

100 SIGNS *of the* TIMES

LEADING UP TO THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

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BEST-SELLING AUTHOR OF
THE GOSPEL STUDIES MADE EASIER SERIES

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CHAPTER ONE

“SEE THAT YE BE NOT TROUBLED”

It is quite common for people who study the signs of the times in the scriptures, attend lectures on them, or read articles or books on the subject to come away feeling fear or even panic. In many cases, authors and lecturers approach the topic in ways that promote fear in their readers. We will avoid this approach in this book. Instead, we will use the signs of the times as witnesses that the gospel is true, that the Lord is keeping us informed, and that His words will all be fulfilled, including His promise to redeem us from our sins and bring us safely back to live with the Father as we diligently strive to live His gospel.

In the course of this book, we will indeed follow the Savior’s counsel to His disciples to “see that ye be not troubled” as we review and study a goodly number of the signs of the times. This counsel to His disciples came during the last week of His mortal mission. The disciples had quietly approached Him as He sat on the Mount of Olives and asked Him to tell them the signs of the times that would precede His Second Coming and “the end of the world” (Matthew 24:3). After hearing many of these signs, we sense that there were obvious looks of fear and concern on their faces. The Master responded with simple counsel that applies to us as well. He said (bold added for emphasis):

Matthew 24:6

6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: **see that ye be not troubled:** for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:23

23 Behold, I speak these things unto you for the elect's sake; and you also shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars; **see that ye be not troubled**, for all I have told you must come to pass; but the end is not yet.

So, the next question is how can we “be not troubled” when all around us the prophesied social upheaval, turmoil, war, and savagery rage, not to mention the fact that nature is in commotion, as prophesied. The Savior went on to give His disciples some keys to having peace in their hearts. He said (bold added for emphasis):

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:37–39, 48–50

37 And **whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived**, for the Son of Man shall come, and he shall send his angels before him with the great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together the remainder of his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

38 Now learn a parable of the fig tree—When its branches are yet tender, and it begins to put forth leaves, you know that summer is nigh at hand;

39 **So likewise, mine elect, when they shall see all these things, they shall know that he is near, even at the doors;**

48 Therefore **be ye also ready**, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.

49 Who, then, is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

50 **Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing;** and verily I say unto you, he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

Verse 37 is particularly helpful. We have numerous opportunities to “treasure up” His word. A big one is to listen to the words of our modern prophets. Have you noticed that they do not preach panic? While they give serious and sobering counsel, they do not preach alarm or frenzy. Another way we “treasure up” His word is to study the scriptures. As we consistently read and study the scriptures, we invite the Holy Ghost to rest upon us. One of the functions of the Holy Ghost is to bring peace, which can significantly help us “be not troubled.” Another is to guide us to avoid deception. One form of deception with respect to the signs of the times would be inordinate fear and nervousness.

Verse 39 reminds us that as we become more and more familiar with the signs of the times, we will recognize that they are being fulfilled all around us. Consequently, our testimonies will be strengthened and our confidence in the

Second Coming will increase. We will “know that he is near, even at the doors” and we can look forward to it, whether it takes place during our lifetime or after we have passed away. If we have been righteous, and it takes place during our mortal life, we can look forward to being caught up to meet Him and then descending back down to earth with Him. (Bold added for emphasis:)

D&C 88:96 and 98

96 And **the saints that are upon the earth, who are alive, shall be quickened and be caught up to meet him.**

98 **They are** Christ’s, the first fruits, **they who shall descend with him** first, and they who are on the earth and in their graves, who are first caught up to meet him; and all this by the voice of the sounding of the trump of the angel of God.

If we have already passed away, and if we lived the gospel faithfully during our sojourn on earth, we will be resurrected and likewise caught up to meet Him and join Him for His descent to the earth to begin the Millennium. (Bold added for emphasis:)

D&C 88:97–98

97 And **they who have slept in their graves shall come forth**, for their graves shall be opened; and **they also shall be caught up to meet him** in the midst of the pillar of heaven—

98 **They are** Christ’s, the first fruits, **they who shall descend with him** first, and they who are on the earth and in their graves, who are first caught up to meet him; and all this by the voice of the sounding of the trump of the angel of God.

Going back to Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:50, quoted before, we see that those who are righteous at the time of His coming are described as “blessed.” This is a scriptural term that often means “happy.” Thus, those who are striving to live in harmony with the gospel will have peace and happiness in spite of world conditions. They will successfully follow the counsel to “be not troubled.”

As we treasure up His word, under the tutelage of the Holy Ghost, we gain sound knowledge. Such knowledge brings stability and testimony, which brings assurance and peace. In the Doctrine and Covenants, we are told (bold added for emphasis):

D&C 38:30

30 I tell you these things because of your prayers; wherefore, treasure up wisdom in your bosoms, lest the wickedness of men reveal these things unto you by their wickedness, in a manner which shall speak in your ears with a voice louder than that which shall shake the earth; but **if ye are prepared ye shall not fear.**

So how does one prepare such that the prospect of the Second Coming strengthens testimony and brings confidence and inner peace rather than fear and trouble to the soul? One of the answers is found among the righteous Saints during the “war years” in the Book of Mormon that preceded the prophesied coming of the Lord to the Nephites. Many “signs of their times” were taking place all around them. About 71 BC, when righteous Captain Moroni and his armies were engaged in near continuous battle against the enemies of righteousness, the environment for the faithful Saints was one of wars, turmoil, and commotion. Yet, in the midst of all this, we are told (bold added for emphasis):

Alma 50:22–23

22 And those who were **faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord** were delivered at all times, whilst thousands of their wicked brethren have been consigned to bondage, or to perish by the sword, or to dwindle in unbelief, and mingle with the Lamanites.

23 But behold **there never was a happier time among the people of Nephi**, since the days of Nephi, than in the days of Moroni, yea, even at this time, in the twenty and first year of the reign of the judges.

It thus becomes clear that one of the keys to inner peace and quality of life is to simply keep the commandments of the Lord.

Another key to being strengthened by the signs of the times is to recognize one of the major purposes for which they are given. As noted previously, they are given to strengthen testimony. By way of review, the signs of the times are prophecies given by the Lord through His prophets since the beginning, which refer to events that will take place during the last days leading up to the Second Coming of the Savior. They are designed to alert the honest in heart who study the scriptures that His coming is drawing near. They are designed to be a continual witness, daily before our eyes, that God exists and the scriptures are true.

Over my many years of teaching, students have occasionally expressed a wish to have lived in former times when many of the miracles recorded in scripture took place. They felt that their testimonies would have been greatly strengthened by personally witnessing such obvious evidences of the blessings of the gospel in action. On such occasions, it has been satisfying to point out to them that they do indeed live in such a time themselves! In these marvelous last days before the Second Coming, we are surrounded with testimony-

building fulfillment of past prophecies. The gospel has been restored and is going forth into all the world, as prophesied. Temples are beginning to dot the earth, as prophesied. The priesthood has been restored, as prophesied, and quiet miracles of healing—physical and spiritual—take place among the faithful on a daily basis. Never before has there been a time in the history of the earth when so many prophecies are being fulfilled before our very eyes. To the spiritually alert and wise, these prophecies become a great means of strengthening and confirming personal testimony. Increased faith brings increased peace.

Examples of some of these fulfilled prophecies are:

- Ezekiel prophesied that the “stick of Joseph” (Ezekiel 37:15–19; the Book of Mormon) would come forth in the last days. It’s here.
- Daniel interpreted the king’s dream (Daniel 2:28–45), explaining that, in the last days, the true gospel would be restored and would go forth to fill “the whole earth.” It’s happening before our very eyes. And with the prophetic lowering of the ages for young men and young women to serve missions, we are watching an unprecedented jump in the number of missionaries. It is no doubt part of the dramatic fulfilling of the Lord’s own prophecy in which He said, “I will hasten my work in its time” (D&C 88:73). We are watching this right now. It adds strength and endurance to our testimonies.
- The scriptures prophesy that, in the last days, there will be a great increase in natural disasters (D&C 88:88–91). The daily news is full of such things.

And the list goes on and on, as exemplified by numerous signs of the times included in this book. As you browse through the list of 100 signs provided herein (there are more), you can no doubt see how each one that has now been fulfilled or that is now being fulfilled becomes a testimony strengthener and builder for each of us. Thus, the signs of the times serve as a strong witness of the truth of the scriptures and that God’s words will all be fulfilled, including His promises to each of us that through the Atonement, coupled with sincere living of the gospel, each of us can be made clean and ready to receive exaltation and live in the presence of God eternally.

Over many years, I have given more than 500 presentations on the signs of the times. The usual approach has been to give a handout listing several signs of the times, discussing them, and then having the class or audience participate in checking off the various signs as “fulfilled,” “being fulfilled,” or “yet to be fulfilled.” As we deal with so many that have been fulfilled or are underway, people’s eyes light up as a spirit of testimony and positive excitement comes upon them. It has been very gratifying, at the end of the lectures or presentations, to have many come up and express appreciation for the “positive” approach. Up until then, they had routinely approached the topic with some dread, but now they could study the signs with great appreciation for the strong witness they provide that the gospel is indeed true.

Sometimes, misunderstandings of doctrine can lead to “being troubled,” that is to say, unnecessary fear or concern when discussing the signs of the times, the Second Coming, the Millennium, etc. During an institute class some years ago, when we were discussing the signs of the times and the Millennium that would start with the arrival of the Lord (D&C 29:11), one of my students, a young man, was not showing the same enjoyment and enthusiasm for the discussion as the other students in class. Several had indicated that they were encouraged by the many signs fulfilled or underway and hoped that the Savior would soon come. Finally, he raised his hand and said, “I don’t want the Second Coming to get here yet.” That took us back a bit, and I invited him to share his concern with the class.

With a perplexed look on his face, he said he didn’t want the Savior to come yet because he was not married. I invited him to explain further. He went on to say that once the Savior had come, there would be no more marriage. I don’t know where he got that idea, but he was greatly relieved when we discussed the doctrine that there would indeed be marriage and family during the Millennium. He grinned widely when I further informed him that he could date any girl he wanted to without having to worry about her standards, because none of the wicked would still be on earth, once the thousand years of peace has begun. The big thing for him would be to make sure he was still here. He then said, “Let it come!” The class chuckled, and we went on with our exciting discussion.

In summary, it is important to use the signs of the times for their intended purpose. When studied and reasonably understood, these great prophecies and their fulfillments can provide strength and testimony. They can create righteous anticipation for every word of the Lord to be fulfilled (D&C 1:38). This can include looking forward to seeing friends and loved ones long since dead, who, hopefully, will come with the Savior. Of course, we do not know if He will come during our lifetime, and, consequently, we need to carefully avoid setting a “deadline” in our own thoughts as to when He will arrive. We need to especially avoid forming timetables in our own minds and teaching or seriously suggesting them to others. This could lead to deception. He will be here the moment He arrives.

The Lord foretold that the coming of the Lord would catch the wicked off guard, but that the righteous would not be taken by surprise. He said (bold added for emphasis):

D&C 106:4–5

4 And again, verily I say unto you, **the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and it overtaketh the world as a thief in the night** [*it will catch the worldly off guard*].—

5 Therefore, gird up your loins [*prepare*], **that you may be the children of light, and that day shall not overtake you as a thief.**

A “thief in the night” is not expected and thus catches people unawares. As faithful members listen to the Lord’s servants, they are kept informed. Perhaps you have noticed that during recent general conferences of the Church, the Second Coming is being mentioned more frequently. One example is the April 2011 general conference address of Elder Neil A. Andersen, of the Quorum of the Twelve, during the priesthood session. He mentioned the Second Coming at least twelve times, one way or another. It was mentioned with quiet calm, and by way of a call to duty to help prepare the world for the Savior’s arrival. We will provide a few brief excerpts of his sermon and **bold** the words “Second Coming” and other phrases referring directly to it so you can find them more readily.

One of your important responsibilities is to help prepare the world for the **Second Coming** of the Savior . . .

Your mission will be a sacred opportunity to bring others to Christ and help prepare for the **Second Coming** of the Savior. . . .

The world is being prepared for the **Second Coming** of the Savior in large measure because of the Lord's work through His missionaries . . .

Speaking to you, the First Presidency has said (bold added for emphasis):

We pray for each of you . . . [that] you can do the great work that lies before you . . . that you will be worthy [and willing] to carry on the responsibilities of building the kingdom of God and preparing the world for the **Second Coming** of the Savior. . . .

My young brethren of the priesthood, I testify of the majesty, but most of all, of **the certainty of this magnificent event**. The Savior lives. **He will return to the earth**. And whether on this side of the veil or the other, you and I will rejoice in **His coming** and thank the Lord that He sent us to earth at this time to fulfill our sacred duty of helping prepare the world for **His return**.

As “children of light,” we have the opportunity to “enjoy the journey” and to “be of good cheer,” as counseled often by President Thomas S. Monson. As we do our part to spread the gospel and serve others in these marvelous days of revelation and fulfillment of prophecy that precede the Second Coming of the Savior, we can readily follow the Master's instruction to “see that ye be not troubled.”

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