27; 12:9-13), which Revelation calls “the great tribulation” (Rev 7:14; 3:10; Matt 24:21). It is at that moment that the reign of the nations will reach its peak and come to an end, before the reign of Jesus Christ with the saints, that is, the millennium, intervenes.

The signs of the end times

Regarding the disciples' second question, I would like to list below the essential points that Jesus announced as signs before his return. - There will be wars, nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom. This is what Jesus said at the time of the Pax Romana (Roman peace: 27 BC - 180 AD; fig. 1), which guaranteed the stability and security of the Roman Empire for more than 200 years (Mt 24:6-7a). In this context, it was difficult for the disciples to understand Jesus' announcement about wars between nations and kingdoms.

- There will be famines and earthquakes in various places (Mt 24:7b).
- These events are not the end, but only the beginning of labor, as in the case of a woman giving birth. They increase progressively until childbirth (v. 8).
- There will be persecution of Christians in all nations. Because of this, many Christians will be indignant and deny their faith. Other “Christians” will hand over their brothers and sisters to the persecutors (vv. 9-10).
- Many false prophets will appear and deceive

many people (v. 11.24).

- Disobedience to God's commandments (e.g., legalization of abortion, LGBTQIA, adultery, early sexualization of children, drugs, etc.) prevails and evil gradually takes hold (vv. 37-39). For this reason, many Christians abandon their first love (Rev. 2:4-5) and become hardened and legalistic (v. 12).
- But a remnant remains faithful until the end (v. 13).
- The message of the kingdom of Jesus Christ must be preached to ALL nations throughout the inhabited earth. Everyone must hear the Gospel as a testimony (v. 14a; Mark 13:10). Only then will the end come (Matthew 24:14b).

An unfulfilled sign

Most of the signs announced by Jesus have been fulfilled on several occasions over the past 2,000 years. However, they are distinguished by their frequency and intensity. Wars, famines, and earthquakes, as well as godlessness and persecution of Christians, are constantly on the rise. According to estimates by Portes Ouvertes and other Christian organizations, more than 300 million Christians are persecuted worldwide today; tens of thousands are forcibly detained, tortured, or discriminated against. Most of them are in Islamic countries.



Fig. 1: Roman Peace in 117 AD

In 2022, more than 5,600 Christians were killed for their faith (see fig. 2). However, one of these signs has not yet been fulfilled: the preaching of the Gospel throughout the earth. It should be noted that the central message of this preaching is the kingdom of God (G.: ευαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας). Today, a “light gospel” is being spread in many places:

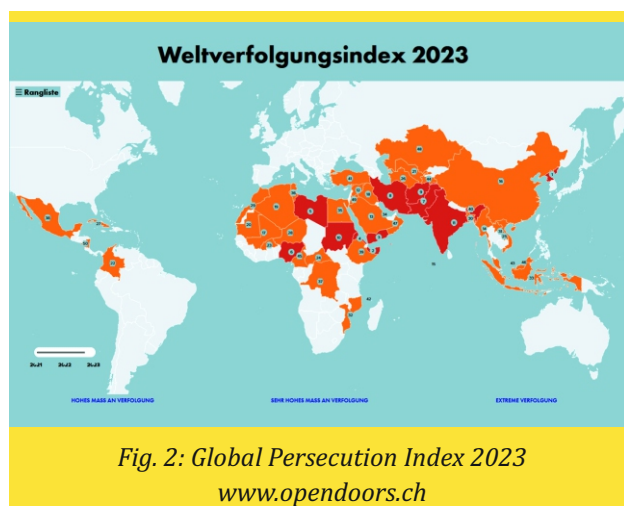
- God accepts you as you are, without any need for sanctification;
- He forgives you, without you having to repent;
- Jesus is always there for you, to serve you;
- Jesus loves you and gives you everything you desire, etc.

But the heart of the Gospel must be the kingdom of God through Jesus Christ (Acts 17:30-31; Ephesians 4:1-5). As Lord of lords and King of kings, Jesus establishes the kingdom of God first in the hearts of men who receive and love him (John 1:12; 14:23-24) and then on a new earth (Rev. 17:14; 21:1-3; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Isa. 66:22; Ps. 102:26-29). Christians are called to submit and obey their Lord so that He can manifest the Kingdom of the Father in them and through them.

Let us watch and proclaim a powerful Gospel that transforms lives. And may our lives be a reflection of what we proclaim.

The Rapture

The end times are characterized by God's terrible judgment on the nations. For this reason, the Church of Jesus cannot participate in this judgment. She is the bride of the Messiah (the Lamb of God), who has been redeemed by his blood and freed from the destructive judgment of this world. That is why she is preserved from tribulation (the end times) and raptured (Rev. 3:10; 2



Thess. 2:6-9; 1 Thess. 4:16-17). In other words, the rapture is the event that begins the countdown to the last seven years, that is, the tribulation. After the rapture, the Church of Jesus must give account before the judgment seat of Christ, not for her life or death, but to receive the reward for her service.

According to the principle of each person's faithfulness in the work entrusted to them, the reward is measured according to their works (1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:9-10).

Therefore, we must be vigilant in fulfilling the work that the Holy Spirit has entrusted to us.

The judgement of the nations and the end

All nations and all peoples must be reached by the Gospel. Then the end will come. Jesus refers to the end of the reign of the nations (Luke 21:24) which, through the Antichrist, reaches its maximum measure of sin and rebellion against God (Daniel 7:25a; Revelation 13:4-8). Jesus gives other signs for the Jewish generation that will live through the end or culmination of this age. He announces the following:

- The abomination of desolation in the temple of Jerusalem. This refers to the desecration of the Jewish temple through the installation of idols and/or the sacrifice of a pig on the altar of burnt offerings (Matthew 24:15; Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).
- Thus begins a great tribulation of three and a half years, such as there has never been before and such as there will never be again (Mt 24:21; Dn 7:25b; 12:7, 11-12; Rev 7:14; 11:1-2; 13:5).
- The sign of false prophets and false Christs also appears at the time of tribulation (Matthew 24:23-26).
- After this difficult period, the lights of heaven, the sun and the moon, are darkened and the heavenly forces are shaken (Matthew 24:29).
- Immediately afterwards, Jesus returns for the second time to Jerusalem in glory (Mt 24:30-31; Zech 12:9; Rev 1:7).

The signs of the end times are concentrated in Jerusalem and the temple. There is no mention of the Church preaching the Gospel during this period, but rather of two witnesses of God. They wear mourning clothes, bear witness to God, and execute God's judgement on the earth (Rev 11:3-14). On the other hand, believers in Jesus from the nations and from Israel are persecuted, tortured, and killed (Rev 7:9-17). The result is an obvious alliance of the nations with the devil, which reveals itself as a blasphemous world government and reaches the highest degree of rebellion and sin of all time. But

the Most High does not sit idly by or wait patiently for them to repent. On the contrary, the earth becomes a great courtroom, in which God inevitably and systematically punishes the wickedness of men (see figure 3). It is the time of the judgement of the nations and, at the same time, the end of their reign on earth. Thus ends the era (Greek: Eon) of the dominion of the nations, which began under Nimrod at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 10:8-12; 11:1-9). After that, Jesus establishes his reign on earth.

Call to vigilance

There are many other signs drawn from the prophets and the Apocalypse that announce the immi-



Fig. 3: The Euphrates has gradually dried up. Coincidence or fulfilment of Rev. 16:12?

nence of the end. Among them is the unmistakable sign of the nation of Israel, represented by the fig tree (Mt 24:32-35). This 'fig tree' was created by God, rejected because it bore no fruit (cf. Lk 13:6-9; Rom 11:25-32). But since 1948, it has come back to life and is becoming greener and greener, even though it no longer bears fruit (for God) in this age (cf. Mt 21:18-21).

Less than 100 years ago, theologians believed that Israel would never exist again as a nation. The numerous prophecies about Israel that had not yet

been fulfilled were then applied allegorically to the Church. However, the existence of the nation of Israel is now a proven fact. The same is true today of biblical predictions that theologians and "experts" are unable to classify and therefore interpret allegorically or metaphorically. But when the time comes for their fulfilment, everything will happen as predicted. An example of this is the third Jewish temple, which must be built according to prophecy.

However, Jesus calls for vigilance on several occasions, because no one knows the exact hour. He also announces a period of immorality and debauchery, like that which prevailed in the days of Noah (Matthew 24:36-39). A society like this has clearly lost its common sense and sobriety. And I believe we are moving closer and closer in that direction.

Jesus promised (Matthew 28:20b) to be with us until the end of this age or the reign of the nations: 'And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.' His promise gives us courage and confidence to look to the future with hope, despite the possible scenarios of horror, and to fulfil the tasks he has entrusted to us on earth. We do not know whether we will see the rapture during our lifetime or whether the end times will be prolonged and we will die before then. No one knows the moment of their death; the pandemic has also demonstrated this. Therefore, we are invited to be vigilant in spirit and to proclaim the kingdom of Jesus Christ to men while there is still time. For he will surely return, and his Church must be prepared to receive him as her spouse.

Therefore:

'Watch, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.' Mt 24:42

And

'You also must be ready, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man is coming.' Mt 24:44

Reini Schümperli

Prayer actions

Regional meetings 2023

Saturdays from 2pm to 5pm

AARAU	BERN	CHUR
22 avr / 24 juin / 21 oct	29 avr / 14 oct	11 mars / 2 sep
Heilsarmee Aarau Asylstrasse 34 5001 Aarau	Heilsarmee Korps Bern Laupenstrasse 5 3007 Bern	Freie Missionsgemeinde Saluferstrasse 41 7000 Chur
Contact: Marife Schümperli Tel. 056 535 15 50	Contact: Marife Schümperli Tel. 056 535 15 50	Contact: Helen Fäh Tel. 081 325 10 94

DELEMONT	MOUTIER	THUN
30 sep	7 oct	3 juin / 9 sep / 4 nov
Assemblée Missionnaire Rue St-Maurice 30g 2800 Delémont	La Fraternité Chrétienne Rue du Moulin 6 2740 Moutier	Heilsarmee Thun Mittlere Strasse 19 3600 Thun
Contact: Christine Friedli Tel. 032 955 15 34	Contact: Mariette Insogna Tel. 032 493 62 13	Contact: Marife Schümperli Tel. 056 535 15 50

How can people believe in Jesus if they have never heard of him? And how can they hear about him if no one preaches the word of God to them? Romans 10:14

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. Matthew 28:19-20

I am not ashamed to spread this message of Christ's salvation everywhere. For this message is a powerful force from God. Those who believe in it learn that God frees them from their guilt and saves them from their despair. At first, this message was intended only for the Jews, but now all other people must hear it. Romans 1:16

But it remains true: faith comes solely from hearing the message, but the message gives us Christ. Rom. 10:17

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. Phil. 4:6

A man's stomach is satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; he is satisfied with the produce of his lips. Death and life are in the power of the tongue. The power of the tongue, and whoever loves it will eat its fruit. Prov 18:20-21

Preach the word, be prepared at all times; convince, rebuke, exhort with all patience and knowledge. 2 Tim 4:2



Jesus rend libre

Be Free - Betet freie Schweizer - Baslerstrasse 38 b - 5200 Brugg
+41 77 435 30 33 E-Mail: info@be-free.ch - Post Kto. 61-360710-8