

Jesus will return. An overview of the signs.

God gives us "signs of the times." These are prophecies that we are told to watch for, prophecies that will identify the times of the Lord's return. The Bible is full of these signs. There are about 500 prophecies in the Old Testament that relate to the Second Coming of the Messiah. In the New Testament, one out of every 25 verses is concerned with the return of Jesus. All of these signs can be trusted, though not all the interpretations of them can be!

1) The Signs of Nature

See Matthew 24:7 and Luke 21:11 particularly referring to the predicted destruction of Jerusalem, yet in Luke 21:25-27 referring to his second coming. Earthquakes, famine, pestilence, and signs in the heavens. Note that Jesus says these signs will be like "birth pangs" (Matthew 24:8) that is, they will increase in frequency and intensity as the time draws near, first for the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70, then for his return. In Acts 2:17-21 Peter quotes Joel referring to natural signs.

These signs are given little respect because people find it difficult to believe that God speaks to the world through signs of nature. Yet the Bible teaches this principle.

God dealt with the world's sin through a great flood in the days of Noah (Genesis 6).

He called the nation of Judah to repentance through a terrible locust invasion (Joel 1).

He called for the nation of Israel to repent by sending drought, wind storms, mildew, locusts, famine and pestilence (Amos 4:6-10).

The prophet Haggai pointed to a drought as evidence that God was calling the people to get their priorities in order (Haggai 1:10-11).

The New Testament begins with a special light in the heavens marking the birth of the Messiah (Matthew 2:2).

On the day that Jesus was crucified, there was three hours of darkness and an earthquake (Matthew 27:45-51).

2) The Signs of Society

See Matthew 24:12,37-39. Jesus said that society will become increasingly lawless and immoral as the time approaches for His return. In fact, He said it would become as evil as it was in the days of Noah .

Paul (2 Timothy 3:1-5) says it will be characterized by three loves:-

the love of self (humanism)

the love of money (Materialism)

the love of pleasure (hedonism)

He tells us the result of this lifestyle will be what the philosophers call nihilism, or despair.

People will become depraved (Romans 1:28), and people will call evil good and good evil (Isaiah 5:20).

3) The Spiritual Signs

There are both positive and negative spiritual signs that we are to watch for. The negative ones include the appearance of false christs and their cults (Matthew 24:5,11,24), the apostasy of the professing church (2 Thessalonians 2:3), an outbreak of Satanism (1 Timothy 4:1), and the persecution of faithful Christians (Matthew 24:9)

Anglicans losing 1,000 people per week, with Methodists closing 2 churches a week. Every 2 minutes a Christian dies for the faith - 700 people a day, equivalent to a 'Twin Towers' every 4 days.

Negative spiritual signs began to appear in the mid-19th Century when pseudo- Christian cults started forming. The Mormons, then the Jehovah's Witnesses, and then a great many more. One significant thing about this is that it was the first time such things were tolerated without fearing harsh treatment for heresy.

As society has secularized, true Christianity has come under increasing attack. Judeo-Christian values, once the foundation of Western Civilization, are now openly mocked. There are restrictions on Christian broadcasting in this country, employment legislation kicked in in October 2003 that prevents churches refusing employment to people of other faiths (the political parties gave themselves an exemption).

Positive spiritual signs include the proclamation of the Gospel to the whole world (Matthew 24:14), a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-32), and spiritual illumination to understand prophecies that have been "sealed up" until the end times (Daniel 12:4,9). We are seeing these positive signs fulfilled in our day and time. Through the use of modern technology, the Gospel has been proclaimed throughout the world in this Century, and the Bible has been translated into all major languages.

The great end time pouring out of the Holy Spirit that was prophesied by the prophet Joel has also begun. Joel called it "the latter rain" (Joel 2:23), and he said it would occur after the Jews had returned to their land. In the 1960's, came the Charismatic Movement which prompted renewal in worship and gave emphasis on, and rediscovery of, the gifts of the Spirit. York was significant in that development in this country

4) The Signs of Technology

Daniel's strange prophecy (Daniel 12:4)! Some say that there will be an explosion of knowledge in the end times and that people will move about quickly, an increase in travel. The literal meaning is to fun to and fro in a book!

The whole world will look upon two bodies lying in the streets of Jerusalem (Revelation 11:8-9).

The False Prophet will display an image of the Anti-Christ that appears to be alive (Revelation 13:15) The False Prophet require all people on earth to take the mark of the Anti-Christ in order to buy and sell (Revelation 13:16-17).

5) The Signs of World Politics

The Bible prophesies that there will be a certain pattern of world politics that will characterize the end time geopolitical map.

The focus will be the re-established state of Israel (Zechariah 12:2-3). It will be besieged by a menacing nation from the "remote parts of the north," (Ezekiel 38:2,6). There will also be a threatening nation to the East that will be capable of sending an army of 200 million namely, China (Revelation 9:13-16 and Revelation 16:12-13). A third source of danger to Israel will be the Arab nations that immediately surround it. They will covet the land and will try to take it from the Jews (Ezekiel 35:10 and 36:2).

Another key player on the world political scene in the end times will be a coalition of nations that will form a confederation centred in the area of the old Roman empire (Daniel 2:41-44, Daniel 7:7,23-24, and Revelation 17:12-13). This confederation will serve as the political base for the rise of the Anti-Christ and the creation of his worldwide kingdom (Daniel 7:8).

Other international political signs include wars and rumours of wars (Matthew 24:6), civil wars (Matthew 24:7), and general international terrorism and lawlessness (Matthew 24:12).

Conclusion

We are living on borrowed time. The signs of the times are upon us. Are you ready? If Jesus were to return today, or if you were to die today, what would happen to you?

Many people believe there is nothing that can be known about the timing of the Lord's return because Jesus said He would return like a thief in the night (Matthew 24:42-44). But Paul makes it clear in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 that Jesus' statement does not apply to believers: *"But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief. . ."* He then explains why: *"for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober."*

We are to be ready. The lost are to be saved, the saved are to be living correctly.