

Economic and Natural Signs

Welcome to Harvest Community Church

Series: Signs, Times and Seasons

Text: Matthew 24:7-8

Economic Signs

Some of the things Jesus tells us that will mark the end of days is **shortages**, scarcities, hunger and deficits. The key word that brings all this together is the word **lack**. Although famines are not new throughout history, there will be a shortage of food in many parts of the world before He returns. The word famine in the Greek means scarcity of grain. However, the word Jesus uses is plural and speaks of multiple famines occurring simultaneously around the world.

Currently around the world 250,000 people die from **hunger** and hunger related issues every year. Out of 7.7 billion people on the earth **8.15 million** suffer from chronic undernourishment, that is 1 in 9. This is the entire population of the European continent and California and Texas combined. The greatest number of those dealing with hunger issues are **children**. Right now, there are over one billion people on earth who earn less than \$1.25 a day. This means that one of the greatest ways we can reach people with the love of Jesus Christ is to feed them.

Proverbs 21:13, Proverbs 19:17

The word famine means 'scarcity of grain', which is what the **economics** were based on in Jesus' day. This would be much like our stock and commodities markets. Jesus was saying that there would be a time when the economic short falls and deficits would be so significant that it would affect global economies and bring financial instability. In **Mark 13:8** adds that there will be famines and **troubles**. The word 'troubles' means to be stirred up, anxious and upset. It could also be translated as the word **distress**. **Luke 21:25**
Jesus was prophetically saying that financial instability would happen again and again as we draw closer to the end of the age.

Pestilences

The word pestilence in the Greek is a medical term that means **diseases**. The word is plural and lets us know that many will arrive at the same time. Many mistakenly think that this refers to things like locust swarms and rat invasions. Today the world is being hit hard with diseases that are literally shrinking entire populations. Things like HIV, cancer, diabetes and various strains of the **flu** are stumping doctors on how to bring about cures. One of the emerging problems is that many are new strains of old diseases and viruses that are **resistant** to our current medicines. Smallpox, the coronavirus, Ebola and Staph infections have become epidemic. Because of the rise in travel what used to be simply an epidemic confined to specific populations are now becoming pandemics that have world-wide effects.

One reason for many of the diseases is a rise in sexual promiscuity. STD's are on the rise around the world and the two most impacted age groups are people in their 20's and senior citizens. While AIDS and HIV are not discussed much anymore 2 million new cases of HIV are documented every year around the world.

It should not surprise us that many diseases are a result of our moral choices. **Romans 1:26-27** God gives the boundaries on sex within marriage for many reasons that are spiritual, emotional, psychological and physical, for our safety.

Many of the diseases are the result of our choices. The way we grow our food, how much food we eat or do not eat, what we smoke, drink or choose to ingest or inject into our bodies. We are at a point in history where people are living longer but at the same time are dealing with many health issues that affect the quality of the longer life.

Earthquakes and other Fearful Signs - Luke 21:11

Jesus said that there would be earthquakes in diverse places. This means in many places simultaneously and frequently. Jesus said that in the last days whatever could be shaken would be shaken. **Hebrews 12:25-28** From Haiti to Indonesia and from California to Australia and Japan we are seeing the increase in seismic and volcanic activity around the world. These events are affecting gigantic regions and displacing millions of people. Currently the Ring of Fire has increased activity and the super-volcano in Yellowstone has shown increased ground swelling and steam being released from vents and geysers.

“Great earthquakes” in the Greek means great seismic activity. While earthquakes have been a part of the geological history of the earth, Jesus was describing the vast number of earthquakes that will take place globally in the last days. The USGS expects about 16 major earthquakes in any given year, 15 in the mag. 7 range and 1 in the 8.0. Records reveal that there are about 20,000 earthquakes each year, with over 500,000 smaller quakes occurring during the course of a year in the 2.0-2.9 range. While we are able to record these events, scientists are unable to predict these events. **Romans 8:22**

Jesus also foretold that there would be fearful sights. This word in the Greek depicts fright, horror or something that is scary. The ancient Greeks actually used this word to describe monsters. Whatever Jesus meant by these words they will hold significance for those living in the last days. Many think this was meant to describe other natural disasters like tornados and wildfires. While this is implied, Jesus did mention other things by name. Some believe that these sights may be in relation to modern technology that could unleash incredible devastation. In the forties we saw two entire cities decimated by nuclear bombs. Today EMP bursts could disrupt the power grid of our nation. Superbugs and chemical weapons are, at the moment, kept under locks but if released would cause unspeakable harm.

Jesus also mentioned great signs from the Heavens. When the Bible speaks of the heavens it is speaking of the sky which includes space beyond our atmosphere. The Bible is not specific in what this means; some have suggested solar flares or asteroids.

We know that during the Tribulation period that a large asteroid named “Wormwood” will come to earth and affect the water supply. **Revelation 8:10-11** Today, nations are actually building ground based and space-based defenses to deflect “near earth” collisions. For the first time in history our country has developed a **Space** Force that is another branch of our military which is separate from NASA.

Cold Hearts and Sinful desires – Matthew 24:12

The Bible says that because **sinfulness** will abound, the love of many will grow cold. While many of the disasters and signs will have the potential to affect millions this sign has the ability to affect every single home, church, community, city, state and nation. Jesus describes this sign as something that affects the very **attitude** of society of both sinners and saints.

Some versions use the word ‘iniquity’, a better translation from the Greek is **lawlessness**. This word describes a society that has chosen to live apart from God’s laws and principles. It is literally a **rejection** and a departure from long held ideas of right and wrong and good and evil. **Romans 1:28** Instead of holding firm to the spiritual laws and truths they had known to guide society in the past, these people will go in another direction. **2 Thess. 2:3**

This falling away depicts a mass mutiny against **authority** in general and against God Himself. The Bible says that God gave them over to a reprobate mind because they chose not retain God in their knowledge. It is important to know that in the Greek it is clear that God does not walk **away** from these people, He **releases** them to follow their own ways and desires.

A reprobate mind is one that no longer thinks or **reasons** correctly. It is literally sin damaged. The correct words to describe reprobate are perverted, twisted and unfit. It pictures the mind of an individual or even an entire society or culture becoming mentally damaged by sin. A reprobate mind is one that has become so distorted by sin that it loses their ability to determine what is morally right or wrong. That mind may remain brilliantly intellectual but is morally deficient. We are seeing this in our day. Have you ever found yourself asking the question – How can someone so smart make such poor decision and treat people so poorly?

Romans 1:28-32

There is a **cure** for this kind of thinking and living. **1 John 1:9, Romans 12:1-2**
The cure is first, a recognition of this kind of sin. Then a confession of the sin; a turning or **repentance** of the sin. The last step is a process of being renewed in both our inner man and in our thinking. One cannot happen without the other.

The Bible says that in the last days this lawlessness would **abound** and that because of this the love of many would grow cold. Jesus was describing something that affects much of the culture even those who are Christians. The Apostle Paul described it as being past **feeling**.

Ephesians 4:19

This is the idea of becoming calloused over time. For some this will happen because they have tolerated and entertained sin in their own lives. For others, they will cease to have compassion because there is so much injustice and pain, they no longer have the **capacity** to care.

Some versions say that their love will grow cold, others say “wax” cold. The implication is that like a callous, this coldness will happen gradually and over time. This is why Christians need to keep the fire of the Holy Spirit hot with in us. We must not allow the ungodliness around us to get inside of us so that we become numb to sin and the pain it causes.

One of the reasons that we must not grow cold is that coldness of heart results in apathy. The Bible describes people in the last days as those who are always growing in knowledge but never come to the love of the truth. **2 Timothy 3:7** The difference between Ignorance and Indifference (Apathy) is I don’t know and I don’t care.

According to Webster’s Dictionary apathy is: *The feeling of not having much emotion or interest*. An apathetic Christian is a person who lost their first Love for Jesus, their concern for the hurting and who is no longer looking with expectation for the return of the Lord. The subject of Christ’s return is a central theme of scripture and we should care.

Romans 13:11-14, 1 Corinthians 1:7, Hebrews 10:24-25, 1 Peter 4:7, Revelation 22:20

Because the coming of Christ is near we cannot be apathetic. We need to live our life as if Christ is coming today; future truth impacts present responsibility.

John 9:4-5, Matthew 5:14-16

Jesus taught about three apathetic attitudes we need to guard against in the last days.

- 1) A cavalier attitude. **Matthew 24:37-39** In Noah’s day, people kept going on in life like things would always be the way it was. For 120 years they ignored his warnings of God’s pending judgement. The emphasis in these verses is not just on how evil the days were, but also on how people were so caught up in doing ordinary things that they didn’t pay attention. **2 Peter 3:3-6**
- 2) A careless attitude. **Matthew 24:42-44, 2 Peter 3:10, Rev. 3:3, Rev. 16:15** Jesus isn’t saying that He is a thief. He is saying that we are not to be careless like someone who quits locking their doors at night or leaves the keys in their car with the doors open. He is warning against a careless attitude that says, ‘it will never happen to me’.
- 3) A callous attitude. **Matthew 24:45-51** The faithful servant works like he knows the master will come at any moment. The evil servant doesn’t believe the master will be home soon and is not motivated to do what is right because there are things he wants to do. The most dangerous of all satanic delusions is that there is no hurry and that there is plenty of time.

In these last days we need to make sure we are living with a passion, a purpose and a true love for people.