

Two Minute Warning

Valley Center October 6,2007

You've probably done this, just as I have. You jump into the car and begin driving to a location you're not exactly sure of, but you're confident you can find it anyway. But then as you go, you begin to realize that it may not be that easy to find. "Why didn't I take 30 seconds to Google a map on this and at least get the name of the street before the turnoff?" you ask yourself. I speak from personal experience!

Our wonderful Lord doesn't want us to travel "in the dark." He wants us to walk in the "light" of not only truth and righteousness, but also of knowledge. He wants us to know where we are in time, and the main features of His plans. "Surely the Lord GOD does nothing unless He reveals His secret to his servants the prophets." Amos 3:7.

I would like to begin a short series on why I believe the Lord's coming is very soon. We know that God is not going to allow evil to continue indefinitely. The divine Surgeon must deal with the cancer of sin. The peace and tranquility of His universe must be restored at some point. The Great Experiment involving such momentous issues of good and evil, life and death, choosing God's way or Satan's way, must reach its conclusion.

Long ago, one of the top angels in heaven, Lucifer, proposed that a New Order be instituted. Despite the fact that up to that point perfection had ruled, and there was peace and harmony, he allowed his thoughts to go in the direction of unwarranted ambition. He desired more. In his envy, he coveted the very throne of heaven, and began a rebellion that resulted in his being evicted. The Bible tells us that the stage of this controversy was then transferred to planet Earth, and that Adam and Eve yielded to his temptation to disobey God's explicit command to not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

This disobedience plunged the earth into a tailspin of chaos, the effects of which would only be disclosed through centuries of the "tree" of knowledge bearing its "fruit" of evil. But mercifully, God interposed a plan that would restore human beings to the harmony of heaven. The Creator God, Jesus Christ, would take upon Himself man's guilt and punishment and give to all an opportunity to chose God's way instead of Satan's.

Though it would seem like a very long time from man's point of view, the crop of wickedness must be left to grow. The full effects of sin must be brought to harvest, so that all could see its inevitable results. But, eventually, the harvest must come. God will not allow this "experiment" to continue for ever. An end must come, when He will put away sin and restore the tranquility that bathed His kingdom before the seeds of iniquity were sown.

To give encouragement and hope to His children, God has graciously given us insights into

Why things on earth are the way they are

How all this started

Who would bring us the opportunity to be saved, and

When we might expect His plan to be completed.

All this information is contained in His Book, the Bible. Because He wants us to know about His great plan, He included many "signs" of His coming in His Book. He didn't have to do this, but He wants to give His followers as much information as they need to be apprised of His doings.

In the same way that you would provide directions to your house for a friend, and list the streets with their turns, and perhaps a visible landmark along the way, so that your friend could say, "Yes, we're on the right track; we must be getting close," the Lord has generously outlined numerous indicators on the highway of time to encourage and uplift His children.

There's another important aspect here, and that is that **believing He's coming soon changes the way you think and live**. "Every one that has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." I John 3:3. Jesus said, "If the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched..." Matthew 24:43. What you know, what you believe, affects how you think and act. What you do and how you do it is in direct response to your conception of reality. Believing Jesus is coming soon changes your perspective of reality.

It might be nice to have a pleasant, leisurely chat as you walk down the stairs of the office building in which you work, but if it were that fateful Tuesday of September 11, 2001, and your office was in one of the twin towers, your "reality" would have been changed by a strong belief that danger was imminent and lives were at stake. What you would do, and how you would have done it would have been changed

by your perception of reality. God wants us to have a clear understanding of the times we live in. He wants us to live in the reality that He knows and controls, even if the vast majority of residents on this globe are living as if life as we know it will continue through the ceaseless ages of eternity. But what thinking person really believes that? Over population, environmental problems, fragile world politics, evaporating fuel and food sources tell even the secularist that all things can't continue forever.

With sadness in His voice, Jesus said to the religious leaders of His day, "You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times." Matthew 16:3. Think of how much time and money today is spent in being able to give accurate weather predictions! There's even a special channel on TV dedicated to weather newscasts. If it is true that Jesus is coming back soon, shouldn't we invest time and study in understanding these signs? Shouldn't we be completely familiar with the signs He gave us, so that we won't be caught off guard?

What I propose to do is discuss these indicators in two general categories; first, I want to study 10 of these signs which all occurred in the 100 year period between 1750 and 1850. Then, I want to study another set of signs that pertain to our day more directly.

It may be that when I said, "we'll study 10 signs that began about 1750", you might have thought, "That's a long time ago. That's ancient history. How could these be signs of Christ's soon coming when they took place up to two and a half centuries ago?" That's a legitimate question! Here's the answer; it's actually a two-fold answer. First, God looks at time differently than we do. What might seem like a long time for us is not that way to Him. He's looking toward a long-range solution to the sin problem, and in His patience He's not willing to plunge into a quick fix "rush to judgment" strategy.

Think of it this way: a football game is played over a sixty minute period of time. For the sake of illustration, let's suppose that those sixty **minutes** represent the sixty **centuries** of life on this planet. In a football game, the last two minutes of each half are preceded by a special time-out called the "two minute warning." I suppose in the days before electronic scoreboards that everyone could see, it was deemed appropriate for the referee to let each team know that time was running out soon, and it was time to make every second count.

It's interesting to me that if we understand that life on this planet has existed for about 6,000 years, as most conservative scholars would agree, then each minute of time on a one-hour clock would represent 100 years. Sixty centuries make 6,000 years, and each minute of a 60 minute hour could represent 100 year period of time. Now, if we look at the last two centuries (you'll see why I'm using that as a reference point a little later), we could say that from about 1800 A.D. on, we've been living in what the Bible calls "the time of the end." A period of 200 years on a one hour clock would be two minutes, or two centuries, in our illustration. I'm going to suggest that we're now living in the "two minute warning" of this earth's great conflict. This is the time that the Lord, the great Referee, is saying to us, "It's nearly over. Make every second count." When you think of it that way, for God to give special announcements of His coming at a point that is 2/60 of a time line, or at a point that would be about 97% toward the end, it doesn't seem out of place.

The second reason why it may seem like a long time since these signs were given has to do with one of the saddest verses in the Bible. There are a few verses in Scripture that are heart-wrenching, and this is certainly one of them. I'm referring to Deuteronomy 1:2. See if you can appreciate the tragedy spoken in this verse: "It is eleven days journey from Horeb by way of Mount Seir to Kadesh Barnea." "Horeb" is another word for Mt. Sinai, where God spoke His law to the people. Kadesh Barnea was a town that bordered Canaan. Can you feel the sorrow in that verse! It's only **11 days** from Sinai to the border of Canaan! But what does the next verse tell us? "Now it came to pass in the fortieth year..." Deuteronomy 1:3.

How did eleven days become forty years? "Oh," you say, "Israel rebelled at the border and wouldn't believe that God could give them the Promised Land, so they wandered about, till it was 40 years from the time they left Egypt." You're right, but how tragic! **It was never God's plan that they spend those decades in the desert!** That was long ago, but here's bigger question for us: Is it possible that God could have come back to this earth and settled the affair long ago, if His people had exercised faith that He was able to fulfill His promise? I believe that there might be something to think about there. "All these things happened to them (the Israelites on the way to Canaan) as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come." I Corinthians 10:11.

So even though these signs that we're now going to study were given quite some time ago, remember that in the larger scope of the

picture, they still fall within the last “two minutes”, if you please, and keep in mind also that if it’s true that God intended to end it long before this, then the signs would have been much closer to the end. However, human faith stumbled on the border of “Canaan.”

With these thoughts in mind, consider the first of 10 great signs, each of which is found in the book of Revelation, each of which has a “date” that can be plotted on a time-line. This “Decathlon Of Signs” constituted God’s “wake-up call” to this planet to get ready. Keep in mind also that what we’ll look at is merely an overview, a survey. Any one of these could occupy much more time than we will allow. The first is found in Revelation 6:12 which reads, “I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake.”

On Sunday morning of November 1, 1755, celebrated as All Saints Day, at about 9:40 a.m. an earthquake estimated to be 9.0, struck about 120 miles west of Portugal. It was one of the most destructive and deadly earthquakes recorded in history, killing upwards of 100,000 people in a matter of minutes. It is called the Great Lisbon Earthquake, and signaled the birth of modern seismology. About 85% of the buildings of Lisbon were destroyed, either by the quake and its aftershocks, the three tsunamis, producing waves cresting in some areas at nearly 100 feet high that began about 10:20 a.m. or the fires that raged for the following five days. About 40% of the city’s population was lost.

Nor was Lisbon the only place effects of the quake were felt. Tsunamis up to 65 feet high swept across the coast of North Africa. 10,000 people were killed in Morocco.

The quake caused gigantic fissures about 16 feet wide in downtown Lisbon. The poet Holmes wrote, “That was the year that Lisbon town, saw the earth open and gulp her down.” There is a fascinating eye-witness account, written by Pastor Charles Davy. (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1755lisbonquake.html>) I’ll quote just a few paragraphs of his description:

“There never was a finer morning seen than the 1st of November; the sun shone out in its full luster; the whole face of the sky was perfectly serene and clear; and not the least signal of warning of that approaching event, which has made this once flourishing, opulent, and, populous city, a scene of the utmost horror and desolation, except only such as served to alarm, but scarcely left a moment's time to fly from the general destruction.

It was on the morning of this fatal day, between the hours of nine and ten that I was set down in my apartment, just finishing a letter, when the papers and table I was writing on began to tremble with a gentle motion, which rather surprised me, as I could not perceive a breath of wind stirring. Whilst I was reflecting with myself what this could be owing to, but without having the least apprehension of the real cause, the whole house began to shake from the very foundation, which at first I imputed to the rattling of several coaches in the main street, resembling the hollow distant rumbling of thunder."

Davy then describes the quake and its effects as he escaped from his apartment and found himself in prayer outside.

"You may judge of the force of this shock, when I inform you it was so violent that I could scarce keep on my knees; but it was attended with some circumstances still more dreadful than the former. On a sudden I heard a general outcry, "The sea is coming in, we shall be all lost." Upon this, turning my eyes towards the river, which in that place is nearly four miles broad, I could perceive it heaving and swelling in the most unaccountable manner, as no wind was stirring. In an instant there appeared, at some small distance, a large body of water, rising as it were like a mountain. It came on foaming and roaring, and rushed towards the shore with such impetuosity, that we all immediately ran for our lives as fast as possible; many were actually swept away, and the rest above their waist in water at a good distance from the banks. For my own part I had the narrowest escape, and should certainly have been lost, had I not grasped a large beam that lay on the ground, till the water returned to its channel, which it did almost at the same instant, with equal rapidity. As there now appeared at least as much danger from the sea as the land, and I scarce knew whither to retire for shelter, I took a sudden resolution of returning back, with my clothes all dripping, to the area of St. Paul's. Here I stood some time, and observed the ships tumbling and tossing about as in a violent storm; some had broken their cables, and were carried to the other side of the Tagus; others were whirled around with incredible swiftness; several large boats were turned keel upwards; and all this without any wind, which seemed the more astonishing. It was at the time of which I am now speaking, that the fine new quay, (wharf) built entirely of rough marble, at an immense expense, was entirely swallowed up, with all the people on it, who had fled thither for safety, and had reason to think themselves out of danger in such a place: at the same time, a great number of boats and small vessels, anchored near it (all likewise full of people, who had retired thither for

the same purpose), were all swallowed up, as in a whirlpool, and nevermore appeared.

This last dreadful incident I did not see with my own eyes, as it passed three or four stones' throws from the spot where I then was; but I had the account as here given from several masters of ships, who were anchored within two or three hundred yards of the quay, and saw the whole catastrophe. One of them in particular informed me that when the second shock came on, he could perceive the whole city waving backwards and forwards, like the sea when the wind first begins to rise; that the agitation of the earth was so great even under the river, that it threw up his large anchor from the mooring, which swam, as he termed it, on the surface of the water: that immediately upon this extraordinary concussion, the river rose at once near twenty feet, and in a moment subsided; at which instant he saw the quay, with the whole concourse of people upon it, sink down, and at the same time every one of the boats and vessels that were near it was drawn into the cavity, which he supposed instantly closed upon them, inasmuch as not the least sign of a wreck was ever seen afterwards. This account you may give full credit to, for as to the loss of the vessels, it is confirmed by everybody; and with regard to the quay, I went myself a few days after to convince myself of the truth, and could not find even the ruins of a place where I had taken so many agreeable walks, as this was the common rendezvous of the factory in the cool of the evening. I found it all deep water, and in some parts scarcely to be fathomed."

Although there have been earthquakes before and after, because of its ferocity and the impact it created, The Great Lisbon Earthquake of 1755 has been recognized as being the fulfillment of Revelation's prophecy.

Second on our list is the date of 1776 and the emergence of the United States of America. The Apostle John wrote, "Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon." Revelation 13:11. Again, we could spend a great deal of time on this one verse! In the pageant of prophecy, a "beast" represents a kingdom, a country, or a power. The "earth" describes the opposite of the "sea", which we are told represents "peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues." Revelation 17:15. So this beast, or nation, rises out of an unpopulated area, generally speaking.

In 1776 America declared her freedom and established a new nation, founded on the twin principles of civil and religious freedom. A

country without a king and a church without a pope were the two "horns" or "pillars" that gave this country its unique character.

Allow me to make this comparison: When Solomon built the Lord's temple, two beautiful and stately pillars graced its entrance. Elaborate embellishment as well as immense strength were their qualities. "He cast two pillars of bronze each one eighteen cubits (about 30 feet) high, and a line of twelve cubits measured the circumference of each. Then he set up the pillars by the vestibule of the temple; he set up the pillar on the right and called its name Jachin ("Founding"), and he set up the pillar on the left and called its name Boaz ("Strength"). I Kings 7:15, 21. So special were they that names were given to them! This country was likewise blessed by two "horns," two "pillars" of **civil and religious freedom**. We'll come back this later.

Today we don't appreciate the unique experiment in democracy forged by the United States. A young aristocratic lawyer, Alexis de Tocqueville came to the United States in 1831 with his friend and fellow magistrate Gustave de Beaumont to study American penitentiary systems. During their nine-month visit they conducted interviews with more than 200 people on American politics, law, and social practices. After returning to France, Tocqueville read hundreds of books and documents while reflecting on what his trip had revealed about the "great democratic revolution" that was transforming the Western world.

In the beginning, this "beast" had the appearance of a "lamb," which would convey a peaceful demeanor. In the book of Revelation, the term "lamb" is applied to Jesus 28 times, so it would correct to say that this new power gave the appearance of being a "Christian" nation. This fits the United States. We see the hand of God in the establishment of this country. His special blessing rested upon it and allowed for its prosperity and success. It was to be a place where His name would be honored and from which His knowledge would be shared.

Read the history of the pilgrims and see how they felt they were under God's protection and guidance

Review the statements of our founding fathers and how they not only acknowledged Him, but depended on God for wisdom to construct this new nation

Notice how America was greatly involved in the Religious Awakening of the 19th century, and became the launching pad of world evangelism

But then later, this nation is said to speak "like a dragon," which in the prophetic symbols of Revelation, refers to the devil. Revelation

12:9. The country that was placed within the swaddling clothes of the flag of freedom would one day abandon liberty! The nation that came on the stage as a lamb would become a dragon! We see the beginning of this shocking turn of philosophy today. In her book The Criminalization Of Christianity, Janet Folger outlines the current strategies that are in place now to make the practice of Christianity illegal in America. Whether it's prayer in school, the name of God on our money or in the Pledge of Allegiance or municipalities making it increasingly difficult to build churches, the war is on. Hollywood has a special agenda to mock Christianity. How many of her titles employ terms that come from the Bible?

Think again of those pillars in Solomon's temple. In Old Testament times, when Judah rejected her Lord, He removed His protection and allowed the enemy access. His people and the articles and furnishings of His house were hijacked to Babylon. The beautiful twin pillars, Boaz and Jochin, came down. "The bronze pillars that were in the house of the LORD...the Chaldeans broke in pieces, and carried their bronze to Babylon." II Kings 25:13. America's twin pillars, or can I say "twin towers", religious and civil freedom, have likewise been under attack. They're beginning to crumble and fall.

So this beast would initially provide freedom of conscience, but would later renounce those principles. Comparing verse 10, the verse before, notice that it emerges just about the time the first "beast" of this chapter is suffering a terrible setback (sorry--this will be number 6 on the list; I'll explain later!). The United States perfectly fulfills the depictions of Revelation's prophecy in the timing of its birth, the place of its origin and in its posture toward freedom of religion. After 1755 for the Great Lisbon Earthquake, put on your time 1776 for the birth of America. The next stop is 1780.

When God created the great lights of the sky, He said that they were to be for "signs." Genesis 1:14. Numbers 3 and 4 on our list of ten go together. May 19, 1780, was the Great Dark Day. I found it interesting that I put into my search engine "great dark day" and immediately found multitudinous references to this event. From the Weather Doctor (<http://www.islandnet.com/~see/weather/almanac/arc2004/alm04may.htm>) comes this account: "The abnormal darkening of daytime skies has often held fear and dread for humans and confusion among animals. There can be several causes for unexpected *dark days*: severe thunderstorms, solar eclipses, volcanic dust clouds and wildfire smoke and ash. Today, we are able to predict the exact moment of

solar eclipses, and observation and communication networks keep us abreast of any severe storms, volcanic eruptions and wildfires. In 1780, however, this was not the case; information moved no faster than Paul Revere's ride. In May of that year, during a crucial time in the American Revolution, the skies over New England darkened, and no one knew why.

Though daytime skies for several days had been unusually coloured — a dirty yellow tinge with a reddish-hued sun — no one in New England was fully prepared for the darkness that descended over the region on the morning of 19 May. When an early descending darkness took hold around the noon hour, all life reacted. Birds began singing their evening songs, then went silent and disappeared from view; frogs began to peep. Chickens returned to their roosts, and cattle walked slowly back to their barns, thinking evening had descended. Human outdoor travel became difficult. Professor Daggett of New Haven, Connecticut reported: "The greatest darkness at least equal to what was commonly called candle-lighting in the evening. The appearance was indeed uncommon, and the cause unknown."

"In some places, the darkness was so great, that persons could not see to read common print in the open air... The extent of this darkness was very remarkable." Prof. Samuel Williams, Cambridge MA.

"The darkness of the following evening was probably as gross as ever has been observed since the Almighty fiat gave birth to light.... A sheet of white paper held within a few inches of the eyes was equally invisible with the blackest velvet." Dr Samuel Tenney of Rowley, (MA?), letter dated from Exeter (NH?).

"By 12, I could not read anywhere in the house — we were forced to dine by candle light. It was awful and surprising." Rev. Ebenezer Parkham Westborough, MA.

John Greenleaf Whittier wrote a poem about it. Rather than dismiss a Council meeting held on that day, Mr. Davenport requested that candles be brought, saying, "If this is the day of the Lord's coming, I want to be found doing my duty." On May 19, 1980, two hundred years later, John Sinor of the San Diego Tribune wrote a column about it.

Remarkably, this prophecy is referred about seven times in the Bible. Revelation 6:12: (right after the great earthquake) "The sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood."

Joel 2:31: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD." (Quoted by Peter in Acts 2:20.) Amos 8:9 "And it shall come to pass in that day, says the Lord GOD, that I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight." Jesus said, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened and moon will not give its light." Matthew 24:29. (See also Isaiah 13:10; 24:23.)

Concerning the night of May 9, 1780, Milo Bostick in Stone's History of Massachusetts says, "The moon which was at its full, had the appearance of blood." Those who were alive at the time and witnessed these events came under conviction that they fulfilled Revelation's predictions accurately.

God is telling us, "Wake up. I'm coming soon. Don't make this world your home. I'm coming to take you to the home I've made for you. It won't have the effects of sin that you live with here. No more sickness or pain. No more death and dying. Be ready! I'll be here soon."

We can learn many things from our pets. Our dog Sukie has taught me the sermon for today. When we return from having taken a trip in the car, we coast up the driveway and hit the remote button to activate the garage door opener, I can be assured that within seconds her bright face will appear at the front-room window, her body quivering with excitement. Somehow she has put together the sound of the garage door opening to our soon arrival. It's a sign to her. Because she loves us, and knows that we love her, it's a signal of a long awaited event. Periodically I have to clean the window from the smudges of her excitement, but I don't mind. The picture of her face in the window as we drive in is what I want my life to be. The signs are there. God's signals have been announced. He's coming back. And that news makes us glad.