

An Overview of the Signs of the Times: The great variety of signs that point to the Lord's soon return.

Dr. David R. Reagan

Many people believe there is nothing that can be known about the timing of the Lord's return because Jesus said He would return like a thief in the night (Matthew 24:42-44). But Paul makes it clear in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 that Jesus' statement does not apply to believers: "But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief. . ." He then proceeds to explain why: "for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober." Paul is referring, of course, to the light of the Holy Spirit who indwells all true believers and who can enlighten us through our study of Scripture to know the season of the Lord's return (1 John 2:27).

God's Attitude As a matter of fact, God is obligated by His character to warn the world of the imminent return of His Son. The reason is that Jesus is returning in great wrath to "judge and wage war" (Revelation 19:11), and God never pours out His wrath without warning. God does not wish that any should perish, but that all should be brought to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Therefore, God always warns before He executes His wrath. He warned the world through Noah for 120 years. He warned Sodom and Gomorrah through Abraham. He sent Jonah to warn the pagan city of Ninevah, and He sent Nahum to the same city 150 years later. Likewise, God is warning the world today that His Son is about to return. He is calling the world to repentance. The message of the hour to unbelievers can be summed up in these words: "Flee from the wrath that is to come by fleeing into the loving arms of Jesus now." Jesus came the first time as an expression of God's love; He came to die for the sins of Mankind. But when He returns, He will come in vengeance to pour out the wrath of God on those who have rejected God's love and grace. The soon return of Jesus also carries with it a message for believers. Lukewarm Christians and carnal Christians are being called to commit their lives to holiness: The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. - Romans 13:12-14

God's Method of Warning God is alerting believers of the soon return of His Son through what are called "signs of the times." These are prophecies concerning world events that we are told to watch for, prophecies that will identify the season of the Lord's return. The Bible is full of these signs. There are about 500 prophecies in the Old Testament that relate to the Second Coming of the Messiah. In the New Testament, one out of every 25 verses is concerned with the return of Jesus. In fact, there are so many signs that it is difficult to grasp all of them. The best way I have found to do this is to put them in categories:

1) The Signs of Nature - We are told to watch for earthquakes, famine, pestilence, and signs in the heavens (see Matthew 24:7 and Luke 21:11). This is the least respected category of signs for several reasons. For one thing, many people simply shrug their shoulders and say, "There have always been natural calamities, so what else is new?" Note that Jesus says these signs will be like "birth pangs" (Matthew 24:8) that is, they will increase in frequency and intensity as the time draws near for His return. In other words, there will be more intense earthquakes and more frequent ones. That is exactly what is happening today.

Another reason these signs are given little respect is because most Christians are so rationalistic that they do not really believe in the supernatural, and they therefore find it difficult to believe that God speaks to the world through signs of nature. Yet, the Bible teaches this principle from start to finish. God dealt with the world's sin through a great flood in the days of Noah (Genesis 6). He called the nation of Judah to repentance through a terrible locust invasion (Joel 1). In like manner, He called for the nation of Israel to repent by sending drought, wind storms, mildew, locusts, famine and pestilence (Amos 4:6-10). The prophet Haggai pointed to a drought as evidence that God was calling the people to get their priorities in order (Haggai 1:10-11).

The New Testament begins with a special light in the heavens marking the birth of the Messiah (Matthew 2:2). On the day that Jesus was crucified, there was three hours of darkness and an earthquake (Matthew 27:45-51). And when Jesus returns, the earth will experience the greatest earthquake in its history as every mountain is lowered, every valley is raised, and every island is moved (Revelation 16:17-21). God has always spoken through signs of nature, and He continues to do so today. We had better pay close attention to them.

2) The Signs of Society - Jesus said that society will become increasingly lawless and immoral as the time approaches for His return. In fact, He said it would become as evil as it was in the days of Noah (Matthew 24:12,37-39). Paul paints a chilling picture of end time society in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. He says it will be characterized by three loves: the love of self (humanism), the love of money (Materialism), and the love of pleasure (hedonism). He then points out that the payoff of this carnal lifestyle will be what the philosophers call nihilism that is, a society wallowing in despair. Men's minds will become depraved (Romans 1:28), and people will call evil good and good evil (Isaiah 5:20).

We are seeing these prophecies fulfilled before our eyes today as we watch our society reject its Christian heritage and descend into a hellish pit of lawlessness, immorality, and despair. Even worse, we are exporting our nihilism around the world through our immoral and violent movies and television programs.

3) The Spiritual Signs - There are both positive and negative spiritual signs that we are to watch for. The negative ones include the appearance of false christs and their cults (Matthew 24:5,11,24), the apostasy of the professing church (2 Thessalonians 2:3), an outbreak of Satanism (1 Timothy 4:1), and the persecution of faithful Christians (Matthew 24:9) These negative spiritual signs began to appear in the mid-19th Century when Christian cults started forming. First came the Mormons, then the Jehovah's Witnesses, and then a great variety of spiritualist groups like the Church of Christ Scientists and the Unity Church.

The apostasy of the mainline Christian denominations began in the 1920's when the German school of higher criticism invaded American seminaries and undermined the authority of the Scriptures, teaching that the Bible is Man's search for God rather than God's revelation to Man. During the 1960's Satanism exploded on the American scene and has since been exported worldwide through American movies, books, and television programs. Dabbling in the occult has become commonplace in the form of astrology, numerology, crystal gazing, transcendental meditation, and channeling. The whole trend has consummated in the appearance of the New Age Movement with its teaching that Man is God.

As society has secularized, true Christianity has come under increasing attack. Judeo-Christian values, once the foundation of Western Civilization, are now openly mocked, and those who still adhere to them are castigated as "intolerant fundamentalists" by the media. The positive spiritual signs include the proclamation of the Gospel to the whole world (Matthew 24:14), a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-32), and spiritual illumination to understand prophecies that have been "sealed up" until the end times (Daniel 12:4,9).

As with the negative signs, we are seeing these positive signs fulfilled in our day and time. Through the use of modern technology, the Gospel has been proclaimed throughout the world in this Century, and the Bible has been translated into all major languages. The great end time pouring out of the Holy Spirit that was prophesied by the prophet Joel has also begun. Joel called it "the latter rain" (Joel 2:23), and he said it would occur after the Jews had returned to their land. The state of Israel was re-established in 1948. In 1949 God anointed two ministries that would have a worldwide impact the ministries of Billy Graham and Oral Roberts. Then, in the 60's, came the Charismatic Movement which prompted renewal in worship and gave emphasis to the continuing validity of the gifts of the Spirit. The acceleration in the understanding of Bible prophecy began in 1970 with the publication of Hal Lindsey's book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*. It seemed to open up to popular understanding many prophecies that had been "sealed up" until the end times (Daniel 12:4, 9). Remarkably, it became the number one best seller in the world with the sole exception of the Bible for the next ten years!

4) The Signs of Technology - The book of Daniel says that there will be an explosion of knowledge in the end times and that people will move about quickly (Daniel 12:4). There are many Bible prophecies that cannot be understood apart from modern technology. For example, how can the whole world look upon two bodies lying in the streets of Jerusalem (Revelation 11:8-9)? Modern television satellite technology makes it easy. How can the False Prophet build an image of the Anti-Christ that appears to be alive (Revelation 13:15)? The answer, of course, is the science of robotics. How can the False Prophet require all people on earth to take the mark of the Anti-Christ in order to buy and sell (Revelation 13:16-17)? It would not be possible apart from computers and lasers. Jesus said that the Tribulation will be so terrible that all life on earth would cease to exist if He did not cut the period short (Matthew 24:21-22). How could all life be threatened prior to the advent of nuclear weapons? Another reference to nuclear power is likely contained in Luke's statement that men in the end times will "faint from fear" because "the powers of the heavens will be shaken" (Luke 21:26). That certainly sounds like a reference to the splitting of the atom.

5) The Signs of World Politics - The Bible prophesies that there will be a certain pattern of world politics that will characterize the end time geopolitical map. The focus will be the re-established state of Israel (Zechariah 12:2-3). It will be besieged by a menacing nation from the "remote parts of the north," the nation of "Rosh" or modern day Russia (Ezekiel 38:2,6). There will also be a threatening nation to the East that will be capable of sending an army of 200 million namely, China (Revelation 9:13-16 and Revelation 16:12-13). A third source of danger to Israel will be the Arab nations that immediately surround it. They will covet the land and will try to take it from the Jews (Ezekiel 35:10 and 36:2). Another key player on the world political scene in the end times will be a coalition of European nations that will form a confederation centered in the area of the old Roman empire (Daniel 2:41-44, Daniel 7:7,23-24, and Revelation 17:12-13). This confederation will serve as the political base for the rise of the Anti-Christ and the creation of his worldwide kingdom (Daniel 7:8). Other international political signs include wars and rumors of wars (Matthew 24:6), civil wars (Matthew 24:7), and general international terrorism and lawlessness (Matthew 24:12).

6) The Signs of Israel - The signs related to the state of Israel are prolific and very important. The most frequently repeated prophecy in the Old Testament is the prediction that the Jewish people will be regathered from the "four comers of the earth" in the end times (Isaiah 11:10-12). The Bible states that a consequence of this regathering will be the re-establishment of the state of Israel (Isaiah 66:7-8). The Scriptures say that once the Jews are back in their land, the land itself will experience a miracle of reclamation (Isaiah 35). The desert will bloom and people will exclaim, "This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden" (Ezekiel 36:35). Another end time miracle will be the revival of the Hebrew language (Zephaniah 3:9). Most people are not aware of the fact that when the Jews were dispersed from their land in 70 A.D., they ceased to speak the Hebrew language. The Jews who settled in Europe developed a new language called Yiddish a combination of German and Hebrew. The Jews who migrated to the Mediterranean basin created a language called Ladino a combination of Hebrew and Spanish. Other significant signs of Israel that we are told to watch for in the end times include the re-occupation of Jerusalem (Luke 21:24), the resurgence of Israeli military strength (Zechariah 12:6), and the re-focusing of world politics on Israel (Zechariah 12:3).

All these signs have been fulfilled in this century. The nation has been re-established, the land has been reclaimed, the ancient language has been revived, the Jews are back in Jerusalem, and Israel is the focal point of world politics. Jesus says in Luke 21:28 that when these signs begin to happen, we should "straighten up and lift up our heads" because "our redemption is drawing near."

The Key Signs The most important signs are the ones that relate to Israel because God uses the Jews throughout the Scriptures as His prophetic time clock. By this I mean that very often when the Lord is revealing an important event that will take place in the future, He will point to the Jewish people and state that when a certain thing happens to them, the important event will also occur. A good example of this principle can be found in Daniel 9 in the famous "Seventy Weeks of Years" prophecy. The prophet tells us to watch for a decree to be issued that will authorize the rebuilding of Jerusalem. He then says that the Messiah will come sixty-nine weeks of years (483 years) after that decree is issued to the Jewish people. There are two key prophecies which relate the return of Jesus to events that have occurred in Jewish history since 1948. These two events clearly established the period in which we are now living as the season of the Lord's return.

The State of Israel The first is the re-establishment of the state of Israel which occurred on May 14, 1948. Jesus singled out this event as the one that would signal His soon return. His prophecy is contained in the fig tree parable (Matthew 24:32-35) which He presented in His Olivet Discourse. The day before He delivered this speech, He had put a curse on a barren fig tree, causing it to wither (Matthew 21:28-29). This was a symbolic prophecy that God would soon pour out His wrath upon the Jewish people because of their spiritual barrenness in rejecting His Son. The next day Jesus reminded His disciples of the fig tree. He said to watch for it to bloom again. In other words, He said watch for the rebirth of Israel. He indicated that when the fig tree blooms again, He would be at the gates of Heaven, ready to return (Matthew 24:33). Equally significant, He added an interesting observation: "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all

these things take place" (Matthew 24:34). What generation? The generation that sees the fig tree blossom. We are that generation. The fig tree has blossomed. Jesus is at the gates.

The City of Jerusalem The second key event was prophesied by Jesus in the same speech, as recorded by Luke: "[The Jews] will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). The first half of this prophecy was fulfilled in 70 A.D., forty years after Jesus spoke the words. In that year the Romans under Titus conquered Jerusalem and dispersed the Jews among the nations. Jerusalem remained under Gentile occupation for 1,897 years until June 7, 1967, when Israel won the city back during the Six Day War. The Jewish re-occupation of the city of Jerusalem is proof positive that we are living in the season of the Lord's return. Jesus said it would mark the end of the Gentile Age.

A Call to Action There is no way to escape the conclusion that we are living on borrowed time. The signs of the times are upon us, and they are shouting for our attention. Are you ready? If Jesus were to return today, would He be your "Blessed Hope" (Titus 2:11-14) or would He be your "Holy Terror" (Revelation 6:12-17)? If you have never received Him as your Lord and Savior, now is the time to act. Repent of your sins, and call upon the name of the Lord that you might be saved (Acts 2:14-39). And if you are a Christian, are you living as if Jesus might return any minute? Have you committed your life to holiness? Are you praying for the lost and witnessing the Lord when you have an opportunity? Are you yearning for the Lord's return? Can you say with Paul that you are a candidate for a "crown of righteousness" because you have lived your life "in the love of His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7-8)? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. - Jesus, in John 14:3.

Modern Day Signs of the Times

A review of signs unique to our day and time

by **Dr. David Reagan**

Whenever I present an overview of the signs of the times that point to the soon return of Jesus, I am often confronted by someone often a professing Christian - who will say, "Come on David, these signs you are talking about have always existed in one degree or another, so what else is new?" They will then proceed to point out that there have always been wars and rumors of war, there have always been natural calamities, and throughout history Christians have always been persecuted. Then comes the inevitable challenge: "Show me something really new and unique that clearly points to our day and time as the season of the Lord's return."

The challenge is understandable, but it is not entirely legitimate. That's because Jesus said the end time signs would be like "birth pangs" (Matthew 24:8). In other words, the signs would increase in frequency and intensity as the time draws near for Jesus to return. There would be more earthquakes, and more intense ones. Wars would be more frequent and more horrible in their degree of devastation. And that, of course, is exactly what has happened in this century. All the signs have been increasing exponentially in both frequency and intensity. But still, it is legitimate to ask if there are any signs that are truly unique to our day and time - signs that have never existed before. Are there new signs that clearly point to this period of history as the time of the Lord's return? The answer is yes.

A Key Prophecy

A verse that immediately comes to mind in this regard is found in Daniel 12. Daniel was given many prophecies by the Lord. Those relating to his day and time he clearly understood. He even seemed to understand prophecies that the Lord gave him relating to distant times, such as the succession of Gentile empires that would ultimately lead to the establishment of the Roman Empire. But when it came to prophecies about the end times - the period leading up to the Lord's return as King of kings and Lord of lords - Daniel did not understand what was revealed to him. He wrestled mightily with the prophecies and finally cried out to the Lord in despair. "I have heard," he said, "but I do not understand! What do these events mean?" (Daniel 12:8). The Lord, in effect, responded by saying, "Cool it, Daniel, because it is not for you to understand!" The Lord's actual words were: "Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time" (Daniel 12:9). It was Daniel's responsibility to deliver the prophecies, not understand them. Note that Daniel was told the prophecies would not be understood "until the end time." In fact, in the very next verse the Lord told Daniel that at the proper time "those who have insight will understand" (Daniel 12:10).

Accordingly, there are many end time prophecies that have never been understood until now, either because their understanding depended on historical events or because they were dependent upon technological developments. The fact that these prophecies have become understandable in recent years for the first time ever is proof positive that we are living in the end times. Let's look at some examples from the book of Revelation.

Revelation Examples

1. **The Tribulation Slaughter** - Revelation 6 says that the Tribulation will begin with a series of judgments that will result in the death of one-fourth of Mankind. The world's population is approaching six billion. That means one and a half billion people will die in the initial judgments, reducing the world's population to 4.5 billion. The next series of judgments, recorded in Revelation 8 and 9 will kill another third of Mankind. One-third of 4.5 billion is another one and a half billion. Thus, in the first 3 years of the Tribulation, a total of 3.5 billion people will die. That's half the population of the world! Is this possible apart from the use of nuclear weapons? Only if it is a supernatural intervention of God. But God normally works through natural processes.

The unparalleled carnage of the Tribulation seems to me to point to nuclear weapons. Revelation 8 speaks of one-third of the earth being burned and one-third of the seas being polluted (Revelation 8:7-8). Later in the Tribulation, near the end, we are told that people will suffer from "loathsome and malignant sores" (Revelation 16:2). That sounds like one of the effects of radiation poisoning. The advent of nuclear weapons makes possible for the first time the overwhelming Tribulation carnage portrayed in Revelation. I think nuclear power was what Jesus referred to in His Olivet discourse when He said that the end times will be characterized by "men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; *for the powers of the heavens will be shaken*" (Luke 21:26, emphasis added). The prophecies concerning the Tribulation carnage have clearly depended upon a major technological breakthrough for their understanding. We are living in the time of that breakthrough.

2. **The Army of 200 Million** - Chapters 9 and 16 of Revelation state that an army of 200 million soldiers will march "from the east" toward Israel. Daniel 9 indicates that this will be an army representing nations in revolt against the Antichrist. Demographers estimate that the total population of the world at the time the Apostle John wrote Revelation (95 A.D.) was only 200 million. How could an army that size march out of the east? It made no sense. In fact, it took 1,650 years for the world's population to double to 400 million! At the beginning of this century the total world population was only 1.6 billion, still too small for an army of 200 million to march from the east. But this century has witnessed an exponential increase in population. The population count is now at 5.8 billion, and just one country to the east of Israel - namely, China - could field an army of 200 million. Here we have a clear example of a prophecy about the end times that could never be understood apart from historical developments.

3. **The Two Witnesses** - Revelation 11 reveals that two great witnesses of God will preach in the city of Jerusalem during the first 3.5 years of the Tribulation. Then, in the middle of that terrible period, the Antichrist will kill them. We are further told that their dead bodies will lie in the streets of Jerusalem for 3.5 days and that all the people of the world will look upon them. How could that be? Prior to 1957 that prophecy was not understandable in natural terms. There was just no way that all the people of the world could look upon two dead bodies in the streets of Jerusalem. All that changed on October 4, 1957 when the Russians sent up the first Sputnik satellite. Today, 30 years later, our planet has many man-made satellites circling it, making possible all sorts of instantaneous communication. When those two prophets lie dead in the streets of Jerusalem, all someone will have to do is point a TV camera at them, send the signal up to a satellite, and all the world will be able to look upon them. Once again, modern technology has made an ancient prophecy understandable for the first time.

4. **The Nation of Israel** - Revelation 12 focuses on the nation of Israel. It makes clear that in the middle of the Tribulation Satan will motivate and empower the Antichrist to annihilate the Jewish state and its people. A remnant of the Jews will flee into the "wilderness" where they will be supernaturally protected by the Lord (Revelation 12:14). At the time the book of Revelation was written, Jerusalem had already been destroyed by the Romans and the worldwide distribution of the Jews had begun. Until this century, there was never any prospect that the nation of Israel would ever exist again. There were, of course, prophetic scholars who pointed to the many promises in Scripture that say the Jews will be regathered in the end times and the nation of Israel will be reestablished once more. But people laughed at these scholars and wrote them off as "dreamers" who were out of touch with reality. Then, on May 14, 1948 the "dream" came true. The independence of the nation of Israel was proclaimed, and the Jewish state came back into existence for the first time in almost 2,000 years.

All the end time prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures make it clear that the Lord will return when the Jews are back in the land (Ezekiel 37) and back in their capital city of Jerusalem (Zechariah 12). Jesus emphasized these two events in His teaching. He pointed to the reestablishment of the state in his fig tree parable (Matthew 24:32-35), and He stressed the importance of the reoccupation of Jerusalem in His Olivet discourse (Luke 21:24). He stated point blank that when Jerusalem is no longer under Gentile control, all the end time events would take place. Jerusalem ceased to be under Gentile control on June 7, 1967.

The central piece of the end time world political puzzle is now in place for the first time.

5. **The Image of the Beast** - Revelation 13 says that the Antichrist's religious leader, the False Prophet, will make an image of the Antichrist that will appear to come alive and speak. This trickery will amaze most of the world's population and will cause many of them to give their allegiance to the Antichrist. What is the explanation of this event? Many have concluded that Satan will empower the False Prophet to give the image life. But Satan does not have the power to create life. Satan is a liar and a deceiver. So, again, how can the False Prophet give an image life? I don't see any way for him to do it apart from modern technology. The illusion can be created through the use of modern robotics. Thirty years ago in 1967 I took my family to Disneyland. We went into a theatre where we saw a man who looked exactly like Abraham Lincoln get up out of his chair in stage center, walk to the edge of the stage, grab the lapels of his jacket, and proceed to quote the Gettysburg Address. When he finished, a lady behind me exclaimed, "Wasn't he a good actor!" He was not an actor. The "actor" was a robot. That was thirty years ago. Think what could be done today with the advances in computer technology.

6. **The Mark of the Beast** - Another prophecy in Revelation 13 that is dependent on modern technology is the famous one that states the Antichrist will control the world's economy by requiring people to bear his mark or name on their hand or forehead in order to buy or sell anything. Again, how could this be possible before the invention of laser and computer technology?

The Uniqueness of our Age

After reviewing the prophecies listed above, I don't think we need any handwriting on the wall to indicate to us that we are living in a unique age. Historical developments and technological inventions are making it possible for us to understand many end time prophecies for the first time. Nor is the list above an exhaustive one. I could name many other signs unique to our day and time - such as the reunification of Europe, the exponential increase in travel and knowledge, and the preaching of the Gospel to the whole world. Even the phenomenal success of Hal Lindsay's book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, is a unique sign of the times. Keep in mind that this book was the number one best seller in the world, with the sole exception of the Bible, for ten consecutive years, from 1970 to 1980 (as authenticated by *Time Magazine*). What was it that the Lord told Daniel? - "Seal it up to the end of time when those who have insight will understand."

The bottom line, my friends, is that we are living on borrowed time, because Jesus is coming soon! Maranatha!

Recognizing Signs of the Times: What are the specific signs that point to the Lord's return

Dr. David R. Reagan

A year ago I felt compelled to resign my membership in a prophecy study group because the director suddenly revealed that he did not believe there were any signs pointing to the soon return of Jesus, with the possible exception of Israel.? I was astonished by that statement, and I wrestled with what to do about it. I finally decided that I had no choice but to resign from the organization.

After all, I have devoted my life to proclaiming that the signs of the times point to the soon return of Jesus. How could I be a member of an organization whose director denies that any such signs exist? I concluded that my continued membership in the organization would put me in the position of being a house divided against myself. So, I resigned.

Abundant Signs

The signs of the times that point to the Lord's soon return are so plentiful and obvious that I don't know how anyone with any spiritual discernment could be blind to them. This, in fact, is an area that even amillennialists and premillennialists can and do agree on. In 1995 I was privileged to participate in a prophecy conference in Orlando, Florida that was sponsored by Midnight Call Ministries. One of the speakers was a remarkable man of God from Abilene, Texas by the name of Elbert Peak. This is a man who has been preaching Bible prophecy for over 60 years. His first topic at the conference was "The Signs of the Times." He began his presentation by saying: "I began preaching on the signs sixty years ago when there were very few that you could actually see. Today they are everywhere. I am no longer looking for signs; I am listening for sounds!" I shouted, "Amen!" It is no longer necessary to search for signs. We are inundated with them. There are so many and they are so clear, that it's like the Lord has a neon sign in the sky blinking on and off, saying, "Jesus is coming soon!" As Elbert Peak put it, we should be listening for sounds -- the sound of a trumpet blast and the shout of an archangel (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

The Meaning of Signs

What is a prophetic sign? It is basically a prophecy concerning an historical event or technological development that will characterize a future time. Let's consider the First Advent of the Messiah as an example. The prophet Micah prophesied that the Messiah would be born in the town of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Daniel said the Messiah would be "cut off" 483 years after an edict was issued to rebuild Jerusalem (Daniel 9:25). He also stated that this would take place before the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. And David stated in Psalm 22:16 that the Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced.

One of these signs is geographical -- the birth site of the Messiah. The second is historical. The edict it refers to was issued in 457 BC. Counting 483 years from that date brings us to 27AD. The Temple was destroyed in 70AD. So, the Messiah had to be "cut off" (that is, killed) sometime between 27 AD and 70 AD. The third sign is technological in nature. The method of execution at the time David wrote Psalm 22 was stoning. Crucifixion was not even invented by the Romans until 700 years later.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem. He was executed in 31 AD, during the "historical window" between 27 AD and 70 AD. And he was executed by crucifixion. The fulfillment of these signs in the life of Jesus serves to validate that He was the prophesied Messiah. There are over 300 prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures about the First Coming of the Messiah. But many are repetitious. For example, it is said more than once that the Messiah will be of the house of David. When you cull out all the repetitious prophecies, you are left with a total of 109 which were fulfilled in the life of Jesus. (For a detailed listing of these prophecies, order our publication entitled "The First Advent of Jesus in Old Testament Prophecy.")

Messianic Signs

On one occasion when Jesus was teaching, the Pharisees and Sadducees came and asked Him to give them a "sign" to prove that He was the Messiah (Matthew 16:1-4). What they wanted was a miracle. But Jesus responded by playing with the word, "sign." He asked them why they could read the weather but could not "discern the signs of the times." Jesus used the word, "sign," to refer to fulfilled prophecies in His life. The same principle applies to the Second Coming of Jesus. There are more than 500 prophecies in the Old Testament about the Second Coming, and one out of every twenty-five verses in the New Testament also speak of this great event. These prophecies contain many signs that we are to watch for, signs that will indicate that the time of the Lord's return is drawing near.

Jesus Himself emphasized this point in His Olivet discourse. He presented a long list of signs that would characterize the end times, and then He said, "when you see all these things, recognize that I will be near, right at the door" (Matthew 24:33). Paul also made the point that we can recognize the season of the Lord's return. In 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 he stated that even though the Lord will return like "a thief in the night," He is not coming for believers in that manner because we are "sons of light." He is referring here to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit who can open our eyes to the signs of the times so that we are not caught by surprise by the Lord's return. In like manner, the author of Hebrews states that we are to "encourage one another" as we see the day of judgment drawing near (Hebrews 10:25).

Signs of the End Times

The re-establishment of the nation of Israel is a classic example of an end time historical sign. Over and over again the Hebrew Scriptures prophesy that in the end times, right before the return of the Messiah, the nation of Israel will be re-established (Isaiah 11:10-12; Ezekiel 37:1-12; Amos 9:13-15; and Zechariah 12:1-3). Jesus emphasized this sign in Matthew 24 when He told us to watch for the rebudding of the fig tree (a symbol of Israel). When that happens, He said, the generation that sees it "will not pass away until all these things [the return of the Lord] take place" (Matthew 24:34).

The book of Revelation is full of technological signs concerning the end times. Take, for example, the prophecy that one-half the population of the world will die in the first three and a half years of the Tribulation (1/4 in the Seal Judgments and 1/3 of those remaining in the Trumpet Judgments -- Revelation 6-9). How could such unparalleled carnage occur apart from the development of nuclear weapons and their missile delivery systems?

Or consider the prophecy that when the two great witnesses of God are killed by the Antichrist in the middle of the Tribulation, the whole world "will look upon their dead bodies for three and a half days" (Revelation 11:9). How could this be possible before the development of television and satellite transmission?

Another prophecy in Revelation that has been waiting for historical developments is the one that states there will be an army of 200 million soldiers that will march across Asia toward Israel during the period of the Tribulation. At the time that prophecy was written (95 AD), there were only 200 million people on planet earth! It took 1,600 years for the population of the earth to double to 400 million. In fact, the earth's population did not reach one billion until 1850. This century has experienced a population explosion due to the advent of modern medicine (keep in mind that the first antibiotic, penicillin, was not discovered until 1928!). Today, the earth's population has just passed the six billion mark, and one Asian nation alone -- namely, China -- could easily send an army of 200 million, as prophesied in Revelation.

An Overview of the Signs

Let me present you with an outline overview of the signs of the times:

I. Signs of Nature (Matthew 24:7; Mark 13: 8; and Luke 21:11)

- 1) Famine
- 2) Earthquakes
- 3) Plagues
- 4) Signs in the Heavens (Unusual weather, new discoveries in space, UFO's, etc.)

II. Signs of Society (Matthew 24:12,37-39 & 2 Timothy 3:1-4)

- 1) Lawlessness
- 2) Violence
- 3) Immorality
- 4) Greed
- 5) Selfishness
- 6) Hedonism
- 7) Rebellion
- 8) Despair

III. Spiritual Signs

1) Negative

- a) False Christs & Prophets and their cultic groups (Matthew 24:5,11,2-4; Mark 13:6,21-22; and Luke 21:8).
- b) Apostasy in the professing church (2 Thessalonians 2:3; and 2 Timothy 3:5, 4:3-4).
- c) Widespread heresy in the church (2 Timothy 4:1-4).
- d) Movement toward a one world religion (Revelation 17).
- e) Persecution of true believers (Matthew 24:9-10; Mark 13:9,11-13; and Luke 21:12-19).
- f) Outbreak of demonic and occultic activity (1 Timothy 4:1).

2) Positive

- a) Outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-29).
- b) Revival of Davidic worship (1 Chronicles 16:1-39; Psalm 150; and Amos 9:11).
- c) Worldwide evangelism (Matthew 24:14 and Mark 13:10).
- d) Understanding of Bible prophecy (Daniel 12:4,8-9).

IV. World Political Signs

- 1) Re-establishment of Israel. (Ezekiel 36:22 - 37:1-2; Zechariah 12:1-6; Matthew 24:32-34; Mark 13:28- 30; and Luke 21:29-31).
- 2) Arab hostility toward Israel (Ezekiel 35:1 - 36:7).
- 3) Russia as a menacing power to Israel (Ezekiel 38:1 - 39:16).
- 4) Asian nations capable of fielding an army of 200 million (Revelation 9:15-16 and 16:12).
- 5) Wars and rumors of wars (Matthew 24:6-7; Mark 13:7-8; and Luke 21:10).
- 6) Kingdom against kingdom -- that is, civil wars and ethnic wars (Matthew 24:7; Mark 13:8; and Luke 21:10).
- 7) Reunification of Europe (Daniel 2:41-44, 7:8, 24-25, and 9:26).
- 8) Movement toward a one world economy (Revelation 18).

V. Technological Signs

- 1) Nuclear weapons. (Matthew 24:22; Luke 21: 25-26; and Revelation 6:8, 8:7 and 16: 2-).
- 2) Television and satellite transmission (Revelation 11:3-12).
- 3) Robotics (Revelation 13:14-15).
- 4) Computer and laser technology (Revelation 13:16-18).
- 5) High speed transportation (Daniel 12:4).

VI. The Accelerator Sign

- 1) Population explosion (Revelation 9: 15-16 and 16:12).
- 2) Increase in knowledge (Daniel 12:4).
- 3) Increase in violence (Matthew 24:12).
- 4) Increase in transportation (Daniel 12:4).
- 5) Rapid disintegration of society (1 Timothy 3:1-4).
- 6) Signs in general to be like birth pangs' that is, increasing in frequency and intensity (Matthew 24:8).

VII. Signs of Israel

- 1) Regathering of the people (Isaiah 11:10-12 and Ezekiel 37:1-12).
- 2) Re-establishment of the state (Isaiah 66:7-8; Zechariah 12:1-6; and Matthew 24:32-35).
- 3) Reclamation of the land (Isaiah 35:1-2,7 and Ezekiel 36:34-35).
- 4) Revival of the language (Zephaniah 3:9).
- 5) Resurgence of the military (Zechariah 12:6)
- 6) Refocusing of world politics (Zechariah 12:2-3).
- 7) Reoccupation of Jerusalem (Zechariah 12:2-6).

God never pours out His wrath without warning because "He does not wish that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Jesus said that when we see all these signs come together, He will be "right at the door," ready to return (Matthew 24: 33). God is warning, and Jesus is at the gates of Heaven waiting for His Father's command. Are you ready?