

TEN INDICATORS THAT CHRIST'S COMING NEARS

For the benefit of any who may not have been present for our previous messages in this short conference, may I very briefly review some of what has already been presented.

As we understand the prophetic scriptures, it is our conviction that the next event on God's calendar will be the Rapture, when Christ comes to the air to snatch away all those (both dead and living) from around the world, and throughout time, who have become children of God by faith, through the new birth. The Rapture will be followed, in heaven, by the Judgment Seat of Christ and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

While that is happening in heaven, here on earth there will be the Great Tribulation under the diabolical reign of the Antichrist. This unbelievably horrific period of seven years, with the final 3 1/2 years being the most severe, will end when Christ returns, with the armies of heaven and His raptured saints, to the earth to defeat and bind Satan, the Antichrist and the False Prophet, and to establish His literal 1,000-year Millennial reign from Jerusalem.

We believe that there are six major signs that lead us to feel that we must be coming near to the time when these events will occur.

- The existence of the miracle nation of Israel
- The obvious preparations for the prophesied invasion of Israel
- The foreshadowings of earth's final human empire
- The setting of the stage for the ruler of that empire—the Antichrist
- The emergence of the end-time counterfeit global church
- The appearance of the “birth-pang” signs which Jesus predicted

We've looked at several of these signs such as the nation Israel, the coming invasion of Israel, and the preparations for the Antichrist's reign. This afternoon we will focus on the extremely significant prophetic message which Jesus gave shortly before His crucifixion. His sermon is recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13 & Luke 23. I invite you to turn to Matthew chapter 24.

The time was just ten days before the Lord Jesus Christ went to the cross.

The location was outside the magnificent temple in Jerusalem.

In the crowd which thronged that special place was Jesus and His disciples. The disciples, undoubtedly with some sense of national pride, were commenting on the beauty of the stately building with its fine stonework and elaborate ornamentations. And properly so. For, though it could never compare for magnificence with Solomon's original temple, still Herod's temple was a truly splendid structure.

Suddenly, and I'm sure to the disciples' great surprise, Jesus said, ***“Do you see all these things? I tell you the truth: not one stone will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”***

The disciples were, in fact, astonished at and dismayed by Jesus' words. Later, they came to Him privately, and asked Him three questions:

1. When will this happen?
2. What will be the sign of Your coming, and
3. [What will be the sign] of the end of the age? (Matthew 24:3)

Jesus' answer is recorded in the three synoptic gospels, and is called “The Olivet Discourse” because it was given on the Mount of Olives. Time does not

permit us to read, in its entirety, any one of the three accounts, but we will point out several specific verses as we go.

In a moment I want to give a synopsis of the Discourse, in which I will outline what I believe are ten specific indicators which Jesus said would precede His Revelation. But before we do that, it's important to realize that there are several ways of interpreting this prophecy of our Lord.

One view says it is history which was all fulfilled in the past. A major problem with this view is its inability to explain how Jesus could have already returned, at the time when the Jews regained control of Jerusalem.

A second view holds that the prophecy applies to the entire Church age in which we now live, and its closing days, in particular. Those who accept this view believe that the Church is here for the Tribulation, but cannot explain how this can be so, for the Church must be raptured before the Antichrist can assume power.

A third view, and the one which I hold personally, is that the prophecy has exclusive reference to the Jewish nation and Jewish believers. It also contains a double reference, with part of it—the answer to the disciples' first question—having had its fulfillment when the Romans, under Titus, destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 A.D. The remainder of the prophecy is yet to be fulfilled in the final period of God's dealing with the earth in relation to, and through, Israel.

There is one other very significant preliminary observation we need to make. Jesus said of the signs which He would describe, that "*all these things are merely the beginning of BIRTH PANGS.*" (Matthew 24:8).

He was obviously saying that the signs would not burst suddenly upon the world, but rather would be like the pains of birth, which begin at some point in time and then **increase** in frequency and intensity up the moment of birth.

And so, just as a physical birth is preceded by birth pains, the signs which Jesus predicted—the actual events which will occur right before the Revelation of Christ—will be directly preceded throughout the earth by similar signs, or by the beginnings of the actual signs themselves. And the event which they precede is **not** the Rapture, but **rather** the Revelation, when Christ returns **with** His saints **to** the earth to deal with the evil false trinity, and to establish His Millennial reign.

What are these “birth pang” signs? I believe that an accurate synopsis of Jesus’ message reveals that there are ten of these.

1. Wars, rumors of wars, commotions, nation rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom.
2. Great earthquakes in various different places
3. Famines
4. Pestilences
5. Unusual signs in the heavens, including fearful sights, signs in the sun, moon and stars, with the powers of heaven being shaken
6. Jerusalem restored to Jewish control after a worldwide dispersion of the Jews, followed by a Jewish return to nationhood in Israel
7. Distress of nations, with perplexity
8. Men’s hearts failing them for fear of what is coming on the earth
9. False christs arising, and
10. A worldwide proclamation of the Gospel

Maybe as I mentioned these signs it occurred to you that many of them sound just like the reports we are hearing almost daily in our media. It certainly seems that way to me. So, let's do a quick review of these ten indicators in the light of current events.

Just this word first. I have discovered so much information in my research on the birth pang signs that it would be quite possible to spend an hour or so on each one of them without, even then, being exhaustive. So, obviously, we will be hitting only the high spots as we look at just a few of the birth pang signs that seem to be showing up everywhere in our world today.

Wars and Rumors of Wars

Anyone who pays even the slightest attention to current events knows that our planet is plagued by seemingly endless conflicts, both large and small. Though there have always been wars throughout history, their frequency and intensity has dramatically increased in the lifetime of many of us here this afternoon.

Within the past 100 years we have had the first truly global wars—World War I and World War II—in which over 61 million people (a high percentage of them civilians) died. In addition to those two wars, there have been a half dozen or more very large scale wars fought since 1970, with hundreds of thousands of casualties. Currently, the tragic civil war in Syria, with over 100,000 dead, is into its third year.

In the realm of rumors of war, we all know about Iran's drive for a nuclear bomb, coupled with blatant threats to annihilate Israel and strike the U.S. Recently North Korea did some saber-rattling amid claims she could hit America. Not long

ago India warned Kashmir to prepare for nuclear war. A Middle East war is almost always being rumored. And so it goes.

Meanwhile the terrifying arms race continues, with the development of nuclear, biological and chemical arms, along with the capacity of delivering these from space or from halfway around the world, to almost any spot on the planet. Fearfully, some of such weaponry is in the hands of so-called “rouge” nations, who could allow terrorists to obtain such. We have arrived at a point in history when we are told that it is literally possible for man to destroy the earth.

But it is most significant to note that Much of the warfare in recent decades has been **ethnic** war—sometimes called “ethnic cleansing,” in which virtual ethnic genocide is carried out. Think of Bosnia, the Indian sub-continent, Sudan and other African countries. That’s significant, because When Jesus talked about nation rising against nation He used the term “ethnos” against “ethnos,”—in other words **one ethnic group against another**.

So, the first birth pang sign—wars and rumors of wars—is certainly upon us.

Earthquakes

Earthquakes are not unique to our age, but like wars, there seems to be a definite increase in such activity, as a search of the U.S. Geological Society website makes very evident. The website lists all earthquakes, worldwide, of a 6.0 magnitude, or greater, back through the 17th century. It also lists the most destructive known earthquakes in human history, as well as the deadliest

earthquakes, year by year. Based on such data, it is instructive to note that major Earthquakes, of a magnitude 6.0 or greater, occurred an annual average of...

.31 times in the 17th century

.65 times in the 18th century

4.00 times in the 19th century,

11.5 times in the 20th century and

25.3 times a year in the early years of this 21st century.

While we must acknowledge that this information could be skewed because this century is still very young, it cannot be denied that there has been a massive increase in earthquake activity. For example, Only five 9.0 magnitude earthquakes, dating back to the 1700s, have ever been recorded. **FOUR** of these have occurred in the past 60 years! **Twenty-nine** of the 37 next most powerful quakes (8.0 mag or greater), dating back to the 1500s, have happened in the past 100 years. **Twelve** of the 23 most destructive quakes in history, dating back to 856 A.D., have happened since 1900, with **FIVE** of these occurring **since 1970**.

The tsunami which struck Southeast Asia several years ago was caused by an earthquake so powerful that it moved the entire island of Sumatra 100 feet southeast from its previous position. Geologists say that the quake was so massive that it set the whole earth vibrating and interfered with the earth's rotation to the degree that time stopped for 3 microseconds. Science reporter Randolph Schmid wrote that "No point on earth remained undisturbed. The quake shook the ground everywhere on earth's surface."

One other fact to note: Jesus said that the birth pang sign was that earthquakes would happen in different places. The Geological Society reports that there have now been earthquakes in 99 different countries. The weekly Society report shows that, worldwide, there are hundreds of earthquakes every single week, often with one or more over the 6.0 magnitude. In one recent week alone there were **four** quakes over 6.0. Birth pang number two is obviously here.

Famines

Like war and earthquakes, there have always been famines. But also like war and earthquakes they have become more frequent and more severe recently.

One encyclopaedia reports that From a low of **one** major famine in the 5th century A.D., there has been a steady increase to **3** in each of the 17th and 18th centuries, **11** in the 19th and **16** in the 20th. In the 20th century alone over 70 million people perished because of famine-produced starvation. What is believed to be the worst famine in all of human history occurred from 1959-1961 in China when tens of millions died. In the past decade alone over 3.5 million perished in the North Korean famine.

According to the UN, Sudan, Malawi, Niger and the Horn of Africa (where 11 million people live) have become at risk of famine just since the year 2000. It seems almost beyond belief, that—in a world with technological advances and know-how which once promised that famine would be beaten forever—millions of people around the globe still face death through famine. Another sign shows up.

Pestilence

It wasn't all that long ago that it was being suggested that pestilence was going to be eradicated from the earth through scientific and medical know-how, coupled with technological advances. Not any more. It is no exaggeration to say that the fearful spectre of pestilence stalks the earth as never before in history. Let me mention briefly several current pestilential threats.

AIDS. In the 40 years since AIDS broke upon the human race, HIV has spread relentlessly from a few widely-scattered 'hot spots' to virtually every country in the world, infecting 65 million and already killing over 30 million. In spite of every effort, and greatly improved treatment, and though the spread of the disease has slowed, nevertheless Nearly 3 million persons contract AIDS each year, 7,000 each day, 300 each hour, and between 1½ and 2 million a year die as a result. And just think: Forty years ago there was no such pestilence.

Flu. There is grave concern among health authorities over this age-old but very current threat. Dr. David Nebarro, head of the UN Task Force on Bird Flu, told reporters he feared the virus could kill as many as 150 million people if the world fails to adequately prepare for the potential mutation of the virus. With new and strange strains of flu, such as swine, avian and canine, surfacing regularly it is no surprise to learn that The World Health Organization reports some 5 million flu cases a year, with between 250,000 and 500,000 flu deaths annually. And did you know that some 8,000 people die of flu each year here in Canada?

Tuberculosis. It is estimated that one-third of the world's population is infected with the bacteria which causes TB, with 8 million developing the disease annually and 2.5 million dying from TB each year.

Malaria. Malaria, which has plagued mankind since ancient times, is today estimated to threaten 40 percent of earth's population, mostly in poor tropical or

sub-tropical countries. Between 350 and 500 million people contract the disease each year, and though it is treatable and usually not fatal, nearly a million a year die from malaria.

The World Health Organization lists six other diseases that threaten our world: **Smallpox, Anthrax, Measles, Dysentery, Cholera, Leprosy**. And around the world, **including** here in North America, hospitals are being invaded by deadly **Mutated strains of bacteria, called ‘super bugs’** which have become resistant to all of our drugs, and for which there is presently no known deterrent. It is a great concern.

And that’s not even to mention the enormous danger of **Biological warfare**, in which deadly viruses are deliberately released into a population by a military force. Several nations are said to possess such horrifying weapons.

Much, much more could be said, but the bottom line is that pestilence is an awesome and fearful fact in our modern world, as another birth pang sign.

Unusual Signs in the Heavens

Inasmuch as there are atmospheric and cosmic heavens, as well as the heaven where God has His throne, many students feel that the Recent violent weather patterns in the atmosphere, the Increased appearance of massive asteroids (such as the 400-meter 2004 MN4) and The UFO phenomenon, qualify as at least the beginnings of this sign.

Jerusalem Restored to Jewish Control

It is a fact of history that Jerusalem was periodically controlled by Gentiles long before the time of Christ, but that it was **totally** lost to the Jewish people in 70 A.D. at which time they were dispersed worldwide and completely ceased to exist as a nation. But on June 6, 1967, during the Six-Day War, **Jerusalem, for the first time in thousands of years, was restored to Jewish control.**

Because time is short, and because they scarcely need to be documented, though such could easily be done, I will only mention the birth pang signs of **Distress of Nations** and the **Epidemic of Fear in our World**. However, let me take a moment to comment on the birth pang sign of **False Christs**.

Most of us are aware that in comparatively recent times we have had a number of high-profile individuals who have claimed to be Christ. We can think of Father Divine, Sun Myung Moon, Jim Jones, David Koresh and others. Wikipedia Encyclopedia lists a total of 26 fairly prominent false christs who have come on the world scene in just the recent past, including five who are currently alive. These five, Alan John Miller, Jose Luis Miranda, Inri Cristo, Sergi Anatolyevitch Torop and Wayne Bent (presently in prison) are each attracting many followers.

Worldwide Proclamation of the Gospel

I believe that this sign will be most completely fulfilled during the Great Tribulation, when the Apostle John's word in Revelation 14:6 will come to pass. *And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having the ETERNAL GOSPEL to preach to those who live on the earth, to every nation and tribe and tongue and people.* But even now, great strides are being made in proclaiming the gospel

to all the world, in large part because of the Internet, TV, radio and other communication advances, resulting in thousands (particularly in other parts of the globe) coming to Christ daily.

Tragically, our world is a mess. In addition to what we've already mentioned, think of the unprecedented violence everywhere—in the workplace, the home, the schools—and in the war on Christians worldwide. Then there are strange human illnesses which are surfacing, as well as the global phenomenon of the unexplained deaths of thousands of birds, cattle, fish, shrimp, whales, dolphins, wild life, etc. Put it all together, and even a skeptic would have to admit that it really does appear that the “birth pang” signs that Jesus predicted are, at the very least, beginning to appear.

And it is most significant to remember that, in addition to describing the birth pang signs, Jesus said that they would occur in relation to the re-establishment of Israel as a nation. Those of you who were present on Friday night may recall that we referred to the parable which Jesus told at the end of the message in which He spoke of the signs. He said:

Now learn this lesson from the fig tree [which is the symbol of the nation of Israel]: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things [the signs which Jesus had been describing], you know that it [Christ's Revelation] is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. (Matthew 24:33-34)

All of which leads to our question: **SO WHAT?**

How should the obvious fact that the Rapture and the Revelation of Christ appear to be very near effect our lives? It depends on where we are in relationship to God.

If you have never come into a vital, personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ through the new birth, there is no decision in all of your life which is as important as that. Do not delay in making such a decision. You have no guarantee of another day, and should the Rapture occur before you trust Christ you have no hope of salvation.

If you know that you are truly born again, and a part of the Body of Christ, the hope of the Rapture should be a cause to look forward with anticipation and joy to our Lord's coming for His own. Now, if there isn't joy, but rather apprehension at the thought of the Rapture, apprehension because we know we have not been living in ways which are obedient, holy and pleasing to the Lord, then we ought to repent of such and invite the Holy Spirit to fill and control us so that our lives **will** be pleasing to our Lord.

I conclude our conference with the words of Titus 2:11-15:

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live SOBERLY (that's in relation to ourselves), RIGHTEOUSLY (that's in relation to others), and GODLY (that's in relation to God) IN THIS PRESENT AGE, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for us that might redeem us from all wickedness and purify for Himself a people who are His very own possession, eager to do good.