

The National Centers for Health Statistics in the United States reports that in 1940, 89,500 babies were born to unmarried women, or less than 4% of all births. The number more than doubled by 1955, then doubled again by 1970, and has tripled since then. Now 30.1% of all births in America are to unmarried women.

Another one of the signs given by Jesus in Matthew 24 is famines. (**Matthew 24:7**) Experts say that for more than a billion people in the world today, about a sixth of the world's population, chronic hunger is an ever present part of daily life. Ten thousand people a day, or more than 3.5 million people per year, die of starvation.

Jesus says that false christs and false prophets will appear in the last days. (**Matthew 24:5**) The book of Revelation confirms this prediction. (**Revelation 21:4,5; Revelation 13:13,14**). The Apostle Paul also sites false religion as a sign of the times. (**2 Timothy 3:1-5**) Spiritualism and astrology have become common in our land. Psychics are commonplace in storefronts, guiding participants through channeling, ESP, auras, crystal balls and palm reading.

One of the greatest signs given by Jesus is found

in **Matthew 24:14**. The Gospel message will be preached in all the world. This seemed like an impossible task not too many years ago. With modern technology the Gospel message is reaching the masses. Spiritual revivals are breaking out in Africa, South and Central America. Scores of former Hindus are turning to God's Word. In spite of fierce persecution, the church continues to grow in China. From the islands of the sea to the massive metropolitan cities, God is on the move. Prophecy is being fulfilled.

This is no ordinary time. God's final call is going out all over this planet. Millions around the world are responding. This is a day of opportunity. God invites you to fully commit your life to Him.

THE VOICE OF PROPHECY SPEAKS

WHAT BIBLE PROPHECYSAYS ABOUT YOUR FUTURE

LESSON 2 Signs You Can't Ignore

Travelling on a busy free way tends to be frustrating when you are in a strange place. A wrong turn can cause confusion and delay in reaching your desired destination. A highway marked with good signs is greatly appreciated by the traveler. As you travel the road of life, signs can be equally vital to your orientation. Fortunately, as spiritual voyagers on the way to the eternal city, we are given a promise that we will not be left without directions or guidance. God, through His infallible Word, has promised that He will do nothing without revealing it to the prophets. (**Amos 3:7**).

At times, when we read an interesting book, we are tempted to skip to the final chapter to discover how the story is going to end. Bible prophecy gives us the privilege of reading the last chapter of earth's history, so that we can be oriented as we face an uncertain future in an erratic and unstable world. Our Heavenly Father gives us a view of the future so that we can know where are going. (**Isaiah 46:9,10**) He illuminates the way through the prophetic Word. (**2 Peter 1:19**)

The ancient Hebrew prophets gave us a picture of our modern world. Zephaniah was speaking of our times when he warned us that the day of the Lord is near. (**Zephaniah 1:14,15**) We are nearing the end of a long journey. Soon we will reach our long-awaited destination.

The Bible tells us what is coming. Scoffers scoff at the event, critics criticize it, infidels try to refute it, but it is still inevitable. There is no doubt in my mind that we are very close to the climax of the cosmic conflict. The Psalmist assured us that "Our God shall come and shall not keep silence." (**Psalms 50:3**)

Whether or not you consider yourself to be a Christian, it *would* be well to know what the prophets have predicted. The Scriptures not only reveal the manner and object of Christ's coming, they also describe the signs that tell of the nearness of this climactic event. One day the disciples came to Jesus with a burning question: They asked Him, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (**Matthew 24:3**)

Though they asked for one sign, Jesus gave them a list of indications that would reveal the nearness of His coming. He then made a statement that is a key to the understanding of the prophecy. He said, "All of these things are the beginning of sorrows." (**Matthew 24:8**)

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

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

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

One of the given signs is wars and rumors of wars. Jesus says, "Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." **Matthew 24:6,7.**

How many wars can you remember? Our generation has witnessed World War I, World War II, the Korean War, The Vietnam War, the Arab-Israeli Wars, war in Bosnia, the Gulf War, Kosovo, southern and northern Ireland, all over Africa from Rwanda and Somalia to the Sudan, the Congo and Afghanistan. Paul predicted that at a time people would be talking about peace, sudden destruction would come. (**1 Thessalonians 5:3**)

Our Lord pointed the prophetic finger to the atomic age when He spoke of "men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." (**Luke 21:26**) The largest, most sophisticated, and most costly weapons and implements of war ever conceived by the mind of man are now in production or on the drawing boards for early construction. Some of these weapons are being produced by small countries, hostile to the western world, countries not known for their stability.

Broadcasting from Hiroshima in 1945 after the atomic bomb was dropped, William Ripley stated, "I am standing on the place where the end of the world began." What would Ripley say *today* at a time of unprecedented nuclear power?

No longer do the strongest nations win. A new kind of war has filled the hearts of people with fear. Terrorism is on the rise. Without doubt the birth pains have become more frequent and more intense.

Another one of the birth pains mentioned is earthquakes. (**Matthew 24:7**) Today we have 4,000 seismograph stations in the world that record 12,000 to 14,000 earthquakes per year – that is approximately 35 earthquakes a day. You don't have to be a statistician or a seismologist to recognize the astounding increase in earthquakes in our time.

Recently I heard someone say, "The only reason for the increase in earthquakes is that we have more sophisticated instruments with which to measure them."

The hands of the clock stood at precisely 4:31 am on January 17, 1994. My wife and I were camped in the Southern California desert when our motor home began to shake, and we were rudely awakened out of our sleep by what we knew was an earthquake. We were more than 100 miles from the epicenter. We didn't have a seismograph in our motor home, nor would we have known how to use it if one would have been available. Neither of us had ever studied seismology. Somehow, we knew without the shadow of a doubt that there had been an earthquake! The first millennium following Christ's prediction records only two major earthquakes, one in Rome in 476, and another in Antioch in 526. In the next Millennium, there was a major earthquake in Shenshi, China in the 16th century. There was another in Jamaica in the 17th century and then the Lisbon earthquake in the 18th century There were four devastating earthquakes in the nineteenth century, one in Missouri, one in Venezuela, one in Peru and another in Japan.

What about the 20th century? Now we are no longer talking of the number of earthquakes per millennium, nor per century. We are facing many every year. The 25 largest of them in the last few years have taken a toll of 1.5 million lives.

The increase of crime is another sign. (**Matthew 24:12**) Never in history has our world been so filled with hatred. Paul said in **2 Timothy 3:1**, "Perilous times shall come." Perilous times *have* come. There is terror in the streets. Murderous gangsters await their prey in the dark. Cruel totalitarian despots enslave millions, murdering, gassing, tormenting, and destroying those they hate. The Bible describes a violent, immoral world similar to the one in the days of Noah. (**Matthew 24:37**)