



The Life of Jesus (84)

The Characteristics of The Last Day (2)



Matthew 24:1-14

#1 Characteristics of the Last Day

3. Increase of Wickedness

“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold” (Mt 24:12)

The third characteristic is that wickedness will increase. In the last days, we'll see all kinds of iniquities prevail around the world.

But wickedness here doesn't just refer to the general concept of sin we normally think of. In the world, sin is considered to be the same as violating the law.

The Bible defines sin as refusing God's lordship as our Creator and placing ourselves as the lords of our lives. It is to drag Him down from His position as our King and Lord which He deserves and for us to sit there instead. It doesn't only include our outward words and actions, but also our thoughts, motivations, and emotions in our hearts.

In fact, that's what God's more interested in. God said, “the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart” (1Sm 16:7)

#2 Characteristics of the Last Day

3. Increase of Wickedness

What's not sinful by our standard can be sinful to God. **God sees the hidden motivations and emotions in our hearts and judges them.** We might think that killing someone is a very serious sin while hating someone in our hearts is not sinful, but God sees both the same.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment..." (Mt 5:21-22)

The best definition of sin is found in Romans 1:28.

"They did not see fit to acknowledge God" (Rom 1:28, ESV)

Sin is not to acknowledge God as Lord. Sin is to refuse Him as our master. That's the nature of sin that the Bible describes. **This nature of sin leads to all kinds of iniquities and lawlessness.** From this root of sin, come all kinds of different outward sins, which we call fruits of sin.

#3 Characteristics of the Last Day

3. Increase of Wickedness

“They did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God... They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful” (Rm 1:28-30)

When the last day comes, we will see all kinds of sins and iniquities prevailing in the world. The more people don't recognize God as their King, the more sins and iniquities there will be because **all kinds of lawlessness are essentially the result of not recognizing God as the Lord.**

That's what Satan wants us to do.

“Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until... **the man of lawlessness** is revealed... He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God...” (2Th 2:3-4)

#4 Characteristics of the Last Day

3. Increase of Wickedness

What the Bible testifies is that Satan wasn't created as an evil being. Rather, he was created as a good and perfect angel full of wisdom and power. But his beauty and perfection made him proud.

He wanted to set himself up higher than God's position and glory, so he betrayed him and thus was depraved.

“You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty... You were anointed as a guardian cherub... You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you... Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor.” (Ezk 28:11-17)

“How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn!... You said in your heart, “I will raise my throne above the stars of God... I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High”” (Is 14:13)

This is how God's angel became Satan out of his pride and desire to be higher than God and to make himself like Him.

#5 Characteristics of the Last Day

3. Increase of Wickedness

God judged the fallen angel, Satan, and made a place to put him eternally, which we call 'hell.'

“But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit” (Is 14:15)

“God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment” (2Pt 2:4)

But Satan didn't want to go to hell alone. So he started to seduce the beings God loves the most, human beings, so that he could enslave them and bring them to hell with him.

And this is how Satan deceived the first woman, Eve. “You will not certainly die. For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Gn 3:4-5)

#6 Characteristics of the Last Day

3. Increase of Wickedness

It sounds good. But there's something that Satan hid. Satan didn't tell her that that's the way she would be enslaved by him and share his fate—eternal death in hell.

“You are slaves of the one you obey - whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness” (Rom 6:16)

“The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning.” (1 Jn 3:8)

“Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” (Mt 25:41)

This is what we must know. If we live without acknowledging God's lordship, we may think we live 'free' from God. But what we should know is that **being free from God really means being enslaved by Satan**. And if we're his slaves, we'll also be put into the eternal fire with him.

So we shouldn't be deceived by the devil's honeyed words. They may sound good, but they're actually a poisoned apple. They are not good for you, but for him.

#7 Characteristics of the Last Day

3. Increase of Wickedness

From the first time Satan deceived the first human beings, he has never stopped seducing all human beings with the same strategy.

“The devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1Pt 5:8)

“For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work... The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing.” (2Th 2:7, 9-10)

This is what Satan does now. Like a roaring lion, he's trying to find his prey. He uses all kinds of things to make his lies sound reasonable and plausible. But we should remember that their end is only destruction.

#8 Characteristics of the Last Day

3. Increase of Wickedness

All those who are deceived by his lie will perish. But those who hear the word of truth from Jesus and believe in Him will be saved. What kind of life will you choose?

“The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.” (1Jn 3:8)

“You were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.” (Eph 2:1-2)

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved.” (Eph 2:4)

#9 Characteristics of the Last Day

3. Increase of Wickedness

We were dead in our sins without knowing that we were following the devil's deception and heading to eternal death in hell with him. But God, who is abounding in love, merciful, and gracious to us, sent His one and only Son to save us from our sins, the devil's lies, and eternal death in hell.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that **whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**” (Jn 3:16)

“He appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.” (1Jn 3:5)

“Jesus Christ gave himself for us **to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify** for himself a people that are his very own” (Ti 2:14)

#10 Characteristics of the Last Day

3. Increase of Wickedness

Jesus, whose very nature is God, humbly came to the world. As the Lamb of God, he took all our sins and bore them in His body. Then He laid down His life on the cross to pay the ransom for our sins on our behalf so that we can be freed from Satan, sin, and death and become His very own purified people.

Satan is now at work. He seems to have enormous power that we can't resist. But remember this, there will surely come a day when **“the Lord Jesus will overthrow [the lawless one] with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.” (2Th 2:8)**

That's the day we're looking forward to as Christians. Until that day comes, we must make every effort to hold on to what we believe with God's love and strength so that we don't lose our faith in Jesus but stand firmly on the foundation of His salvation.

Memory Verses

“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold” (Mt 24:12) (1)

“They did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God... So they have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity...” (Rm 1:28-30) (1)

“The secret power of lawlessness is already at work... He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing.” (2Th 2:7, 9-10) (2)

“The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.” (1Jn 3:8) (1)

“Jesus Christ gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own” (Ti 2:14) (1)

Reflection Questions

1) What do you think is the nature of sin? How do you define sin? What are some fruits of sin that you see in your life or in the lives of those around you? What are some results of sin?

2) The Bible says that the devil is prowling like a roaring lion to find someone to devour. He will do his best to deceive you so that you might lose your faith. How do you think you can fight against him?