

SIGNS OF THE SECOND COMING

Sane and Sensible Perspectives on the Last Days

You don't have to wait for Jesus to return to experience the peace and power of His reign. His Kingdom comes whenever we trust and obey Him as Lord. But even that can't hold a candle to what it will be like when the Light of the World returns to establish His Kingdom on earth *forever*.

There are incontrovertible signs that the long-awaited Day is closer than you might think. Prepare to be very excited by this... Jesus actually expects us to discern the "signs of the times" and these signs say we are in it!

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MAJOR SIGNS TO EXPLORE

Day vs Season

Jesus and Paul are in complete agreement on this. We will not know the "day and the hour"—the exact moment of the Lord's Return—but we will know and recognize the "times and the seasons" that lead up to that moment. They both say that unbelieving world around us will be taken by surprise, but we will see the great Day coming and be ready for it. If we stay awake and keep our (spiritual) eyes open!

Four Absolutes to Observe

Amidst all the confusing reports and contradictory teachings that surround the Last Days, it is a great comfort to know that there are some basic truths that can be known for absolute certain. These four truths give key insights into the times we live in and provide a very handy framework to surround all the mysterious pieces of this fascinating puzzle.

Three Unprecedented Signs

Many of the signs Christians give as indications that Jesus is coming soon are not at all convincing to unbelievers. Such things as weather events, or political crisis, or moral degeneration have always been happening somewhere on the earth (just as Jesus said they would). However, there are unprecedented signs—stupendous happenings



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prophesied in scripture—that are taking place now which had never taken place before. And these signs silence even the skeptics.

Jewish Signs of Jesus' Return

It is a mark of God's faithfulness that He never forgets, but always fulfills, His promises and His purposes. Long before Jesus came to earth, God chose the Jewish people to be in a unique covenant relationship with Himself. This was certainly intended for their benefit, but also for ours. Ultimately the long-awaited Savior would come to them, then through them to us. Guess what? He is getting things ready to do it again! And His own beloved first covenant believers are already playing a major role.

Gospel Signs of Jesus' Return

Jesus gave us this sign, but Peter explained it. He wrote in 2 Peter 3:1-9 that the Father is in no hurry to bring things to a quick close to the expanding message of the gospel, because He doesn't want anyone to be perish, but all to come to repentance. For that to happen the gospel has to be preached to all the world. That day is coming at us like a freight train...but there is more to this gospel sign than simply getting the word out.

Global Signs of Jesus' Return

When the Bible was being written the "world" to its authors was no larger than the Mediterranean basin and outlying provinces, mostly under Roman control. Before the entire world could be organized into anything like the unified whole pictured in the Book of Revelation, it first had to be explored, then subdued. When these signs were given, they were unthinkable possibilities; now they are everyday realities. Well, almost all...

A Convergence of Calamities

Occasional disasters have sadly been a fact of life all over the planet. In our generation, however, we have never seen a volcano explode with anything like the climate changing force of Tambora in Indonesia in 1815 which caused "the year without summer" even in the United States. As for outbreaks of disease, the influenza pandemic following World War I killed more than the great war itself—an estimated 20 to 40 million people worldwide. Nevertheless, there is something about the calamities of our day which proclaim that the "End of Days" is at our doorstep.

Sign of the Seventh Year

Seven is a lovely number in the Hebrew/Biblical way of numbering things. It stands for completion and for rest. Is it possible that this number also provides a key to understanding the timing of the Last Days? Without getting too deep into the complex world of numerology, is there something simple, yet powerful, that the number seven might reveal to us about the days we are in?



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CHAPTER ONE

DAY AND HOUR VS TIMES AND SEASONS

Jesus and Paul are in complete agreement on this. We will not know the “day and the hour”—the exact moment of the Lord’s Return—but we can know and recognize the “times and the seasons” that lead up to that moment. They both say that the unbelieving world around us will be taken by surprise, but we who believe will see the great Day coming and be ready for it. If we stay awake and keep our (spiritual) eyes open!

"But concerning **that day or that hour**, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." Mark 13:32-33 ESV

Now concerning **the times and the seasons**, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. 1 Thessalonians 5:1

A Crystal-Clear Warning

The clearest warning against setting an exact date for the return of the Lord is given in this passage by Jesus Himself. He says that even He doesn’t know! That should have settled the question, but it didn’t. Embarrassing pronouncements of deceived believers (who thought that they knew better than Jesus) have littered two thousand years of Church history. Inevitably, the slow passage of time proved them all resoundingly wrong. Nevertheless, unheeding people continue to bet against the Word of the Lord.



These reckless date-setters seem to be proliferating in our own day. This is itself a sign of the “time and season” we are in. Jesus told us that the season of “[The Birth Pains](#)” leading up to “[The Great Tribulation](#)” would be marked by ungrounded rumors about His Return (Matthew 24). In a way, then, the increase in date setting is understandable. Excitement is mounting. Many in the Body of Christ sense that we are entering the Last Days. We would not be at all surprised if Jesus comes in our lifetime. Are we close enough to it to predict that Day’s arrival?



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A Better Way Forward

As a practical measure, we would be far better off trying to understand if we are in the Birth Pains and, if so, just when do we transition from those days into the Tribulation. Since Jesus told us that He was coming at the end of the Great Tribulation (see Matthew 24), that would put us on the timeline! Unfortunately, one popular theory about the Last Days completely negates any possibility of watching the timeline as a way of gauging the Lord's Return. Pre-tribulation rapture enthusiasts believe that Jesus could show up at any moment. Naturally, this encourages a lot of wild speculation and date setting. If there are no rules, then anything is possible.

But Jesus gave us the rules. Those rules limit—as they are meant to—many of the unknowns which would otherwise surround His Return. He has given us a timeline. He calls it the “signs of the times” and the rule is to watch for it. Remember, He was not pleased that people didn't pay enough attention to the signs which marked His first coming. This timeline that marks His Second Coming has both a complex and a remarkably simple dimension. The simple side of the timeline is that His Return will come at the very end of the Great Tribulation, which in turn follows right on the heels of the Birth Pains. It is only the exact nature and order of the internal features of those two events which can become complex.

The Parable of the Fig Tree

With these considerations in mind, listen to what Jesus has to say in the parable of the fig tree:

28 "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 **So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates.** 30 Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. 32 **"But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows,** not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come." Mark 13:28-33 ESV

By this we can see that just as the leafing out of the fig tree tells us that the summer harvest is near, so the signs that Jesus provides should let us all know that His Return is close, even “at the very gates.” Not everyone will know this, of course. Only those who listen to His words and pay attention to the signs will have this legitimate expectancy about the Day that's coming. Even so, He goes on to warn that the exact day and hour will remain unknown, presumably right up to the very end.

The analogy is a good one. It can be extended in two ways. Even in summer, the exact day and hour of the harvest is not known until it arrives, but you're looking for those figs to get ready. Likewise, the exact day that marks the end of summer's warmth is not known until it comes, but you know when summer is winding down. Everyone in the



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summer season knows that those days are drawing near—and they're watching. But, if it's not summer yet, they have no right to expect those days to suddenly arrive.

A Summary of Jesus' Teaching

When it comes to the timing of His return, we can see by this that Jesus makes a clear distinction between signs that are clearly meant to show believers that His Return is drawing near, and the day and hour which will remain a hidden thing. He fully expects that we will know that it is near, but we are not to press Him for the exact moment. This foretold lack of exactness is why our new life is characterized by awaiting His return with an eager watchfulness. But what we should be watching for is the season. Once the right season arrives—and we know we are in it—the day will inevitably come!

- 1) Dates and hours—the exact moment of His Coming is withheld from all.
- 2) Times and seasons—the near approach of His Coming will be known by many.

Jesus' Teaching Repeated by Paul

The teaching of Paul lines up perfectly with the teaching of Jesus. For people of the world there will be a complacent attitude that life is going on as usual. Unaware of "the times and the seasons," they will not be watching and preparing for the return of Christ. Instead, they will be surprised and overwhelmed like people suddenly awakened (too late!) by a thief in the night. But it is quite different for people of faith who have no need of further instruction concerning the return of the Lord. The clear implication is that they will be awake and alert to the times and seasons and will not be surprised when the Day finally arrives.

1 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. 2 For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 4 But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. 5 For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. 6 So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 ESV

Now that we know these things, we won't have to be in darkness either. We can watch for the season of Birth Pains, fully expecting it to transition into the Tribulation. As the Tribulation progresses, we will all be looking with increased urgency and expectancy for the Day of the Lord's Return. By then, these considerations of timing will have become a countdown, as one event of the Tribulation after another unfolds. Our spiritual eyes will be scanning the horizon of prophesied time. As the Tribulation deepens and darkens, we will know with an absolute assurance that the Day of our deliverance is a mere matter of days away.



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CHAPTER TWO

FOUR ABSOLUTES TO OBSERVE

Amidst all the confusing reports and contradictory teachings that surround the Last Days, it is a great comfort to know that there are some basic truths that can be known for absolute certain. These four truths give key insights into the times we live in and provide a very handy framework to surround all the mysterious pieces of this fascinating puzzle. Although these absolutes are scattered generously throughout the teachings of Jesus and the apostles, we can see them gathered together in Peter's second letter.

Peter not only prophesies these things, but his letter carries an ominous sense of urgency that the church not lose sight of these basics. He wants believers to know for certain that “the predictions”



of the prophets and the Lord Himself will come true, even though the Last Days will be filled with “scoffers.” This means that believers should “be diligent” and “take care” so they won’t be swept up and carried away by “the error” of the unbelievers surrounding them. Scoffers and rumors will abound in the Last Days, but faithful people can and should remain calm, certain and watchful.

1 This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, 2 that you should **remember the predictions of the holy prophets** and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, 3 knowing this first of all, that **scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing**, following their own sinful desires... 14 Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, **be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace...** 17 You therefore, beloved, **knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people** and lose your own stability. 2 Peter 3:1-3, 14, 17 ESV

Two Sets of Two

These four absolutes pair off nicely. If we are faithful believers, the first pair has to do with what we can know with absolute certainty about the Lord and ourselves. His faithfulness requires our watchfulness. The second pair shows us the two sides of what we can expect from the unknowing and/or unbelieving people around us. Their foolishness will spread errors of all kinds. The increasing intensity of scoffing and rumors



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around us is, therefore, a telling sign of the times we are living in. It may not be as unprecedented and incontrovertible as other signs we will look at, but because it was correctly predicted about the Last Days, it deserves to be mentioned with honor.

We can know these four things with absolute certainty.

1) Jesus Will Return. This grand promise will come true. This is our base line for understanding everything else. If we doubt this in the slightest, we would shift to the wrong side of history and lose our privileged position of being a people in the know. What we know is stupendous. The last recorded words of Jesus in the Bible are, "Surely, I'm coming quickly." The Early Church had the urgency and the expectancy that belong to those words. They got that part of it right, but they got the timing wrong. It will fall to our generation to walk out the order of events in God's timing. Nevertheless, this promise and it's long delay lead directly into the other three absolutes.

2) We Must Watch. Because Jesus is certain to return, we of all people need to be on the lookout. Therefore, we are told repeatedly by Jesus and all the apostles to be on guard, to be at watch, to be alert. This too is certain. What could be worse than to be doing the wrong thing, heading in the wrong direction, and have the Lord suddenly appear? Who wants to be caught like "the wicked servant" Jesus described? Besides, in the context of the dangerous days that precede His Return, we need to be watching for safety's sake as well as for taking part in the Harvest. Still, the best reason for watching is looking for any sign that our heart's True Love is about to appear.

Although we are expected--by the Lord---to know these things with clarity, the world around us will not. Expect that there will be an increase of skeptics and scoffers who don't believe Jesus is coming at all. Period. However, there will also be an increase of confused and conflicting reports by those who believe, but don't have clarity.

3) Scoffers Will Come. There will be scoffers. Peter says to know this "first of all" that scoffers will come. Indeed, they will. They are already here. Even some Christians are saying, "We heard about His Return, but it never happened. Things are going on as usual." But they're wrong! Ironically, all these scoffers are themselves signs. Astoundingly, the closer we get to the time of Jesus' Return, the more the scoffers will increase. This will be due to the heightened awareness within the Body of Christ that the Last Days are real and that they are really upon us. But unbelievers (and blinded Christians) won't have a clue. They will seek out fresh reasons to ridicule the growing Christian witness, rather than give in to it. For that would mean repenting of their own wrong ways and joining us.

4) Rumors Will Abound. There will be rumors and false expectations going off like popcorn. Just as scoffing will increase due to the unbelievers around us, so too, wild rumors will increase due to the misguided among us. The closer the Last Days come, the greater will be the expectancy, excitement and anxiety. Those who believe the



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scriptures, but lack a well-grounded understanding, will run with whatever fanciful ideas occur to them. Ungoverned souls will spread "errors." Jesus emphasized this, so we need to pay attention to His warning. He said specifically, "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it" (Matthew 24:23). We need to know for certain that what excitable people will be saying, will usually be foolishness. Calm and settled souls rarely start or spread rumors.

The Picture within this Frame

With these absolutes in mind, we have a clearer picture of what to expect in the days ahead. No matter what, we need to stick to our rock-solid belief that Jesus is indeed coming soon. This in turn means we need to stay watchful like no generation before us, for the signs are growing in clarity and intensity that the time is short. At the same time, the unbelieving world will do its best to ridicule us as nut jobs and misfits. In their eyes we will be seen as clinging to long-unproven beliefs, resisting progress (aka. the mark), rather than living in the "real" world like sensible people. They're blind, but it won't help our position to have lots of misguided believers running around spreading foolish and half-baked rumors, easily proven false when they fail to occur. This will only add to the scoffing! So, let us be prepared for that, too, and not "lose our own stability."



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CHAPTER THREE

UNPRECEDENTED AND INCONTROVERTIBLE SIGNS

Many of the signs Christians give as indications that Jesus is coming soon are not at all convincing to unbelievers. They're not even convincing to many of us. Such things as weather events, or political crisis, or moral degeneration have always been happening somewhere on the earth (just as Jesus said they would). However, there are unprecedented signs—stupendous happenings prophesied in scripture—that are taking place now which had never taken place before. And these signs silence even the skeptics.

2 But he answered them, “When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’ 3 In the morning, ‘It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ **Hypocrites!** You know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but **you can’t discern the signs of the times!** Matthew 16:2-3 WEB

Read and Heed the Signs!

Judging by the strength of this rebuke, it is evident that Jesus fully expected everyone to be able to read the “signs of the times” the first time He came to earth. Recall that there were many prophecies about Messiah’s birth, life, work and death recorded in the Hebrew scriptures. Still, many Jewish believers didn’t recognize Him as Messiah, nor did any of them understand what had been foretold about His true calling.

Zoom forward to our day. There are vastly more prophecies and far more astonishing signs pointing to His Return, than to His first visit. This is not merely an addendum to the cross. This

is the beginning of the fulfilment of all that death and resurrection began. He is returning to accomplish nothing short of the “restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21). What will He say of this generation, if we don’t read and heed the signs we’ve been given? Fortunately, certain of the signs are so fresh on the scene and so marvelous in nature that they carry a power to convince like nothing else we’ve seen.



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Unique and Unarguable Signs

These signs are unique. None of these signs were in place prior to the middle of the past century. This means that until very recently, no one looking for Biblical signs of the Lord's return could have said His Return was drawing near—not without ignoring scripture. None of these signs had even begun to occur until just over a hundred years ago. On the other hand, the signs of the "Birth Pains"—wars and natural disasters, for instance—have always been with us. These never have been. They are utterly unprecedented as signs of the Second Coming. Many of them are also unprecedented as never-before-seen historical events.

The recent appearance of these signs makes them extraordinary, but it also makes them unarguable. Sure, some skeptics will continue to scoff, but any honest observer would have to admit how astounding it is that so many prophecies from thousands of years ago exactly describe our times. And that they include things about our times that would have been unthinkable realities to those prophets.

Such a startling congruence of ancient prophecy and present events just doesn't happen in ordinary history. This makes them incontrovertible. How can anyone argue against such a mountain of evidence? Even so, it may not convince unbelievers that it was our God who made the prophecies and who even now is fulfilling them. But they cannot deny the congruence, even if they choose to seek some other explanation for it. (Good luck with that!)

Solid Evidence for Believing

For Christians, however, the convergence of these signs points inexorably to the knowledge that Jesus said His Church would have about the season of His Return. Most Christians believe deep down that these are the Last Days. These signs give us clear, solid Biblical evidence for that innate belief. Their "sudden" appearance in our generation is nothing short of miraculous. In every case, these signs represent prophecies in scripture that for two thousand years had seemed, not only distant, but unimaginable. Now, there are not only visible, they are racing towards completion right before our eyes!

These "unprecedented and incontrovertible" signs fall under three main headings: Jewish Signs, Gospel Signs, and Global Signs. Each of these groups contain numerous signs each.

1) [Jewish Signs](#). It is a mark of God's faithfulness that He never forgets, but always fulfills, His promises and His purposes. Long before Jesus came to earth, God chose the Jewish people to be in a unique covenant relationship with Himself. This was certainly intended for their benefit, but also for ours: Ultimately the long-awaited Savior would come to them, then through them to us. Guess what? He is getting things ready to do it again! And His own beloved first covenant believers are already playing a major role.



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2) [Gospel Signs](#). Jesus gave us this sign, but Peter explained it. He wrote in 2 Peter 3:1-9 that the Father is in no hurry to bring things to a quick close because He doesn't want anyone to be perish, but all to come to repentance. For that to happen the gospel has to be preached to all the world. That day is coming at us like a freight train... but there is more to this gospel sign than simply getting the word out.

3) [Global Signs](#). When the Bible was being written the “world” to its authors was no larger than the Mediterranean basin and outlying provinces, mostly under Roman control. Before the entire world could be organized into anything like the unified whole pictured in the Book of Revelation, it first had to be explored, then subdued. When these signs were given, they were unthinkable possibilities; now they are everyday realities. Well, almost all...

An Orderly Flow of Events

These signs are ordered in this way for a reason. Our scriptures tell us that the gospel is to the Jews first (Romans 1:16). Curiously, the Jewish signs began appearing first, then the others followed. Not only that, but the prophecies concerning “The Day of the Lord” preceded the New Testament prophecies about the Last Days and speak much about God's future dealings with His first chosen people.

In this sense, the redemption coming to us all through the Lord's Return is for the Jews first. We Gentile believers would do well to honor their position in the heart and plans of the Lord. Through the Jews—through Jesus—this gospel came to us Gentiles and we in turn must pass it on to all the world. Those gospel signs are now taking place within the context of a world that is rapidly being transformed globally, not entirely for the better. The Jews. The Gospel. The Globe. That's the unfolding progression of salvation, culminating soon in the Lord's Return.

There Are Other Signs

In addition to these three major categories of unique and unarguable signs, there are others that can be named. Jesus foretold signs of what He called the “Birth Pangs” which would come before the terrible ordeal of the Great Tribulation. These are emerging through “[A Convergence of Calamities](#)” taking place in our day. This sign can be debated, so it can't be added to the top three for that reason. Nevertheless, it carries a lot of weight once you have seen them. The other sign is elegant in design and readily appealing to Christians, but by its nature could hardly convince a non-believer. It's called “[The Sign of the Seventh Year](#).” To these other signs may be added in the days ahead, as future events bring ancient prophecy into clearer focus.



CHAPTER FOUR

JEWISH SIGNS OF JESUS' RETURN

It is a mark of God's faithfulness that He never forgets, but always fulfills, His promises and His purposes. Long before Jesus came to earth, God chose the Jewish people to be in a unique covenant relationship with Himself. This was certainly intended for their benefit, but also for ours: Ultimately the long-awaited Savior would come to them, then through them to us. Guess what? He is getting things ready to do it again!

Unprecedented Jewish Signs

The Jewish people were chosen to be a sign, a pointer to the invisible reality of God and His otherwise inscrutable ways. Not just a sign, but also a reality—the visible expression of God's life and saving love in the world. Out of the very life of Israel has come everlasting life through their Messiah and ours. Jesus will forever be a Jewish man. He is fully God, but in His humanity, He was and remains Jewish.

They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the

patriarchs, and **from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ** who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen. Romans 9:4-5 ESV



For many benighted centuries these first-chosen ones seemed, perhaps even to themselves at times, to be a warning sign: "At all costs avoid God's disfavor!" Tevye in "The Fiddler on the Roof," joked half-seriously, "I know, I know. We are Your chosen people. But, once in a while, can't You choose someone else?" In the world's eyes, their light was buried under bushel baskets of misunderstanding, suspicion and prejudice that we heaped upon them. All this is changing, changing so suddenly and dramatically that it is breath-taking to behold.

The Jewish people *in one generation* have gone from being obscure and despised on the fringes of every country, to being in command of one of the most dynamic nations in the world. Their scientists have garnered a preponderance of Nobel Prizes out of all proportion to their numbers. They are world-class leaders in technology and medicine as well as science. Their economy consistently outperforms that of their beleaguered



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neighbors. Yet, all of this pales in comparison to the role the Lord has chosen for them in the Last Days. The Returning King of the Earth will set up His throne and rule from Jerusalem in the heart of a restored Israel!

Naturally enough, with that kind of future intended, the signs associated with modern Israel are, perhaps, the greatest evidence the Lord can give us of His preparations to return soon.

1) The Re-gathering of the Jews

The return of Jews to the land promised by God is a modern miracle. It also set the End Times clock in motion. The Lord promised the land to Abraham and his descendants forever. Every Christian knows this. Less well known is the sheer number of prophecies in the Old Testament which foretold a vast dispersal of the Jews following the loss of their homeland—that, and the subsequent work of the Lord which would restore them. Always, this restoration was couched in terms of “the latter days.” Jesus proclaimed the same things.

They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, **until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.** Luke 21:24 ESV

How were the Jews scattered? And why? The Roman Empire was the agent both of Israel’s destruction and the Jewish dispersal. If you asked them, they would have said the nation was ungovernable. The First Jewish War began as a revolt. The Romans crushed it in typically brutal manner with the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple (70 AD). The Second Revolt of Judea (132-135 AD) was the last straw. In putting down the rebellion led by Bar Kokhba, the Romans razed Jerusalem, desecrated the Temple mount and raised a Roman city in its place. Jews of Judea were either killed, exiled or sold into slavery. The centuries-long diaspora had begun. This, too, was prophesied by a despondent Jesus:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, **your house is left to you desolate.**" Matthew 23:37-38

A Slow Then Sudden Return

For well over a millennium and a half, Jews of the Diaspora prayed with yearning hearts to see a return to the land. No doubt the nearly universal persecution they experienced compounded their anguish at being outcasts and wanderers. Even so, they proved reluctant to leave the relative “security” of the ghetto for an uncertain future. Theodore Hertzl, the founder of modern Zionism, correctly read the signs of antisemitism in the late 1800s. He called for European Jews to return to the Land, but the response was a



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trickle. Europe was civilized and safe. Far too few realized that the Zionists were the prophesied “fishers.” The Nazi “hunters” came afterward.

But 'As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them.' For **I will bring them back to their own land** that I gave to their fathers. "Behold, I am sending for **many fishers**, declares the LORD, and they shall catch them. And **afterward I will send for many hunters**, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the clefts of the rocks. Jeremiah 16:15-16 ESV

In the aftermath of the Holocaust and World War, the Zionist movement, led by David Ben-Gurion, grew ever more determined to regain Israel for the Jews. Even the Allied powers knew about the death camps, yet refused to bomb the rail lines leading to them. If the Jews were to survive in such a hostile world, they vowed they would never go meekly to the slaughter again, as so many had in the gas chambers. Many lost all faith that they could count on God. They could only count on themselves. Sadly, just when Israel was reborn, their ancient faith lay in grave (for all but the Orthodox). To this day the majority of Israelis are adamantly secular, even if avowedly ethnic, in their outlook and allegiance.

Of course, the Lord has plans for a far fuller restoration than land. They have an ancient spiritual inheritance He intends to renew. For now, the Jews are in their Holy Land once again. That is—in itself—a massive sign of the Last Days!

2) The Restoration of the Hebrew Language

Of all the stupendous, amazing signs of His Return that the Lord gives through His first chosen people, this one probably has the least impact on geo-political events. But it is no less dazzling. When in the full course of human events has a once-dead language ever been successfully brought back to life? To be sure, Latin and Greek are still taught, but outside the walls of the Vatican Latin is never spoken. And the Greek of Greece is not the original tongue so eloquently written by Paul. Even the English of Shakespeare is practically a closed book to his linguistic descendants. In recent times, the Irish Republic launched a heroic attempt to bring back ancient Gaelic. It failed.

Yet, Israel speaks Biblical Hebrew once again. Let that sink in. They not only speak Hebrew—a language kept alive solely for religious study and ritual as Latin and Greek were. They speak it in pure form! This is even more remarkable when we recall the centuries, no millennia, of dis-use and misuse. The Hebrew kept alive by the Yeshivas (schools) inevitably suffered in isolation. In Jerusalem for instance, the people spoke Yiddish, French or Arabic, not Hebrew. When Hebrew was required for intercommunication it was a form of Medieval Hebrew, an outmoded and degraded version of the Biblical original. God had promised something far better.



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"For at that time **I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech**, that all of them may call upon the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord."
Zephaniah 3:9 ESV

A Very Determined Hero

The Lord used a resourceful man from Eastern Europe to accomplish this modern resurrection. Born Eliezer Perelman in Lithuania in 1858, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda caught the Zionist vision and emigrated to the Holy Land. He worked tirelessly to create a thoroughly modern Hebrew dictionary and to promote Hebrew as the language of instruction in schools. Sensing that this could never accomplish the goal, he and his wife, Deborah Jonas came up with a bold plan. Speaking only Hebrew in the home and isolating their family life from the outside, they brought up their son, Ben-Zion, as the first native speaking Hebrew child in almost two thousand years.

Now, *sabras* (native born Israelis) all speak Biblical Hebrew in a "pure" form, just as their God had promised so many years ago through His prophet Zephaniah. For those who have grown up with the reality of modern Israel this may seem inconsequential—expected as a matter of course that a nation would speak its ethnic tongue. Students of history and of prophecy, however, can see it for the astonishing miracle that it is. And move the minute hand on the Last Days clock just that much closer to the midnight hour...

3) The Restoration of the Jewish Nation

The nation of Israel was twice ruthlessly destroyed by the Romans—partially in 70-72 AD and completely in 130 AD. For almost two thousand years, the forlorn dream of Jews in exile from the land was to return to the land as sojourners. But few would have believed national restoration was possible. Then, first by the Zionist movement beginning in the late 19th century and later by Nazi persecution the Jewish people began returning to the Land. The lineage of the priesthood is identified and available to be restored and many of the furnishings for a rebuilt temple have already been prepared, making the restoration of temple worship in Jerusalem a real possibility—apart from the political chaos that such a move would launch.

"Before she was in labor she gave birth; before her pain came upon her she delivered a son. Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? **Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment?** For as soon as Zion was in labor she brought forth her children." Isaiah 66:7-8 ESV

Then say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and bring them to their own land. And **I will make them one nation in the land**, on the mountains of Israel. Ezekiel 37:21 ESV

The day that the British Mandate for Palestine expired, Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, declared independence. With the vote of the United Nations in its favor, Israel was reborn in a single day—May 14, 1948—just as the Lord prophesied through Isaiah. To top it off, Isaiah's exact words were fulfilled. Israel as a nation was “brought forth” and immediately afterward the “labor pains” of war began. The surrounding Islamic nations of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia all declared war the same day that Israel became a nation recognized by the world's governing authority.

4) The Restoration of National Unity

Another marvel about the founding of Israel is one we might easily take for granted. The nation that emerged in 1948 was a united whole, a single nation. Well, that's normal isn't it? To this day, nations arise with a united purpose; only later might they splinter and divide. Indeed, division is exactly what happened to the nation of Israel under its third king, Solomon's son Rehoboam. A disgruntled Jeroboam led the Northern Kingdom into rebellion against Judah and Benjamin in the south. That heart-breaking division remained right through the final destruction of Israel and the deportation of the ten northern tribes by Assyria in 722 BC.

When modern Israel declared its independence in 1948 no trace of that former division remained. Centuries of persecution during the Diaspora (dispersal) united the Jewish people with a shared dream of national restoration: “Next year in Jerusalem!” to be sure, political and religious differences of opinion abound, many with vehement intensity, but a common bond continues to hold the nation together. That common bond may have more to do with “us against the world”—the nations which seek their destruction—than with a shared faith in their national God. Nevertheless, this marvel of a united Israel was exactly predicted by Ezekiel over 2500 years ago.

Then say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and bring them to their own land. 22 And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. And one king shall be king over them all, **and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms.** Ezekiel 37:21-22 ESV

5) Jerusalem and Israel in World Politics

Only a hundred and fifty years ago, who would have thought that Jerusalem could ever again have a role to play in world politics? Who could have conceived that it would become the very epi-center of global politics, a fault line setting the nations of the world in an uproar? The answer, of course, is no one except (perhaps) students of Bible prophecy. Even they must have been scratching their heads. Certainly, as shrew an observer as Mark Twain didn't see it coming *at all*. Writing of his 1867 visit to the Holy Land, Twain marveled with undisguised scorn at the “romantic” accounts bandied about by religious tourists.



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To find the sort of solitude to make one dreary come to Galilee for that... these unpeopled deserts, these rusty mounds of barrenness, that never, never, never do shake the glare from their harsh outlines... that melancholy ruin of Capernaum, this stupid village of Tiberias, slumbering under its six funereal palms... we never saw a human being on the whole route [to Tabor]. Mark Twain, "The Innocents Abroad"

Twain was hardly alone in his assessment. Others saw it too. Ten years earlier (in 1857) the British Consul in Palestine reported that the entire land was largely uninhabited, that its greatest need was repopulation. As late as 1895, French author Pierre Loti described a dismal scene: "As elsewhere, as everywhere in Palestine, city and palaces have returned to the dust... This melancholy of abandonment, weights on all of the Holy Land" (Joan Peters, "From Time Immemorial" p 161). These men would be shocked and astonished by present events we largely take for granted. Their writings preserve for us an undeniable record of how stunningly and swiftly an Invisible Hand has overthrown the old order. Exactly as it was prophesied!

The oracle of the word of the Lord concerning Israel: Thus declares the Lord, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the spirit of man within him: "Behold, **I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of staggering to all the surrounding peoples.** The siege of Jerusalem will also be against Judah. On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves. And all the nations of the earth will gather against it. Zechariah 12:1-4 ESV

A Continuing War Against the Jews

The mandate from heaven to regather the Jews and restore their nation flew in the face of newly discovered Saudi oil. All the leading nations of the world—especially in their covert operations—conspired against Israel's formation, including the United States. This sordid story has been masterfully chronicled by John Loftus and Mark Aarons in their book, "The Secret War Against the Jews." Reading it, one is amazed that the Zionists were able to pull it off in the face of such intense international opposition. Indeed, only a great God could foretell it and accomplish it!

The average post war citizen in the US and Europe wanted the Jews to have their homeland for the sake of the Holocaust. Nevertheless, powerful people in their governments were willing to sell out the Zionists to gain favor with the Saudis. As a matter of historic record, the first Saudi king, Ibn Saud, intensely hated Jews and vigorously resisted all efforts to restore them to their land. The deadly infection of hatred spread throughout Islam. Hence, from the 1930s on, a witches' brew of antisemitism, Arab oil and terrorist violence has turned Jerusalem into a "cup of staggering." Israel's emergence and survival are truly miraculous.



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Positioned to See Him

This miraculous Jewish sign is all the more compelling because Zechariah linked it to the ultimate realization by the Jews that Jesus is their Messiah. This Jewish nation, surrounded by enemies and at the center of world events, would see “him whom they have pierced.” Present day Israel will see Jesus return and “weep bitterly” to behold that He is the Messiah they rejected. This prophecy is a highly focused sign of the nearness of our Lord’s Return. Israel not only had to be reborn for this to take place—for them to be in position to “look on” Him. It also had to become “a cup of staggering.” We are there!

"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, **when they look on me**, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and **weep bitterly over him**, as one weeps over a firstborn." Zechariah 12:10 ESV

6) The Conversion of the Jews

Previous centuries have seen forced Jewish converts to Christianity who practiced their Jewish faith secretly and willing, believing converts who were then assimilated into Gentile Christianity. The rise of Messianic Jews (Jews who retain their Jewish heritage and identity when coming to faith in Christ) in the past few decades marks a shift towards the end of the age of the Gentiles. For more on this see “[Gospel Signs of Jesus’ Return](#).”

This Story Is Not Over

Many more prophecies regarding the Jews remain to be fulfilled. And they will be. Tragically, however, not all the future events will be as positive as those which have already occurred. Unbridled persecution, catastrophic wars, and massive relocations are yet to come. By the time we see those signs, the last of the Last Days will be mercifully close indeed. We have been given these so that we can know—know with an absolute certainty—that we have already entered days the prophets foresaw. The days immediately before Messiah’s Return.



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CHAPTER FIVE

GOSPEL SIGNS OF JESUS' RETURN

Jesus gave us this sign, but Peter explained it. He wrote that the Father is in no hurry to bring things to a quick close because He doesn't want anyone to perish, but all to come to repentance. For that to happen the gospel has to be preached to the entire world. That day is coming at us like a freight train...

Unprecedented Gospel Signs

Peter foresaw that the return of the Lord Jesus would be significantly delayed. He saw, too, that this unexpectedly long delay would give scoffers additional reason for doubting that Jesus would come back at all. It might even cause sincere believers to question this epic promise of the Lord. According, he gives us two important insights into the timing of the Second Coming.



Knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say,

"Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." ... But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that **with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day**. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, **not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance**. 2 Peter 3:3-4, 8-9 ESV

We who are enmeshed in time easily "overlook" the reality that God isn't. Because God is outside our time and space, His view of time's passage is radically different from ours. For Him a thousand years is as one day. That Jesus said He was coming back "soon" just doesn't sound the same to His ears as it does to ours! However, there is a further mystery here that is well worth exploring. It is the "Sign of the Seventh Year" and it relates directly to the timeline of the Lord's Return.

The Father's Heart of Love

By far the more endearing reason for the delay is the Father's Heart. Jesus told us, "God so loves the world" that He doesn't want anyone to be lost. Grace shows up here



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as God's gift of time—time that allows everyone the chance to repent. Well, "OK," the Early Church may have said. "Give us a generation to get the message out." To their understanding the world was largely confined to the Mediterranean basin—well within their reach. They had no practical concept of the immense size of the earth, or that it was already covered by far-flung nations entirely unknown to them. Ah, but not unknown to our Father!

That's why the long delay makes perfect sense. The gospel must go out to the whole world, not just the ones who first received it. That kind of universal evangelism was a practical impossibility before the invention of modern means of transport. Interestingly, this unavoidable delay on our part in reaching around the world, would give God even more time-opportunity to bring "many sons and daughters to glory" (Hebrews 2:10 NIV). Just consider this: the population of the world then was about 300 million. Now it is over seven billion.

Our God is after an immense harvest! All the signs are saying the time is ripe for the greatest in-gathering of souls the world has ever seen.

1) The Gospel to the World

For the first time in world history, the gospel is on the verge of reaching every living person. This is all the more amazing since the numbers are increasing exponentially. By the time Jesus returns there may well be more Christians alive on the earth, than have ever lived. But as quickly as the world's population has grown in recent years, technology has grown even more swiftly. New means of electronic communication have brushed aside all former limits to reaching the world.

Consider the different paths which are converging now. The "old school" method for reaching the lost required years of training for missionaries and Bible translators alike. They often sowed their entire lives into the mission overseas. This work progressed painstakingly slowly, but it is now reaching its zenith. The Bible is at last being targeted for translation into every known language (see [Wycliffe](#) translators). The gospel is also being carried by missionaries into every known people group as a witness to all the nations (see MorningStar's [Eagle Missions](#) for example). This monumental task is nearly completed.

Old School Meets New Tech

At the same time, recent developments have flooded the entire planet with astonishing new high-tech capacities to spread the gospel. The internet, satellite television, radio and cell phones span the globe, bringing the message of salvation into the very air surrounding every tribe and nation. Which will get the job done first? Probably, the answer is both! There is no way, however, for us to decide the issue. We don't even know when one individual has fairly and fully "heard" the gospel, let alone seven billion. But we are clearly getting close.



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All of this had to happen first, then the end can come. Can anyone dispute it is happening?

As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?" And Jesus answered them, "...**And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world** as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. Matthew 24:3-5,14 ESV

2) The Tabernacle of David

For the church as a whole, there is a little-known sign that has, perhaps, escaped the attention of many. Of course, it is well-known to those who are involved in it, but this is still a remnant portion compared to the whole. This gospel sign is the emergence of a worldwide prayer and praise movement. Prayer and praise that is offered before the Lord as continuous worship is prophesied of the end of the age.

In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up its ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old. Amos 9:11 ASV

"After this I will return, and **I will rebuild the tent of David** that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old." Acts 15:16-17 ESV

King David commissioned a sizable troop of worshippers and musicians to offer continuous prayer and praise at the Tabernacle in Jerusalem. Except for the century-long 24/7 prayer vigil of the Moravians at Herrnhut in Germany, the earth has rarely seen such extravagant worship sustained on the Davidic scale. Curiously, this too, is one of the things God is raising up in the earth today and restoring to the life of the church. A 24/7 worship and intercessory movement began in Kansas City, Missouri in 1999. According to founding pastor Mike Bickle, The International House of Prayer (IHOP) has inspired a hundred other prayer groups all over the world to follow their lead.

3) Messianic Jewish Believers

A long-awaited sign is finally coming to pass. The conversion of Jews at the end of the age of the Gentiles is a present reality. Previous centuries have seen forced Jewish converts to Christianity who continued to practice their Jewish faith secretly. Willing, believing converts—though rare—had no other option than to be assimilated into Gentile Christianity with a resulting loss of their Jewish heritage. Such Jewish conversions were in themselves proof that the "age of the Gentiles" was still in full swing.



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Something radically different is happening in our day. Messianic Jewish congregation can be found in most major cities. These are Jewish converts to Christian faith in Jesus, but who retain their Jewish heritage and identity. They continue to keep the Jewish festivals, their congregations are presided over by Rabbis, yet they enthusiastically worship Jesus as their Messiah. This phenomenon has not been seen on earth since the expulsion of Jewish Christians from the synagogues late in the first century following the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. Messianic Judaism began in the 1960s and has been growing rapidly ever since. It marks a dramatic shift towards the end of the age of the Gentiles.

And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree. Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, **until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.** Romans 11:23-25 ESV

They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, **until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.** Luke 21:24 ESV

Who Can Argue with these Signs?

These gospel signs are utterly unprecedented. Until this generation the gospel clearly had not reached the entire world. Now, it is covering the globe. Prior to 1999, continuous (24/7) prayer and praise simply didn't exist. It has been going on non-stop ever since then, and will continue to blossom. Only a half century ago, the phrase "messianic Jew" or "completed Jew" was unheard of. Now, the emergence of Jewish converts on a large scale and of a fully Jewish character is bringing down the curtain on the exclusive faith-hold of Gentile Christianity itself. Yet, these signs are not only unprecedented, they are incontrovertible. Who can possibly argue that Biblical prophecies of the Last Days are not being dramatically fulfilled in our day?

CHAPTER SIX

GLOBAL SIGNS OF JESUS' RETURN

When the Bible was being written the “world” to its authors was no larger than the Mediterranean basin and outlying provinces, mostly under Roman control. Before the entire world could be organized into anything like the unified whole pictured in the Book of Revelation, it first had to be explored, then subdued. When these signs were given, they were unthinkable possibilities; now they are everyday realities. Well, almost all... Some are still being moved into place by an Invisible Hand.

Unprecedented Global Signs

The Book of Revelation gives us a picture of the whole world organized against God along with signs of global deterioration. Again, these are Biblical signs that simply were not happening until the middle of the 20th century. In our day, they are an avalanche carrying us into the Last Days.

1) Environmental Signs

We now have the capacity to destroy the environment. All by ourselves we can kill life in the rivers and aquifers (springs of water); kill one third of the life in the ocean (with oil spills or worse); cause ourselves to be scorched by the sun (with the loss of the ozone layer); and spread plagues world-wide in a matter of hours (jet travel).

This means that humanity has “gained” the ability to bring catastrophic calamities upon ourselves and the entire earth. This has never happened before. Our destructive powers were limited to local disasters due to our limited technological ability. Notice how these newly acquired abilities dovetail with prophetic passages from the Book of Revelation.



The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. **A third of the waters became wormwood**, and many people died from the water, because it had been made bitter. Revelation 8:10-11 ESV



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The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing died that was in the sea. The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. Revelation 16:3-4 ESV

The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to **scorch people with fire**. They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over **these plagues**. They did not repent and give him glory. Revelation 16:8-9 ESV

An Unwitting Instrument of Judgment

It must be said that God doesn't need our "help" when it comes to judging us. The Almighty is perfectly able to do things on His own, as the above passages seem to indicate. The angels sound the trumpets or pour the bowls and calamities happen. So, it hardly matters that we have "matching" destructive abilities. The Last Days judgments could happen without any human agency involved—just as it was with Sodom and Gomorrah.

Nevertheless, in the Old Testament the Lord frequently used one nation to be the instrument of inflicting His judgment upon another. This was indeed the more frequent manner, as any reading through the major and minor prophets immediately confirms. It is, therefore, an extraordinary sign that we are now in the position of becoming an instrument for rendering judgment upon ourselves. It doesn't have to happen that way, but is it not (at least) both bizarre and deeply troubling that it could?

2) Political and Economic Signs

We now have a one world financial system. Babylon as it is pictured in the Book of Revelation looks like world capitalism corrupted by unrestrained greed. How did we get here? The history of western expansion since the Middle Ages shows that wherever commercial trade went, governmental authority followed, since safe-guarding trade required treaties. Trade treaties in turn led to military interventions to enforce them, because laws are powerless without "the sword." The conquest of India by the British and the Opium War they waged against China are outstanding examples of trade connections leading to power structures. This greed-corrupted side of commerce will come under judgment, perhaps sooner than we think.

After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. And he called out with a mighty voice, **"Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! ... and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living."** Revelation 18:1-3 ESV

World War II brought the nations of the world together in total war on an unprecedented scale. Its aftermath left the belligerent nations united in mutual interdependence through banking, industry and commerce. It also left many yearning to see a world without war.



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Out of this the United Nations emerged along with the World Bank, the World Court and (naturally enough) the UN's "police" force. We now have a one world government. Although it is still in its infancy, it is inevitably growing towards centralization of power, just as the world-wide economy is hastening towards irreversible interdependence.

The Dark Side of Globalization

The one world economic system is several steps ahead of the one world governmental system. Real authority for the world governing bodies is more *de jure*, than *de facto*. We can be sure, however, that there are powerful people who are helping "globalization" along. Some see it as the proper evolution of society necessary for the survival of humanity. Others, see it as an opportunity for their own despotic control over the world's wealth and inhabitants. We already know that this dark side will seize control with the rise of the antichrist. Signs abound that this "beast system" is already in full preparation mode. (See Update section for links.)

And they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast. And they worshiped the beast, saying, **Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with it?** And a mouth speaking great things was given to it, and blasphemies. **And authority was given to it** to continue forty-two months. Revelation 13:4-5 MKJV

Efforts continue at developing a one world religious system, also prophesied in Revelation. There are compelling signs that this could take place through the Vatican and its present vicar, Pope Francis. Like many events of this century, the formation of the beast religious system may happen swiftly, even more swiftly than the "one world order" for government. Taken together, these are unprecedented global signs clearly envisioned in the Book of Revelation of what the world would be like in the Last Days.

3) Technological Signs

The mark of the beast is easily the most talked about sign of the Last Days. It has been so for years. When I was young—back in the sixties—none of us in Christian youth fellowship could imagine why anyone would want to take such an obviously evil sign. And what would it be? Was it a tattoo? How crude! Then, bar codes came out. Now we have it! The unfolding reality is more subtle and ingenious—from the standpoint of serving the Evil One's purpose.

We now have the technological ability to put a mark (a smart chip) under the skin of the hand or the forehead so that no buying or selling can be done without the mark. That's a pretty compelling reason for taking the chip. But what will gain it favor in the beginning? The answer is identity theft. None of us saw that coming either. Identity theft was unheard of until the electronic age. Now, all of us can see in the chip a rationale for ensuring safe and secure transactions. Few of us—the Christian few—will see beyond the chip to realize that it is the forbidden mark.

Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, **to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark**, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666. Revelation 13:16-18 ESV

A Living, Breathing Image

Technology also ushered in another strange twist. In the sixties the idea of a speaking image of the beast could barely be imagined. We had posters of dictators and grainy images of Hitler on film, but it took Hollywood to lead the way. Well in advance of real technology, science fiction and special effects began bringing speaking, holographic images right before our eyes. Now, it is easy to “see” how the second beast could bring the antichrist’s image visibly to “life” all over the planet. Add to human ingenuity and creativity, the supernatural “enhancements” of spiritual darkness and you have something only John the Revelator could have seen coming!

And by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. And it was allowed **to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak** and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. Revelation 13:14-15 ESV

4) Persecution of Christians

In the West until recently, we tended to think of Christian martyrdom as a thing of the past—a tragic oddity that mercifully ended when the Roman Empire converted to Christianity in the 4th Century. Sure, there were wars of religion that bloodied Europe in the wake of the Protestant Reformation. But that was Christians killing Christians. Our idea of martyrdom was covered with the dust of history.

The sudden rise of Isis changed that gross misperception. Now we know that Christians are indeed being killed in our own day. Perversely, Christians are not only being martyred, they are actually being beheaded. We are even seeing evidence of this atavistic practice with our own eyes. This is a double confirmation of ancient prophecy! Who would ever have thought that beheadings would make a gruesome return to public view? Yet, all this was foreseen by John on Patmos.

Also I saw the souls of **those who had been beheaded** for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. Revelation 20:4 ESV



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Martyrdom on the Rise

What may still not be as widely known is that martyrdom had already been dramatically on the increase long before the rise of militant Islam. The number of Christians that have been killed in the last 100 years exceeds the total from the previous 1900 years. Millions of Christians were killed by Hitler. Millions more were murdered by the communist regimes of Stalin, Mao Zedong and other “enlightened” atheists. It’s not just politicians; it is also religious fanatics who persecute Christians. Believers in Jesus to this day suffer death at the hands of radical Hindus and Buddhists, not to mention Satanists. All of this was prophesied 2000 years ago.

Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, **who were to be killed as they themselves had been.** Revelation 6:11 ESV

Sadly, it is not over. We should all be prepared to face this and—by God’s grace and strength—face all fear of it down. According to the book of Revelation, many Christians will die during the Great Tribulation as martyrs. It will be the ultimate act of courage and devotion offered to the Lord in the most trying of times. These will “escape” the other horrors of the Tribulation and receive one of the highest honors of heaven, a martyr’s crown.

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "**These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation.** They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. Revelation 7:13-15 ESV

An Unthinkable Reversal

Fifty years ago, a world-wide persecution of Christians seemed unthinkable, fantastic. Christianity throughout the West was a major part of the glue that held civilization together. Christians and Christian leaders enjoyed a favorable position on the world’s stage. Christian morality was still held in honor. All that is rapidly changing. We did not know then that what would replace the hegemony of Christian values was not something non-Christian, which may have been benign, but a far darker thing of active menace.

The once Christian lands, in moving away from Christ, are now becoming anti-Christ. Already the Name that is above all names can hardly be mentioned in the public square anywhere in the West. Worse, those who pursue “alternative” life-styles view His scriptures as their sworn enemy. Those who believe the scriptures are vilified. This is one of the greatest “woes”: when evil is called good, good becomes evil (Isaiah 5:20). Wherever these “anti-Christians” come into political power, Christians are hounded and

harassed. Soon they could be martyred. The entire world is filling out the picture of persecution painted in the Book of Revelation.

5) The Information Age

One predicted sign of the Last Days is something that we all enjoy: the internet. Another sign just as enthusiastically pursued is world travel, whether for business or pleasure. Remarkably, Daniel foresaw both. As brilliant as Daniel was, there was no way he could have seen this coming by his own understanding. No, our present age of information and jet travel is an absolute confirmation that Daniel received genuine prophetic visions. God alone can see our future more clearly than we do our present. At the end, the angel told Daniel to seal up the prophecies he was shown until a time when knowledge would increase as well as travel. Since both are happening now, we can also expect that the Lord will soon be “unlocking” things that are still hidden in scripture about the Last Days.

“But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. **Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.**” Daniel 12:4 ESV

Putting It All Together

What can we say to these things? These global signs alone make an irrefutable case for the timeline of Last Days prophecies in the Bible. Without question these signs have all been falling into place over the last 50 years. Equally without question, none of them were even visible on the horizon 100 years ago—except for those with scripture enhanced vision. Whether the signs are environmental, economic, political or technological; whether they have to do with an increased persecution of Christians, or with the increase of information and travel—they all point dramatically to these being the days just prior to Jesus’ Return. Let’s be sure to get ready!

CHAPTER SEVEN

A CONVERGENCE OF CALAMITIES

Occasional disasters have sadly been a fact of life all over the planet. In our generation, however, we have never seen a volcano explode with anything like the climate changing force of Tambora in Indonesia in 1815 which caused “the year without summer” even in the United States. As for outbreaks of disease, the influenza pandemic following World War I killed more than the great war itself—an estimated 20 to 40 million people worldwide. Nevertheless, there is something about the calamities of our day which proclaim that the “End of Days” is at our doorstep.

4 And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. 5 For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. 6 And you will hear of **wars and rumors of wars**. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. 7 **For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.** 8 **All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.** Matthew 24:4-8 ESV

Watching for the Birth Pains

On the Mount of Olives, Jesus taught His disciples that a period He called “the Birth Pains” would precede the Great Tribulation. These are “pains, sorrows and travail, especially of childbirth” (Strong’s) which we can watch for as early signs of the more intense trouble to come. At the top of His list are wars and natural disasters, as quoted above. He continues by adding persecution, martyrdom, apostacy and betrayal, the rise of false prophets and lawlessness. That’s a lot to watch out for!

9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. 11 And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. 12 And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. Matthew 24:9-12 ESV



Some of the above should be so obvious that we'd have to be dead not to notice it. Or so it would seem. Remember the well-known example of crabs being brought to a boil? They don't seem to notice that the temperature in the pot is escalating to life-threatening degrees. It may be already so for us. Throughout Church history, the world has seen a great deal of all the above activity. The real question for us is not, "Are these birth pains happening?" Jesus said these painful events "must take place, but the end is not yet." What we can watch for are not the signs themselves, but an escalation of them.

Measuring the Birth Pains

Can the Birth Pains be measured? This is such a formidable task that we will limit this exploration to the first two categories of sorrows mentioned by Jesus, wars and natural disasters. Has there been an escalation of these events? It certainly seems that there has. Leaving aside conflicts for the moment, just consider the apparent increase of earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, mud slides, tsunamis, and volcanoes. These disasters wrench at us through the news, tugging frequently at our hearts and our purse strings. We are overwhelmed at times by the sight of such disasters happening all over the world.

Some would argue, however, that our perception of escalation is almost entirely due to the tremendous increase of media coverage that these events receive in our day. A century ago, it took days or weeks to get reports out due to the more primitive technologies available. Additionally, many tragic events happened unnoticed by the world because there simply weren't enough reporters to cover the globe. All that has changed now that any person with a cell phone can report an event to a watching world through social media.

A further complication is that the cost of natural disasters has increased dramatically. This is due not to the scale of the disasters, but to the increased value of the homes, personal property, and infrastructure involved. Nevertheless, it too creates a perception of escalating "sorrows."

What Do the Studies Show?

Perception is one thing; reality often another. In this case, our perception of escalation in natural disasters is justified by the facts on the ground. According to a report online by the Borgen Project, "the number of natural and geophysical disasters taking place each year is noticeably skyrocketing." The chart they provided shows an across the board increase of reported disasters over the past three decades.

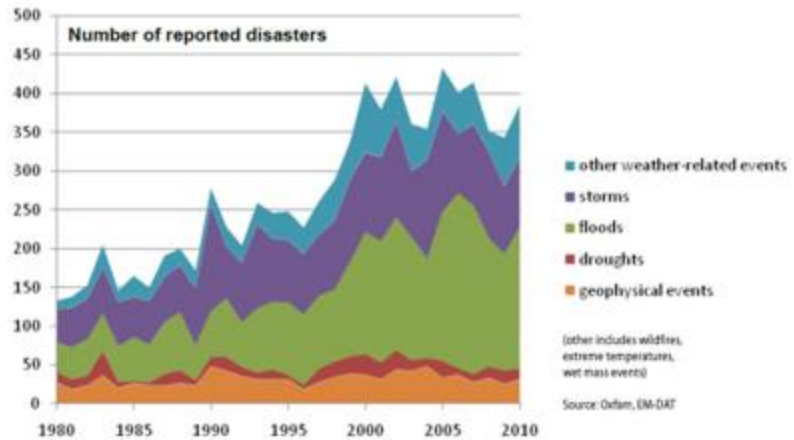
Here is an excerpt from [their report](#):

Geophysical disasters include earthquakes, volcanoes, dry rock-falls, landslides and avalanches. Climatic disasters are classified as floods, storms, tropical cyclones, local storms, heat/cold waves, droughts and wildfires.

In 1970, the average of natural disasters that were reported was 78; in 2004, this number jumped to 348.

According to AccuWeather, since 1990, natural disasters have affected 217 million people every single year.

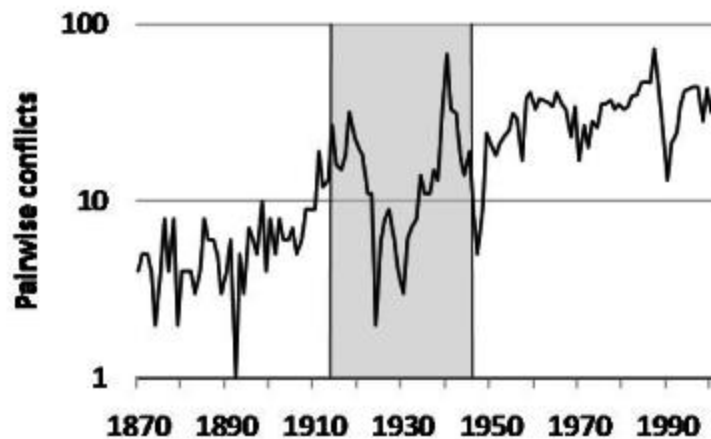
From 1980 to 2009 there was an 80 percent increase in the growth of climate-related disasters. Between 2001 and 2010, more than \$1.2 trillion was lost to the increased rates of natural disasters. This was a dramatic rise, which between 1981 and 1990 had been roughly \$528 billion.



The cause of this increase is still being studied, but scientists seem to agree that it is a combination of natural and man-made elements. For now, global warming is not seen as the sole cause. From a Christian perspective, however, we can readily imagine that there may be supernatural activity behind these prophesied trends.

What about Wars?

It turns out that wars are also increasing at an alarming rate. According to historytoday.com, armed conflict by nation states are escalating due to two factors: the pressure of economic growth and an increase of borders. Because there are now four times as many countries as there were a hundred and fifty years ago (from 47 to 187), there has been a corresponding increase of cross border wars. The evidence shows a startling increase in the number of wars between nations ("pairwise conflicts"):



The frequency of wars increased by 17% per year in the period of the First and Second World Wars, and by 31% per year during the Cold War. In the 1990s, the frequency of wars between states rose by 36% per year.

The Versailles Treaty that ended the First World War created many new nations along ethnic lines. This trend towards ethnic division increased as the colonial empires left new nation states in their wake. A fragmentation is now going on whereby nations are falling into deadly internal conflicts, as well as cross border wars. One of the driving forces for this is ethnic hatred and rivalry, sometimes going back for centuries.

Jesus predicted this very thing: “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” (verse 7 above). While kingdom (realm) does indeed indicate our modern nation states, nation (ethnos) would be better described as “ethnic groups.” The accompanying chart only shows conflicts between nations, not civil wars between ethnic groups within nations. Those numbers would likely send the graph’s arc far higher.

Putting the Signs Together

What this means is that we have not one increasing “sorrow”, but many, if not all, of the ones Jesus mentioned. Wars are increasing. So are all manner of natural disasters. Each one would have sign value in itself, but taken as a whole we have a genuine convergence. A convergence of calamities. That certainly fits the picture of the Birth Pains which Jesus outlined. But where are we on the timeline? At what point do birth pains spill over into labor pains? When do we transition from the Birth Pains to the Tribulation? Perhaps, it is still too soon (in 2017) to tell about that, but it may be the right time to say the “beginning of sorrows” has begun.



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CHAPTER EIGHT

THE SIGN OF THE SEVENTH YEAR

Seven is a lovely number in the Hebrew/Biblical way of numbering things. It stands for completion and for rest, because God rested on the seventh day, once He completed His great work of creation. Is it possible that this number also provides a key to understanding the timing of the Last Days? Without getting too deep into the complex world of numerology, is there something simple, yet powerful, that the number seven might reveal to us about the days we are living in? Peter supplies the clues that lead us into this mystery.

8 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that **with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.** 2 Peter 3:8 ESV

One Day and a Thousand Years

In his second letter, Peter establishes a principle of interpretation that we should “not overlook”: Because the Lord marks time differently that we do, for Him a thousand years is “as one day” and one day is “as a thousand years.” Notice that he is not saying, “One day equals a thousand years (and vice versa) every time you see it written in scripture.” This is a simile, not an equality, so we do not have permission to apply it slavishly across the board every time we see “day” written in scripture.

With sensible biblical interpretation, context holds important keys. Peter’s context is the Psalms. In

referencing this “fact” Peter is reminding his readers about what had already been written in the scriptures about the way the Lord sees time. Note that the context in Psalm 90 is directly connected to God’s work in creation—the first six days. God is “everlasting.” He existed long before He began creating. Even so, we are given a correspondence between one day and a thousand years for the way in which God views our time.



2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. 3 You return man to dust and say,



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"Return, O children of man!" 4 **For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.** Psalm 90:2-4 ESV

This intriguing insight can be extended in several directions. Can we take each Biblical day of creation to signify an actual thousand-year period of earth time? Some creationists take it just that way. Or, can we take this passage as an indication that the Lord limited Adam's "day" to a thousand years due to the Fall? Adam indeed died just shy of one thousand, at the ripe old age of 930. Or, can we take this correspondence and send it forward? That's how it becomes our "Sign of the Seventh"!

The Last Day and a Thousand Years

One fascinating aspect of Peter's principle is that he set it in the context of a teaching on the Last Days. That should be enough to arrest our attention. Considering Peter's closeness to Jesus, he may have had some inside information we aren't privy to. This gives us even more reason to take his analogy seriously. Therefore, it's well worth looking at the larger passage.

3 knowing this first of all, that **scoffers will come in the last days** with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. 4 They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." 5 For they deliberately overlook this fact, that **the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God**, 6 and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. 7 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. 8 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that **with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day**. 9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. 2 Peter 3:3-9 ESV

Peter, like many in the Early Church, fully expected the Lord to come soon. Nevertheless, he also foresaw that there would likely be a long delay which would give scoffers plenty of fuel for their scoffing. It is therefore, directly in connection to his thoughts about the Last Days that Peter brings out this analogy from Psalm 90 and adds to it. Not only is one day as a thousand years (Psalm 90), but a thousand years can be reckoned as one day (2 Peter). So, with the help of the good Bishop from Ireland, let's count down the "days" using those thousands!

A Biblical Countdown

Before we start our countdown to the Last Days, we need to review the sabbath principle and pause to meet the scholarly Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, James Ussher, who lived in the early 17th century. Bishop Ussher's fame rests upon his painstakingly researched chronology of the years from Adam to Christ which



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gained wide acceptance in the Church. He took 4 BC as the date of Jesus' birth and worked backwards using every Biblical lineage available to arrive at 4004 BC as the date of Adam's creation.

This chronology can be debated over details, of course. Both Johannes Kepler and Sir Isaac Newton worked with the same resources and came up with slightly different numbers. Nevertheless, almost all who have studied it, accept this timeline in broad outline. This outline gives us roughly 4000 years from Adam to Christ and now 2000 years to our own day. If we follow Peter's principle that "a day is as a thousand years" we can look back and count six completed days of redemption from the Fall of man to the present.

Sabbath Law and Our Timeline

If we combine the sabbath principle with Peter's we see something extraordinary. That principle, repeated often in scripture is that six days of work find their completion in the day of rest which follows. Seven completes the cycle of work and rest. God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) labored six days, then rested. The fourth commandment is that we do the same. Even the land itself required a seventh year of rest, following six years of cultivation. Recall just for a moment the trouble Jesus got into for breaking the Sabbath command in the eyes of the Pharisees.

15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. 16 And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered them, "**My Father is working until now, and I am working.**" John 5:15-17 ESV

We watch with astonishment at how crudely literal the Pharisees were in not even allowing a healing to take place on the day of rest. The part we sometimes overlook is that Jesus disclosed that for Him and for the Father there has been no continuing day of rest. They have both been working "until now." Since They rested after the work of creation, this can only be in reference to the new work of redemption required of Them, if They were going to rescue us from our Fall. A large part of that work would come at the cross, but from the moment Adam and Eve first sinned, God has been "at work" to rescue us from sin and its terrible consequences throughout our history.

When Will the Lord Rest?

Now, the question becomes, "When can the Lord look forward to resting from His present work of redeeming us?" The answer easily is when He Returns and brings this present age to an end. How long will He be allowed to rest? Again, the answer is easy: during the Millennial Kingdom! For one thousand years, Jesus will be with us reigning as King with absolutely no opposition from the Enemy to work against. That will be His "day" of rest. He will have the whole field to Himself. At the end of the Millennium He will have to "go to work" one last time, when the Enemy is released from prison.



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It must be acknowledged that the numbers for our timeline are inexact. The genealogies in the Bible vary with some of the manuscript streams. The records of the regnal years of the kings of Israel and Judah lack sufficient clarity. Should we take our timeline from Adam's creation or from his fall? Due to these honest considerations, we cannot name a date for the exact end of the six days of redemption. Even here we can't set the "day and hour." We can only say with assurance that there are roughly six thousand years from Adam to now, and that with the Lord "a thousand years is as a day." This Sign of the Seventh Year points to the very near return of Jesus!

A Sign for Believers

The Sign of the Seventh Year is an elegant, intriguing, even somewhat compelling, sign for believers, but could hardly be accepted by an unbeliever or a skeptic. You have to believe in the Bible and the God of the Bible to give it credence. For unarguable evidence of the Second Coming, we must refer people to the three truly "unprecedented and undeniable" signs—the Jewish, Gospel and Global Signs. The Big Three are signs that any honest unbeliever would have to admit exactly correspond to prophecies written in the Bible thousands of years ago. Still, we who know we are in the Last Days can point them to the Sign of the Seventh Year and wink.

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For over a decade Steve Evans and [Healing Streams](#) have been helping people recover inner peace and freedom through the free eCourse for healing, [Matters of the Heart](#). Through Forerunners4Him he has been showing how we can be saved for heaven and teaching the way to live a Spirit-filled life on earth. Go now to receive a completely free primer, [Getting to Heaven](#) and/or an introduction to [Living in the Spirit](#) at our website.



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