



IT IS WRITTEN TELEVISION PRESENTS

Revelation Speaks Peace

UNLOCKING THE SIGNS

A PLANET IN UPHEAVAL

One day the disciples came to Jesus with a burning question: They asked Him, “What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (MATTHEW 24:3) Though they asked for one sign, Jesus gave them a list of indications that would reveal the nearness of His coming. He then made a statement that is a key to the understanding of the prophecy. He said, “All of these things are the beginning of sorrows.” (MATTHEW 24:8)

I have heard scoffers proclaim that the list of events given in Matthew 24 are not signs, because the majority of the happenings described in Matthew 24 are not new. We have always had wars and rumors of war, pestilences, famines, etc. Those who take this position appear to be missing the very point Christ made in that verse. Their theory fits quite well with the King James translation of the word “sorrows.” The Greek word *odin* has a much deeper meaning. Looking it up in a Greek Lexicon, we find the following definition as the primary meaning: “To have the pains or throes of childbirth, to be in travail or labor.”

Here you see the image of a nervous first-time father to be, anxiously timing the space between his wife’s painful contractions, to determine the nearness of the delivery. The pain itself is not the signal: Only when the pains become more frequent and more intense does he *know* that the baby is about to be born.

Over the last five years, these signs have accelerated to the point where they are occurring in rapid sequence. Not only are they becoming more frequent, but they are also becoming much more intense. This clearly indicates that the final days of our suffering and the birth of a new world are upon us.

Jesus gave us signs to watch for in three general areas: the religious world, the political world and the natural world.

THE RELIGIOUS WORLD

Jesus said that when “many” come and say that they are Christ, it is an indication that we are living in the last moments before His appearing (MATTHEW 24:5, 11). In recent years, the number of people who claim to be the Messiah has escalated to the point where something like 1,200 people make that claim in North America alone—and have followings! Consider such noteworthy frauds as Charles Manson, David Koresh, Jim Jones and Marshall Applewhite—to name a few.

Additionally, much of the world of Christianity has tragically begun to slip into a “form of godliness” that denies “the power thereof” (2 TIMOTHY 3:1-5). The boundary markers of the past—markers like the authority of God’s Word and the deity of Christ—are being moved at an alarming rate. There are still millions of faithful Christians in every corner of Christianity, of course, but there has been an alarming trend in many corners toward disbelief.

THE POLITICAL WORLD

One of the given signs is wars and rumors of wars. Jesus says, “Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” (**MATTHEW 24:6, 7**). Our generation has witnessed World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Arab-Israeli Wars, the Gulf War, and war in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo, Southern and Northern Ireland, all over Africa, and too many more places to list. Paul predicted that at a time when people would be talking about peace, sudden destruction would come (**1 THESSALONIANS 5:3**).

Our Lord pointed the prophetic finger to our day and age when He spoke of “men’s hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth...” (**LUKE 21:26**) Today, our biggest fear is no longer the menacing shadow of nuclear war; it is biological weaponry that can be manufactured inexpensively by terrorists. Terrorist attacks hit a new record in 2003, and the next year they nearly tripled.

THE NATURAL WORLD

Among the signs Jesus lists here are famine, pestilence and earthquake (**MATTHEW 24:7**). Famine is at an all-time high—with four out of five children born each day into families that cannot afford to feed them. Ten thousand people a day, or more than 3.5 million people per year, die of starvation. More than 800 million people are malnourished on a planet that easily has enough for all.

Pestilence is also on the increase—with frightening new diseases like Avian Bird Flu, Ebola, SARS, West Nile Virus, and treatment-resistant strains of tuberculosis. Not only are diseases a problem, but natural disasters are also becoming commonplace. One recent *TIME* magazine cover story indicated that what used to be a “once-in-a-lifetime” catastrophe has become commonplace. *Discover* magazine (December 2004) called the year 2004 the “year of calamity” because of the sheer number of problems faced by the citizens of planet earth. In 2004, four devastating hurricanes pummeled the Gulf States in just six weeks—and then in 2005, Katrina devastated the city of New Orleans, only to be followed by Rita and Wilma in quick succession. Last year was the first time we actually *ran out of names* for hurricanes!

Jesus also mentioned a rise in earthquakes. (**MATTHEW 24:7**) Significant quakes in the last century total more than the previous 19 centuries combined. You don’t have to be a statistician or a seismologist to recognize the astounding increase in earthquakes in our time. The quake that caused the Asian tsunami was the first one to be felt by every instrument on earth—it was a 9.3 on the Richter scale, and left a gash 800 miles long in the floor of the ocean. Even veteran scientists, according to CNN, were left speechless by the sheer magnitude of this one quake.

Of course, none of these signs were meant to scare us—they were meant to keep us watching! Jesus said, in **JOHN 16:21, 22** that the moment will come when the birth pains (the “sorrows”) will have past, and we will be with Him. When that happens, our joy will so far overshadow our sorrow that we will have trouble remembering what this world was like.

In the meantime, as we wait, the gospel message continues to spread at an astounding rate. One of the greatest signs given by Jesus is found in **MATTHEW 24:14**. The gospel message will be preached in all the world. This seemed like an impossible task not too many years ago, but with modern technology the gospel message is reaching the masses. Spiritual revivals are breaking out in Africa, South and Central America. Scores of former Hindus are turning to God’s Word. In spite of fierce persecution, the church continues to grow in China. From the islands of the sea to the massive metropolitan cities, God is on the move. Prophecy is being fulfilled.

This is no ordinary time. God’s final call is going out all over this planet. Millions around the world are responding. As you see the signs unfolding, what is your response to Him?