

## The Signs of Christ's Second Coming

The day of Jesus' coming will come soon, because the signs that indicate its approach (Mt 24, Mk 13, Lk 21, and 2 Ths 2) have come true or are coming true. We look for signs in nature (earthquakes, floods, storms, eclipses of sun and moon), signs in the life of nations (wars and rumours of war, pestilence, famine, unrighteousness in business and politics, perilous times — 2 Tm 3:1-4), and signs in the visible church (false teachers, hypocrisy, love growing cold, falling away from the truth and from the faith, the appearance of Antichrist).

Some of the things Jesus mentioned as signs had happened before, and even now people may explain them as natural events. This does not, however, mean that they aren't signs. Christ made them signs of His coming, and as we observe them they remind us that the end is at hand. A bodily ailment may have a natural cause, and yet it leads on to death. In a similar manner these things lead on to the end of this present world.

The beginning of the end, or things that lead toward it, were noticeable even in the days of the apostles. The destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70) was, so to speak, the prelude to the final judgment, and at the same time the beginning of the end. In Matt 24:2-5 Jesus pictures the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world side by side, and interweaves the two together. For this reason, Peter in his day could say, "The end of all things is at hand" (1 Pt 4:7). Today these signs are more evident and pronounced. The next thing we may look for is the end itself.

The purpose of the signs is to prepare us. "So also, when you see all these things, you know that He is near, at your door." (Mt 24:33; Lk 21:28). Nevertheless, the day will come suddenly, as a snare (Lk 21:35), and unexpectedly, like a thief (2 Pt 3:10; 1 Ths 5:2-6). Therefore we should always watch and pray, that we may be able to escape all these things that are going to happen and to stand before the Son of Man (Lk 21:36).

[Adapted from E W A Koehler, *A Summary of Christian Doctrine*, 1952, pages 297-298]