

Perspective

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Are You Watching for the Signs?

The disciples wanted to know what we would like to know. As they sat on the Mount of Olives, they said, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” Jesus gave them things to watch. However, even knowing the signs it is easy to miss them; we can misunderstand what Christ intended.

There were these eager evangelical preachers, hoping to save souls, standing by the side of the road holding up a sign that read, “The End is Near! Turn yourself around now before it’s too late!” They held up the sign to each passing car. People shouted as they sped on, “Leave us alone---you religious nuts!” From around the curve, they heard the loud screech of tires and a giant splash into the water. One minister said to the other, “Do you think we should just put up a sign that says, ‘Bridge is Out’ instead?” Is it possible we are missing the signs we need to be alerted to watch?

Despising and scoffing at prophecy

The apostle Paul wrote the church at Thessalonica, and admonished them: “*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies.*” (1 Thessalonians 5:16–20). The word despise means to “feel contempt or (have) a deep repugnance for” something that we mock and make fun out of it. This kind of mentality is a dangerous spiritual condition to have. It is tantamount to rejecting God, because it rejects what He reveals in His Word. Peter warned the church of this menace of the carnal minded: “*Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.’*” (II Peter 3:1-4)

The apostle goes on to say they willfully forget the great flood of Noah that came upon the people of this world who perished. He admonishes the early church that God is not slack concerning His promises, but, God above all, wants to give all the opportunity to repent. Jude 1:17- 19 states, “*But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.*”

Someone who mocks or scoffs at prophesy lacks one major thing—the Holy Spirit leading in their life. To be a son of God we have to be led by the Spirit of God (Romans 8:14). Proverbs 9:8 says, “*Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, reprove a wise man and he will love you.*”

A scoffer does not ever go to the proper source to seek right knowledge, but he will always go to the person least qualified to provide the right answer to a question (Proverbs 15:12). Proverbs 24:9 admonishes us, “*The devising of folly is sin, and the scoffer is an abomination to men.*”

What 10 signs did Jesus give the future apostles?

1. In Matthew 24, Jesus warned in verses 4 and 5, to be alert that no one deceives you, even if they come in His name. He said later in the chapter there would be false prophets and false Christs who would do great signs and wonders which, if possible, could even deceive the elect. Most Christians of this world will be shocked to know that their own churches and ministers are fulfilling this prophecy. It is important for the saints to drop anchor on the bedrock of truth.

2. Jesus said there would be wars and rumors of conflict, but He said not to worry – these things must happen, but it will not be the end (Matthew 24:6). Sadly, this sign is unmistakable. Nations fight, tension rises, and the headlines are awash in each skirmish. All we can do is pray for our leaders and pray for peace. As Christ’s ambassador we cannot become embroiled in earth’s conflicts either physically or emotionally.

3. Jesus Christ said, *“And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.”* (Matthew 24:7-8). In parts of the world, we will see massive food shortages, destructive earthquakes and other devastating natural calamities. It is like the earth with its earthquakes and volcanoes is groaning. These signs remind us that we live in a failing world, waiting for God’s restoration. All we can do is have compassion on those who suffer, and help others as we are able by good works.

4. Then in verse 9, He said there will be extreme persecution of the saints, and it will be a time of trial by betrayal. There is a cost of being a true disciple of our Lord; we must remain steadfast in the faith, and endure to the end (Matthew 24:13).

5. Jesus said false teachers will arise, and as a result of lawlessness--- wickedness will abound. We must let the light of righteousness shine brightly (Daniel 12:3).

6. He said the love of many would grow cold. Compassion and unity are fading in most nations, and they are being replaced with division and apathy. Actively love your neighbors, your family, and even those who oppose you. Let love be your witness of God’s way.

7. In verse 14, Jesus said the gospel of the kingdom of God would be preached around the world as a witness to all nations. In the computer and cell phone age it is possible now to reach nearly every corner of the globe. It is important for the church brethren to be actively involved in the promulgation of the gospel.

8. In Matthew 24:15, Jesus said to watch for the “abomination of desolation” standing in the holy place. Solomon’s temple was divided into the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. So, Jesus was undoubtedly speaking of the holy place on the temple mount in Jerusalem.

9. Jesus said in Luke 21:20, “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near.” The enemies will surround and attack Jerusalem in the future.

10. Christ taught His disciples in Matthew 24:32-34: *“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So, you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near, at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.”*

In that generation, when you see these things happen, know it is near: Jesus said: *“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.”* (Matthew 24:21-22)

He said all life would be blotted out if the days leading up to the end were not cut short. In the generation when a perfect storm of international war and conflict is possible and when all life could be erased off this planet by nuclear weaponry—that is the end of the age in which Jesus will return to stop man’s mad rush to obliterate life off the surface of the Earth.

Jesus said in verse 42, *“Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.”* He also said in verse 46-47, *“Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods.”* Our job is to keep living God’s way of life until we are changed from mortal to immortal, and we do not let any obstacle dissuade us from that path to be glorified with Christ. (Romans 8:17).

See that you are not troubled

Jesus Christ has given us signs to watch for, but He did not intend that we be over anxious or fret and worry about the tribulation that is coming. Prophecy is intended to show God’s will and it is a call to repentance. It is to supply a motivation to see the urgency of times, so the wise will make the necessary changes in their lives, so they might be in the kingdom of God. Events in the world are showing us that the end of the age is not far off, and each passing year brings us closer.

Paul the apostle wrote what we need to know now: *“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now, our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore, let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.”* (Romans 13:11-12)