
Sleeping Through the Sirens



IF THE PEOPLE who worked in the Twin Towers had known on September 10, 2001, what was about to happen, would they have gone to work on the 11th? If you were about to cross a field, but someone told you it was full of mines and poisonous snakes, wouldn't you be glad for the warning?

You can be glad that the biggest event in Earth's history will only come after many signs. Jesus is coming! And He has given us a whole series of signals so we can know His coming is near.

Thoughts to Remember:

♦ Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled...I will come again" (John 14:1-3). The disciples answered, "And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age" (Matthew 24:3)? Jesus listed more than 20 signs of His return in the Bible. We'll look at 15 of these signs.

♦ **False christs and false prophets.** "For false christs and false prophets shall arise," Jesus told us in Matthew 24:5, 11, 24. Recently, in several countries, people have followed after one person or another who called himself Christ. We also see an explosion of interest in the occult, astrology, and New Age movements.

♦ **International conflict. Ability to destroy the earth. Fragile peace agreements.** "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars...For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (Matthew 24:6, 7). Jesus is talking about war on a global scale. World War I had 20 million casualties. World War II had 50 million. But the 20th and 21st centuries have been the bloodiest of all: Korea, Vietnam, Bosnia, Rwanda, Afghanistan, Kuwait, and many others. Jesus predicted this explosion of conflict: "...And on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring" (Luke 21:25). Thermonuclear warfare is new in history. Never before have humans had the capability to destroy ourselves completely. God tells us He is coming to "destroy those who destroy the earth" (Revelation 11:18). Political leaders sign meaningless peace agreements around the world. If peace even comes after such agreements, it is shaky and temporary at best. "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them...and they shall not escape" (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

♦ **Famines. Pestilences. Earthquakes. Natural disasters.** "There will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places" (Matthew 24:6, 7). About 57 million people die from lack of food each year. Of the world's population of 6 billion, 60 percent are malnourished and 20 percent are starving. Forty million people worldwide live with AIDS—not counting SARS, mad cow, cholera, influenza, hepatitis, malaria, smallpox, and other diseases. In the last 90 years,

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1.5 million people have died as a result of earthquakes. In 1993 the U.S. set an unfortunate record of 1,297 tornadoes. Scientists predict a massive volcano in the Pacific Ocean with the power of 1 million atom bombs. The only security is in knowing Jesus Christ. "Let not your heart

be troubled" (John 14:1, 27). He who calms storms can calm troubled hearts.

- **Environmental pollution.** Pollution is rampant. Recently over a thousand scientists signed a statement warning, "Human activities inflict harsh and often irreversible damage on the environment and on critical resources. If not checked, many of our current practices... may so alter the living world that it will be unable to sustain life in a manner that we know..."
- **Moral decay.** Rising crime and violence. "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood... until the day that Noah entered the ark, [they] did not know until the flood came and took them all away" (Matthew 24:37-39). Marriage is good in itself, but it has deteriorated badly. In 1900 there was one divorce for every 12 marriages. In 1995 it was one out of two! The teen pregnancy rate continues to climb, and immorality of every description is taught on TV. "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence" (Genesis 6:11). Every country in the world is affected by crime and violence.

- **Attitude of skepticism.** Love of pleasure. "...Scoffers will come in the last days... Saying, Where is the promise of his coming" (2 Peter 3:3)? "This know also, that in the last days... men shall be...lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:1, 2, 4). What time in history has been more skeptical of religion and of God's existence than today? When have people pursued pleasure—alcohol, drugs, nightclubs and parties, casual sex—more relentlessly than now?

- **Economic uncertainty.** Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded... You have hoarded wealth in the last days" (James 5:1-4). Wealth itself is not evil. But in the days before Christ comes, money will have less value than ever before, and it won't provide any security or safety—especially wealth gained through cheating others. Only in Jesus can we have true security.

- **Gospel taken to the whole world.** This is the final sign. "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). We see it beginning to happen even now: in the fall of the Berlin Wall that enabled the gospel to be preached in Communist areas; in the doors God has opened in China; in the millions who have turned to God in Europe.

The "take-home" message for you . . .

- The world is in turmoil. And for some, our own lives are in turmoil too. Every time we lay a wife, a husband, a child to rest, we pray, "Come, Lord Jesus!" When we read accounts of disasters, small children with distended bellies in starvation, acts of terrorism, we long for Him! Are you ready? Jesus can help you with the turmoil in your life today, and that's good news. But the best news of all is that He's coming soon to put an end to stress, heartache, and suffering. He has a better world for you—a world of peace and perfect safety.

Just between you . . . and God:

- If you long to live in that world, just bow your head and pray right now. Ask God into your heart and life. He will change your life for the better, and soon, He will change your world for the best.

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