

Diabolical Crimes Mark a Troubling Sign of the Times

Recently a 15-year-old boy shot both of his parents when they insisted he do his chores. The reason for his anger? He was anxious to look up a Bible verse for a friend who wanted to know how to get saved. Two injured people hardly compare to some of the horrific mass murders we have witnessed in the past few years, but this incident does reveal an increasing number of people who have lost the ability to control themselves.

Of course, murder has been in our midst from the founding of this nation, but senseless killing has never been seen on the scale we are experiencing in our day. There have been some 25 incidents in the United States since 9/11 where at least five people have been murdered in wanton killing sprees. What is going on with people?

I believe Scripture holds the key to understanding the “helter skelter” happening in our culture. The spiritual deterioration of individuals (1 Cor. 1:18) and even an entire nation (Amos 8:1-2) are both documented in the Bible. However, I think what we are seeing today reflects something of much grander proportions than either of these historical phenomena.

It seems we are witnessing one of the final stages of the spiritual downfall of mankind. In Matthew 13, Jesus described false believers as “tares” the angels would reap “at the end of the age” (vv. 39-40, NASB). The book of Revelation describes the unbelievers alive in the last days as rotten grapes ready for “the great wine press of the wrath of God” (Rev. 14:19). The apostle Paul skipped the metaphor of maturing plants and simply said that in the end times, “evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse” (2 Tim. 3:13).

Just as it takes time for plants to ripen to the point of harvest, so too the sinful condition of mankind has taken several thousand years to arrive at its final state of evil. While this reasoning may sound good in a seminary course, does it really hold water in the real world? For instance, how do a couple hundred killings in America compare to the numerous occasions down through history when entire people groups have been exterminated?

It is true that there have been certain periods when Satan was able to possess a man and direct his followers to the point of massacring large numbers of people (e.g., Adolph Hitler, Idi Amin, etc.), but the number of victimizers in these cases were typically limited. What we are seeing in the U.S. and throughout the world now is an escalation of wickedness amongst the masses—not the few.

I can see two predominant contributing factors for this phenomenon.

First, the technological advances of our time have made it possible for people to indulge sin at a level and intensity never before imaginable. The book of Daniel predicted the last days would be a time of a great increase in knowledge (Dan. 12:4). What other generation has experienced the increase of knowledge that we have seen? Perhaps you are aware of the fact that it took nearly 18 centuries from the time of Christ for man's knowledge level to double. From 1750-1900, it doubled again, and once again from 1900-1950. By 1997, it was doubling every two years, and today it probably doubles within months. No generation in the history of mankind has experienced anything remotely comparable to what is occurring in our time.

"Yes, but many of those scientific advances have been for the betterment of mankind," some would contend. It is true that they have made temporal earth-life more comfortable and safe, but how much of it has contributed to man's eternal well-being?

Consider some of the ways these technological advances have contributed to the wickedness of our day. For instance, what American living in the 1900s could have imagined being able to view sexual deviancy of all kinds on a screen sitting in their homes? What early pioneer could have comprehended a day when 50 million unborn babies would be slaughtered in our country? How could those simple folks have envisioned an entire city of people being vaporized with the push of a button?

Perhaps even more close to home for most of us is what today's technology has meant to our personal lives. We now live in such a fast-paced society that we can have nearly anything we desire on the spot. Not only does such a lifestyle of instant gratification keep a person's carnal nature inflamed, but it also quickly hollows out people of the normal contentment that comes with a decent life. The prosperity and technology of our day has enabled people to quickly immerse themselves and burn themselves out in their sin of choice. These zombie-like burnouts who commit bizarre crimes are only going to increase.

The other major contributing factor in the escalation of evil we are witnessing is the increasing latitude God is allowing the enemy as the end approaches: "Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has *only* a short time" (Rev. 12:12). This ripening of evil is preparing the masses of humanity to come to the point that they will accept the mark of the beast.

You know that nice neighbor lady who always gives you a bright smile and a friendly greeting? One day she will be openly worshiping Satan (Rev. 13:8). Those close family members you pray for? They will be the very ones who turn you into the authorities (Luke 21:16). Those conservative pundits you admire? One day they will be calling for your execution (Rev. 6:9-11). That is where humanity is heading.

Considering the rapidity of the changes we are witnessing and the shocking way people are reacting to them, one must

conclude that the final, terrible period of mankind's history is nearly upon us. The closer we come to that frightful time, the more we are sure to see people like Ted Bundy, James Holmes, Jared Lee Loughner and the Tsarnaev brothers emerge from the shadows to commit their diabolical crimes. What is even more disconcerting, however, is the change that is coming over "decent" citizens. It all points to the eventual demonic takeover of unredeemed mankind.

How do believers handle such foreboding predictions? First, we must live in God's reality. We cannot afford to seek escape in the world's entertainment system. Not only does it deaden the spiritual discernment so crucial for such a time, but it also puts us in the same spirit that is at the bottom of these atrocities.

Second, we must move forward in faith. Each of us has a rich history of God's love and faithfulness. When indiscriminate killings and human tragedies are occurring all around us, we must remember that the same God who has proven His trustworthiness to us in the past is on His heavenly throne, ruling sovereignly over all earth's activities. He will take us through victoriously whatever mayhem the dark lord of this world instigates.

Third, we must remind ourselves that we are citizens of heaven not earth. Whatever we face on earth is meant to better prepare us for our eternal home. Perhaps the best advice we can receive is from the One whose coming we all anticipate: "When these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Luke 21:28).

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