

Signs of the Times

Condensed from: Mormon Doctrine, Bruce R. McConkie

At that day "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." (Isaiah 40:5) They will recognize the signs as certainly as a woman in travail foreknows the approximate time of her child's birth. (Thess.5: 1-6) The "signs of the times" are the marvelous events, which identify the dispensation of the fullness of times and immediately precede the Second Coming of Christ. They include:

1. Universal apostasy followed by increased spirituality among men

In Thessalonians Paul cautioned the saints concerning the Second Coming saying "for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first". Peter explained that this apostasy would be followed by an age of restoration, when the Lord has promised to "gather together in one all things in Christ."

2. Printing and general availability of the Bible

Without knowledge of the truths found in the Bible, the Lord could not have brought to pass his latter-day purposes. During the dark ages reading, writing, and knowledge of the scriptures were confined, almost without exception, to the clergy. Because the people lacked the knowledge of the truth their civil and ecclesiastical leaders more easily kept them in bondage. The printing and availability of the bible was a mighty force behind the reformation.

3. Discovery of America, establishment of a land of liberty

Ether 2:7-12 tells us that this land is "choice above all other lands" had has been reserved in all ages for the people chosen of God to inhabit it. The establishment of this country, and its constitution was ordained of God so that:

- 1) The Book of Mormon could be brought forth
- 2) The Lord's true church could be established again upon the earth

4. Revelation, visions, and gifts of spirit return to the earth

Truly the heavens have been opened once again in the latter-days. The Father and the Son appeared personally to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and heavenly messengers have, and continue to minister to the faithful. The gift of the Holy Ghost is poured out upon the righteous church members throughout the world.

5. Coming forth of the Book of Mormon

Truly the price throughout the ages in keeping, compiling and bringing forth this marvelous book is unparalleled. Isaiah 29, Ezekiel 37, and Mormon 8 all relate this process as being a sign of the restitution of all things.

6. Restoration of the Priesthood and the Keys of Authority

Without the priesthood, which is the power and authority given to man by God to act in His name, and the Keys of Authority, which is the right and power of presidency, to lead and direct over the church and temple ordinances, the Lord's purpose for this earth could not be accomplished.

7. Restoration of the gospel and the Church of Jesus Christ

John saw the promised restoration as taking place just before the day of judgement in Revelations 14:6-8

8. Persecution of Jews - Jews to begin to believe in Christ

Persecution of the Jews throughout the ages is common knowledge. What many do not realize is the number of Jews joining the church today, and the many more Jews that have begun to accept Christ at least as a great rabbi or teacher. Not until Christ appears to the Jews on the Mount of Olive and shows them the wounds in His hands and feet will the Jews as a whole come to recognize Jesus Christ as their Savior.

9. Gathering of Israel - as a people and to Jerusalem

Moses conferred the keys for the gathering of Israel upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery on April 3, 1836 in the Kirtland Temple and the gathering has escalated from that time to the present. Israel, the nation has now been established, the Jews are gathering there and are bringing back their people from where they have been scattered, including places in Russia and Africa.

10. Return of Ten Tribes

As we realize that the tribe of Ephraim is one of the ten tribes we recognize that a great gathering to Zion is already underway. The complete fulfillment of this prophecy will happen after the Second Coming, during the millennium according to Bruce R. McConkie's Millennial Messiah. The lost tribes of Israel reside in countries north of the Holy Land, and not until the millennium will their time fully come to be converted. At that time will scriptures be found as a record of their people, and they will have prophets who preach to them. It will all be under the direction of Christ for it will be in the time that he reigns personally upon the earth that the final fulfillment will come. It is interesting to note that the largest and most populated country that the church is not established in is China.

11. Building of Temples

The purpose of the Lord is to "bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man". Temples are the place that necessary ordinances are performed allowing this to take place. Temples are being built in the far corners of the earth, that people everywhere can enjoy the blessings of the temple. The temples that are being built are of the finest, longest lasting materials. They are literally being built to last a lifetime.

12. Lord to come suddenly to His Temple

This prophecy was fulfilled, at least in part by his return to the Kirtland Temple on April 3, 1836. It can be assumed he has appeared in other temples as well, and will yet come down to those places upon the earth built for him. In particular, prophecy seems to predict an appearance at a temple built in Jackson County, Missouri.

13. Spirit of Elijah - genealogical research

The fulfillment of this sign is well documented. Genealogical research is abounding within the church and the world in general.

14. Gospel to be preached to all the world

This well-known prophecy is all but accomplished, and continues to gather speed as it rolls forth. Many countries where the church is not yet organized have service missionaries and the brethren are constantly establishing diplomatic relations. During the millennium all people will have the opportunity to hear the gospel message.

15. Lamanites to blossom as a rose

Fulfilled as the church has grown in Central and South America. The work began with American missionaries by the hundreds and then thousands being sent there 20 to 40 years ago, until the present time in which they have progressed to largely having their mission force filled from within.

16. Knowledge to increase among man, while lack of wisdom abounds

The printing press might be considered one of the few inventions before the time of Joseph Smith. Certainly as we have discussed, it was necessary for the establishment of the church. In the years since the church was established scientific discovery has progressed at a pace that is hard for us to comprehend or keep up with. As we contemplate these discoveries it is plain to see that many of them are helping to forward the work of God.

At the same time, the population as a whole has turned away from God, putting value in their own knowledge, ignoring the wisdom of God.

17. Disease, plagues and pestilence sweep the earth

In D&C 45:31-32 We read: "They shall see an overflowing scourge; for a desolating sickness shall cover the land. But my disciples (followers) shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved; but among the wicked, men shall lift up their voices and curse God and die." How well this describes people in our day who practice great immoralities, then raise their voices in defense of their wickedness. Tremendous resources are spent fighting the diseases of immorality, and in politicking for their rights to practice it. Homosexuality, infidelity, drug abuse and their related diseases, abortion, alcoholism, poverty and homelessness, gangs and violence. These could all be considered plagues and pestilence the Lord has sent as a judgement and a sign of the last days. If we gather to Zion and stand in holy places we can find a measure of protection. There are however, many innocent victims to these plagues as well. We must recognize that it is not for us to judge or condemn, but to show compassion and comfort those who are in need of comfort.

18. Famines, disasters and calamities abound

We need only look at today's headlines to see that this prophecy is being fulfilled. Scientists are startled by a many fold increase in earthquakes each decade of the last century.

19. Wickedness increases - spirit of God ceases to dwell in men

This too is apparent in the headlines of today. Murder, rape, robbery, lying, cheating, stealing, are all crimes to get gain or pleasure. Our country, founded on religious principle has become more of a Godless society that legalizes sin while limiting the recognition of God and the practice of prayer and other religious traditions.

20. Lord begins to pour out judgements

On June 24, 1894, over a hundred years ago, President Wilford Woodruff stated: "God has held the angels of destruction for many years, lest they should reap down the wheat with the tares. But I want to tell you now, that those angels have left the portals of heaven, and they stand over this people and this nation now, and are hovering over the earth waiting to pour out the judgements. And from this very day they shall be poured out. Calamities and troubles are increasing in the earth, and there is a meaning to these things... Great changes are at our doors. The next 20 years will see mighty changes among the nations of the Earth." It is interesting to note that almost to the day, 20 years later, the Archduke of Austria was assassinated, thus initiating the First World War.

21. War and rumors of wars cover the earth

From then until the present have wars covered the earth like a plague. Weapons of mass destruction, while somewhat reduced from decades ago, exist in sufficient number to destroy the earth many times over.

22. People apostatize from true worship and follow false doctrines

True worship of God the Father, his Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost ceased to exist only a few hundred years after the crucifixion until truth was restored by Joseph Smith's vision. Most churches today worship a God without body, parts or passions. Worship of symbols, saints, power or possessions abound, and men no longer believe that God speaks to man. Many religions still believe that Christ will come again, but refuse to see the signs of the times. Perhaps we are somewhat guilty of this also.

24. The sun darkened, the moon turned to blood

President Joseph Fielding Smith, as quoted in July '71 Ensign "Thus, the work of the Lord is advancing and all these things are signs of the near approach of our Lord. The words of the prophets are rapidly being fulfilled, but it is done on such natural principles that most of us fail to see it. Wonders in heaven and in the earth should be seen, and there should be fire, blood and pillars of smoke. Eventually the sun is to be turned into darkness and the moon as blood, and then shall come the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Some of these signs have been given; some are yet to come. The sun has not yet been darkened. We are informed that this will be one of the last acts just preceding the coming of the Lord. One wonders if we are not now seeing some of the signs in heaven."

25. Gathering of all who hold keys to Adam-Ondi-Ahman

This great gathering where all the prophets from the different dispensations, including whomever is president of the church at that time will turn over their keys to Christ. This may be the largest priesthood meeting ever held, and is another event that is to immediately precede the Second Coming. It is unlikely to appear in the church news when it does occur. Bruce R. McConkie suggests that it will not be a one time meeting of the handful of prophets over the ages, but eventually, probably during the millennium, will include everyone who has ever had a stewardship in the church.

27. Special mission in Jerusalem of two latter-day prophets

Revelations chapter 11 describes in detail the two prophets who will preach to the Jews, be murdered by them, and then be raised up after 3 days. It states they will prophesy for a thousand two hundred and threescore days, which is about 3 1/2 years. This could mean anyone from members of the quorum of twelve or seventy, to mission presidents, missionaries, or any man holding the Melchizedek priesthood and having the gift of prophecy. Again, we are unlikely to know this is happening, it could be happening now, and we should not put off the "day of our repentance" until reading this in the church news.

26. Final great war in the Holy Land

The Lord will come in the midst of the greatest war the world has ever known. All nations will be gathered together at Jerusalem. The armies of the earth will be assembled in the Valley of Decision. Apparently those engaged in the conflict (perhaps counting those helping to support forces, such as manufacturing and transporting armaments, food and supplies) will total 200 million. With the United Nations as active with forces as it now is it is easy to envision world conditions that could begin such a war. At the height of that conflict Christ will come and the great millennial era will be ushered in.

28. Wicked to be burned as stubble

At His coming the righteous will be "caught up" while the wicked, those not living at least a terrestrial life will be burned. Whether this is figurative or literal is not clear. We are told that by the payment of our tithes and offerings we will be spared.

29. Restoration of earth to its paradisiacal glory

Paradisiacal glory refers to the state the earth was in before the fall of Adam. It was in a Terrestrial state. This restoration would include the landmasses being joined back together as one. This would cause quite a commotion in the elements. Also in the Garden of Eden plants, fruits, and vegetables grew abundantly and year round. To return to this state the earth would need to eliminate the 23 1/2-degree tilt of its axis that gives us the seasons. This also would be a great change; in fact, stars would appear to fall from heaven if we were looking heavenward at the time. Another change would be the enmity between man and beasts. All creatures upon the earth would become vegetarian, and have no desire to kill or eat one another.

30. Christ to return in glory and reign personally upon earth

This is the greatest of all the prophecies. In Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith it states: "Then will appear one grand sign of the Son of Man in heaven. But what will the world do? They will say it is a planet, a comet, etc. But the Son of Man will come as the sign of the coming of the Son of Man, which will be as the light of the morning cometh out of the east." All people shall see it together! It shall spread over all the earth as the morning light! "For as the light of the morning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, and covereth the whole earth, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." JS-M 1:26