



Signs of Jesus' Second Coming

Is the big turning point coming - or ... the end?

Dear Andrew, *

Jesus told His disciples about certain signs. These signs are applicable to both the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and the second coming of Jesus at the end of the world.

Jesus and the Signs of the Times Matthew 24:3-14 (NKJV)

“... the disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things be (the destruction of the temple)? **And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?**’ And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will **deceive many**. And you will hear of **wars** and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be **famines, pestilences, and earthquakes** in various places.

All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake.

*And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many **false prophets** will rise up and deceive many.*

*And because **lawlessness will abound**, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this **gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world** as a witness to all the nations, and then the end **will come.**”*

Should we even speak about the end of the world with educated people? The disciples asked about it and Jesus confirmed it. So, let’s feel free to speak about the end of the world. However, we want to speak at the same time about the second coming and the end of the world just like the disciples did.

* This name was selected to remind us of the biblical Andrew, who led his brother Peter to Jesus (John 1:40-42).

But there is one thing we don't want to do – something that Seventh-Day Adventists have **never done – we don't want to calculate a date for this event**, because we can neither do it nor should we do it.

Jesus reproached His contemporaries for not paying any attention to the signs of the times (Matthew 16:4).

This shows that He attaches great importance to our heeding these signs.

And He answered the disciples' question about His second coming in detail. Thus, we want to examine the signs of the times today. Since these signs apply to then and now, we first want to take a short look at the signs then (as far as we have the facts from back then) and then speak about the signs today. Also, the end time signs are characterized as global, worldwide.

What signs did Jesus mention?

1. Deception
2. Wars
3. Famines, inflation
4. Pestilence
5. Earthquakes
6. Persecution of Christians
7. Lawlessness
8. World mission

Sign: Deception

Just before Jerusalem was destroyed, how was it with deception? In those days, there were many who claimed to be the Messiah. We know of a Theudas and Judas from Galilee. And also from a Jonathan, Dositheus and Simon. Then there was Menahem, the leader of the Zealots, who conquered the Roman troops in 66 and wanted to be recognized as the messianic savior.

The worst deception actually came from the religious leaders of the time. Their own interpretations were more important to them than the Word of God. Originally the Jews had had the true faith revealed by God. But step by step they had left God's path. **They used words from the Bible and connected them with a different topic.**

They mixed divine with human. The consequences of this is worse than an absolute lie. Yes, this sign could be discerned about 1900 years ago.

What is happening today with the creeping diversion from God and His word?

Deception is the main sign of the end. Jesus only mentioned this one multiple times. We have a creeping, but immense falling away from faith – even within our church.

Today, many are seduced and think there is no God. There is a **worldwide godlessness** today. Many deny there is a God. Many say that they don't know if there is a God. Then many others, who think they believe in God, live their daily lives as if He didn't exist.

Another form of godlessness is materialism. They have everything. They don't need God.

Today there is also a **God-is-dead-theology**. Many clergy and believers don't believe any more on the God that is shown to us in God's word. The false prophets have also changed Jesus. They deny His eternal divinity and thus make Him only human. They also downplay the terrific power and nature of sin.

I would also like to mention the **ecumenical movement** here. They have the good intention of uniting Christianity, but in so doing they disregard God's truth.

Modern theology is also spreading more and more, which doesn't have God's word as its authority, but rather scientific assumptions. Human reason is considered more important than the Bible. Modern theology is almost exclusively taught in universities today. This has had and still has corresponding impact. The Bible calls the churches, who preach a modified gospel, Babylon.

In addition, a **blending of Christian faith, spiritualism and heathen religions** can already be seen. Just think about yoga, transcendental meditation, Zen, New Age and many other such things.

A deception, which was actually thought to be gone in our modern times, is continually celebrating new triumphs today. I mean all the types of secret things, which people believe will help them develop higher capabilities:

Occultism, Spiritualism, Esoteric: These things have spread like a plague in the last decades. They have also infiltrated the church-sector. I am thinking of **charismatic appearances** like the "Toronto Blessing", occult healings and also speaking in tongues, which aren't a gift of a foreign language.

Another seduction is **world optimism**. Some think that progress will go on and on. Technology makes anything possible. They are blind to the disadvantages of our development or they think that if we try hard enough that we will get everything under control. The movement can also be mentioned here, which calls **peace, peace**, although there is no peace. (1 Thessalonians 5:3)

Self-deception: Some reinterpret God's will themselves so that they don't have to do it. Example: Assuming a father said to his child: "Go to bed!", the child knows where they stand. But if the child would act like some do in matters of faith, then the child could say to himself: "Father said: Go to bed. What he meant was that I am tired. He doesn't want me to be tired. But I can get over my tiredness by going to play. So, I will go and play. Then I will have obeyed my father." This is self-deception. Many practice this.

The goal of the master deceiver is to dissuade people from trusting God and being obedient to Him. We can study his method in Genesis chapter 3. He was successful with Adam and Eve with one temptation.

Today, he has gone considerably further and has tempted us in a multitude of ways. May I ask, if you want to confront this issue? Do we want to change this with God's help? The sign of "deception" has had great triumphs.

Sign: Wars

What about the sign of war, rumors of war and nation rising against nation? The objection always arises: There have always been wars. That is correct. So, if war it to be a sign, then we will have new, unusual and world-wide developments. However, I would like to dare to point something out: **Aren't the still existent wars already a sign alone?** Actually, there shouldn't be any more wars with such smart people, as we are. Humanism spreads the hypothesis that if all people were educated, then crime would diminish. So, since wars are still present, it is also a sign.

Nation against nation: Remember what happened in Rwanda when the Hutu and Tutsi slaughtered one another. Or think about Bosnians, Croatians and Serbians or the Russians and Chechens. These are developments, which no one thought were still possible. Also

think about the Middle East and the Arabian countries.

Almost every day we currently hear about **rumors of war** in the media.

In the end time the increase of wars and their worldwide prevalence has made them a sign of Jesus' second coming. World wars are a phenomenon of the 20th century. It had never before existed. The casualties of both the **world wars** among soldiers and civilians has been estimated at 120 million people. And since then more than 25 million people have died in other wars. The loss of people and goods in the world wars was decidedly higher than in all the previous wars.

What about weapons development? Today we have atomic, bacterial and chemical weapons. We already know about these things. In 1944 100 million 20-hundredweight bombs would have been needed to destroy France. Today, one gigaton bomb would be enough for the whole earth. Now, whole countries can be contaminated bacterially or chemically and what's more it is invisible, odorless and tasteless.

What is with defense spending? Unfortunately, I don't have any new statistics. However, they are astronomical sums. Despite the situation easing, vast sums are still being spent. This is one of the reasons why almost the whole world is financially near bankruptcy. The war in Afghanistan and Iraq cost the USA millions every day. America has more debts than all the

other countries put together. The military planes, tanks, ships and guns not only don't earn anything, but rather cost immense amounts for ongoing maintenance. Never before have such vast sums of money been spent on armament as in the 20th and 21st centuries.

The sign of "wars" is unfortunately very present.

Sign: Famines, inflation

How was it back then?

The Bible tells us in Acts 11:28 (NKJV) and historical reports confirm it: *"Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar."* The sign was present back then.

What is it like today?

The 20th century will go down in history as an era of the greatest famines. Many people died of starvation during the world wars. In 1921/22 there were 38 million people who died of starvation in Russia and China. The famous Arctic explorer, Dr. Nansen from Norway, led a relief effort for Russia at that time. He wrote that this famine was "without a doubt, the worst known in the history of humankind." The brutality of the famine was so great that cannibalism prevailed across large areas. In 1928-30 many millions of people died of starvation again in Russia and China. Think about the starvation in the Sahelian zone and in the Horn of Africa.

Today one third of the people live in abundance, one third have the bare necessities and one third are starving.

While there are 500 million children under the age of 15 in the countries where there is starvation, who have never drunk milk, never worn shoes and have never had any medicine, about 300,000 breaktime sandwiches from students are thrown away every day here by us. Do we know that **40,000 babies die in the world every day**, because their mothers don't have anything to give them to eat? Many people live on the streets in India. They search through garbage bins for something to eat. They sleep on a newspaper at the side of the road. The garbage men come in the morning and everyone who is still laying around gets a kick. If he doesn't move, then he has died and lands in the garbage truck.

Why do we have inflation?

I want to return to armament. During WWII a tank cost about 500,000 Reichsmark. All that was needed to turn it into a pile of scrap was a grenade, which cost 37.50 Reichsmark. So, you could destroy a half a million Reichsmark with 37.50 Reichsmark. Today, this happens on a much larger scale. Often, not even a grenade is needed to scrap something. The expensive military equipment is suddenly outdated and obsolete. In value of billions! It is just as if we threw our savings out the window. Unfortunately, there are many more reasons which contribute to inflation.

Then it has to be mentioned that we live above our means. The result is creeping inflation. 50 years after the introduction of the German

Mark, it was only worth 10 Pfennig (cents). It is a similar situation with the Euro. Inflation is a result of our wanting more and more. The Bible predicted this egoism in the end times in 2 Timothy, 3:1-4 (NKJV): *“But know this, that **in the last days** perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.”*

We also have to consider the **tension between capital and labor**. On the one hand tremendous wealth and on the other hand great poverty. James 5:1-6 (NKJV) made an important prophecy about this: *“Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! ... You have **heaped up treasure in the last days**. Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth ...”*

Naturally, this applies to individual countries of the world to a varying extent.

What about the sign: famines, inflation? This sign is clearly existent.

Sign: Pestilence

I don't have any information on what the situation was like back then concerning pestilence. **But what is it like today with pestilence and contaminating the earth?** Influenza spread around the world after WWI along with other epidemics and killed around 40 million people. Today, it is most astonishing that old epidemics are returning, for example **Cholera** in South America. Epidemics usually originate from animal products. We have nearly become accustomed to cancerous diseases. In the last few years **AIDS** has become something to fear. And it is spreading more and more around the world. It is a threat to whole nations. Suddenly, many people have succumbed to **Alzheimer's** disease. Others to a burnout.

In recent years there is a lot of talk about the mad cow disease (BSE). We are suddenly acquainted with completely new terms like: **CJD – Creutzfeldt-Jakob-Disease**. Human greed has led to an exploitation war against animals. As a result, the animals get sick. These diseases then get transferred to humans when they eat the animals. I think I can also mention the epidemic spread of **addictions** here as well.

The epidemics are also correlated to the contamination of the water and air. **In one generation we have managed to bring the world to the brink of ruin with our chemicals, our cars, our high energy demand and our modern lifestyle.**

Scientists say that even if we stopped everything that is wrong immediately, we still couldn't save the world. I am not able to scientifically verify such statements.

But God's Word confirms that they are correct. Isaiah 51:6 (NKJV) says: *"Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look on the earth beneath. For the heavens will vanish away like smoke, **the earth will grow old like a garment, and those who dwell in it will die in like manner ...**"*

In Revelation 11:18 (NIV) it says: *"**The time has come ... for destroying those who destroy the earth.**"* There are immense upheavals in the earth's ecology. The number of people has grown by 2 billion within 3-4 decades. Through an increase in meat consumption in the Western world a **significant increase in animal farming has become necessary**. For example, Holland has 5 million cows and 14 million pigs. They don't know what they should do with all the manure anymore. The animals are fattened quickly with the aid of hormones and antibiotics. The dead animals are partially processed and then put into the animal feed.

So that there is room for large herds of cattle, **rainforests are burned down** at the rate of 20 hectares per minute. That means, that every year forest areas are destroyed which are the size of Denmark, Holland and Belgium together. This causes a **great decrease in oxygen**. For example, Germany uses 500 million tons of oxygen per year, but can only produce about 30 million tons with its green areas. Serious **damage has also been done to the forests of the world** by acid rain. This is caused by pollution of the atmosphere with

our poisonous gasses. Depending on the amount of energy used, the exhaust gasses are around 21%. The lowest **exhaust gasses** with 4% come from atomic energy. But there are other massive problems. In Central Europe about half of the forests have been damaged, in the former Soviet Union 60-80%. Thus, the oxygen production is sinking. Through changes in the atmosphere, which are connected with pollution, **wind speeds** keep increasing.

37,000 people died in a cyclone in Bangladesh. In addition, due to the **greenhouse effect** we also have climate shifts with all its consequences. The situation on earth is steadily getting worse. We will soon see what other consequences the ever-growing hole in the ozone layer has. Due to these circumstances and other mistakes like monocultures, great fresh water reservoirs are shrinking – for example the Aral Sea, and Lake Chad. **Drinking water shortages** are arising and in many areas, there isn't any clean water left.

Huge quantities of filth, chemicals and feces end up in the water. The rivers and oceans are polluted. Daily, thousands of dolphins are dying. Other kinds of fish are getting bigger and sick. The barrels of poison, which were sunk during the last war, are rusting away. Chemicals dumped in the ocean, tanker accidents and untreated waste water do the rest. This happens worldwide today. **Toxins are getting more and more concentrated in the food chain**. Today, we know that the now illegal DDT became concentrated up to 750,000 times. That is why meat consumption is much more dangerous now than plant foods.

The Bible says: The earth grows old like a garment. Humans are spoiling the world. The scientific community is very pessimistic and justifiably so. The only ones, who have a justified hope, are those who trust the One who said: "... *I will come again and receive you to Myself...*" (John 14:3 NKJV)

He also said: "*I make all things new.*" (Revelation 21:5 NKJV) The sign "pestilence and pollution" has become dramatically visible. Will we tell our fellow humans about the hope of the new earth?

Sign: Earthquakes

What was it like back when Jerusalem was destroyed?

Heavy earthquake activity is reported: an earthquake on Crete, in Philostratus, Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos, Rome and Colossae. The cities of Laodicea and Hieropolis were destroyed by earthquakes. **The destruction of Pompeii in 63 A.D. is especially well known.**

And what about today?

Sometimes I also hear the objection: There have always been earthquakes. Correct! So, if it is supposed to be a special sign, then it will have to do something extraordinary in this area. **The earthquake statistics show a significant increase.** Does this only have to do with our improved measuring devices? Whereas years ago, when these instruments showed 2-3 movements in 10 minutes, they

now show hundreds in that time frame. Severe earthquakes have always been detected. Over a time period of 1100 years, from 800 to 1900 A.D., there were 9 severe earthquakes. In the 20th century there were 15 severe earthquakes. This is approximately fortyfold more.

In addition to this, there is something else that will amaze us. **Humans presumably trigger earthquakes today.** Geologists say that this is nearly certain. How does that work? It is a result of the enormous manmade water reservoirs/lakes. It is a known fact that dams have already caused thousands of earthquakes up to a magnitude of 6.4. – And what effect do the underground atomic bomb explosions have?

I will mention other **natural catastrophes** in abbreviated form: volcanic eruptions, extreme drought and on the other hand floods – there are areas, that have had almost two meters of precipitation per square meter per day-, storms of all types, etc. These signs also speak clearly. We also know new terminology like tsunami.

Sign: Persecution of Christians

What was it like with this sign before the destruction of Jerusalem? **The great and mighty church of the time** managed to put Jesus on the cross, supposedly because He had blasphemed God. They claimed to act in God's name.

They accused Jesus of teaching the people "to disregard the rules of their ancestors". They also accused Him of not heeding the tradi-

tions. Jesus responded: *“For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men ...”* (Mark 7:8 NKJV)

They were then able to convince the Romans, the state power, to kill Jesus. The apostles and the early Christians were brutally persecuted and branded as sectarians by the church.

The other persecutor was the state power. I think it suffices if I say one name: Nero. The early Christian church suffered cruel and merciless persecution from this Roman emperor. Nero died shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem. Why did the state power persecute the Christians although they were the best citizens? Because there was and is a limit for Christians in respect to the state. The limit is: **“We ought to obey God rather than men.”** (Acts 5:29 NKJV)

The third persecutor was the false brothers. Jesus said in Matthew 24:10 (NKJV): *“And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.”* Christians, who were not true to the faith, betrayed and hated their brothers and sisters in faith.

The persecution back then came from three directions: the big church, the state and false brothers.

How is it today with persecution? The 20th century will go down in history as a century of the greatest persecution of Christians. Think about China, the Soviet Union, Sudan, Columbia, Spain thirty years ago and many other countries. There are also enough alarming examples in the few years of the 21st century.

Sign: Lawlessness

The increase of lawlessness in big and small things is a sign of the end times, which is expressed in the **huge increase of crime.**

There are sectors of the economy and even countries, which are controlled to a great degree by organized crime. Think about the mafia in Italy, Russia and China. The president of the Federal Criminal Police Office in Germany said years ago about theft in Germany: **Theft has become a national sport here.** High unemployment rates around the world don't make the situation any better. Rapid population growth also adds to the increase of lawlessness. The cities in this world grow twice as fast as the rural areas; they are also the main regions of crime.

We also want to remember the **ever-increasing corruption.** Last year a high judicial officer in Germany said: “We used to have black sheep. Now we have herds of them.”

Sign: World Mission

Up till now, we have only spoken about negative developments. Concerning this Jesus said: “This is only the beginning of the end – just like the beginning of birth pains.” So, in regards to Jesus' second coming – using a metaphor – we are between the beginning of the birth pains and the actual birth. **Labor has already started.**

Now for the most important sign of the end. It is the only positive one. *“And this gospel of the*

kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14 NKJV)

To be exact it says: and **this** gospel or **this** good news – in other words the true, unaltered and unadulterated gospel will be proclaimed, which Jesus preached. Revelation 14:6 calls it **the everlasting gospel**, meaning it will **never lose its validity**.

Jesus promises in this text that in the end times a sign of His soon return will be the spreading of the gospel in the whole world. This is happening now and will continue to increase.

How are things with the sign "world mission"? What was it like before the destruction of Jerusalem? The early Christians actually managed to take the gospel to the world with its much smaller population at that time. God's word confirms this through the apostle Paul in Colossians 1:6 (NKJV): "... *the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world ...*" Verse 23 (NKJV): "... *the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven ...*" As far as I know, this was the only time when this was accomplished in early Christianity. But with God's grace and help it will be accomplished in the end times.

It is our commission to preach the gospel to all the inhabitants of the earth, all people and nations, every language. This promise will come to pass, since Jesus said it and because He, who has all power in heaven and on earth, is watching over it.

How is the sign world mission today? We can see several distinctive points here: It can be said that around 1960 the so-called **layman was rediscovered**. Before this point in time, most free churches had become pastor churches. But then they returned to a biblical principle. Everywhere in the world, where the gospel is decisively going forward, church members are involved. This is a milestone.

Around 1989/90 a new world mission perspective emerged. Up until then, they had calculated this way: There are about 230 countries in the world. There are already Christians in a little more than 200 countries. The 30 unreached countries are small countries.

So, we have already come a long way. Then a new perspective was won. The world was divided into areas of one million people. In the process, we as the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, discovered in 1990 that there were 2300 areas, each with one million people, where there was still no church. We then set ourselves the goal with God's help of founding churches in all these unreached areas. Since then we have made good progress. We call this the Global Mission Strategy. Actually, about 450 churches and missionary associations have strategies to reach the whole world with the gospel. 250 of these strategies should be in implementation. Our church has begun work in about half of these regions. **At the moment, we have 22,700 missionaries in these unreached areas.** Most of them are laypeople, who are doing this work at their own expense or only with a very small allowance. There is a great need for missionaries. Every year thousands more need to be sent out.

We may also **use all the modern technological possibilities** for our missionary commission: mission planes, mission ships, radio, television, satellites, cassettes, video tapes, CDs, Bible correspondence courses, literature distribution like flyers, magazines, books and advertisements, computer, fax, email, internet, personal evangelism, care groups, seminars, evangelistic series, medical mission, development and disaster relief. At the moment, we are seeing modern technology being used more and more for evangelism and thousands more are going into mission work. Furthermore, many are experiencing a revival in their home countries and are starting to serve the Lord with their talents.

Bible societies started to be founded around 1800 for the purpose of spreading God's Word. **The Bible societies have experienced tremendous development.** Today, the Bible is available wholly or partially in more than 2,000 languages. More languages are being added.

The Problems are Unsolvable

The former UN General Secretary, U Thant, said on New Year's Day in 1970: "If we don't solve the problems of mankind in this decade, then they will become unsolvable. The following problems haven't been solved: war, hunger, crime, addictions, environmental damage, racial hatred, inflation, sexualization, neurotization, radicalization, corruption, population explosion, energy shortage, soil erosion, radioactivity, atomic waste, epidemics, etc. Hardly anyone dares to face the extent of the facts."

The Savior is Coming

In Greece there was the famous "Gordian knot". According to this legend: whoever unties the knot will have the world supremacy. One day, Alexander the Great came to the city. He sliced the complicated knot with his sword. The Gordian knot was a cinch in comparison to the problems of our day. But the Bible tells us: There is someone, who will solve the knots of problems in this world and He will have world supremacy: Jesus Christ. After His discourse about the signs of His coming, He said: *"So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors!"* (Matthew 24:33 NKJV)

Turning point or the end?

Are we facing a great turning point or the imminent end? This question is false. The great turning point and the end of the world are both coming and at the same time. Which one is applicable to us, is our decision. The last invitation to God's grace will be powerfully proclaimed. The message will soon have reached everyone and then our Lord Jesus will appear in power and majesty.

Dear Andrew, I am sure you will observe the signs of the times in the future with a new perspective. May God bless you!

With warm greetings,

Helmut

May I recommend other Letters to Andrew about prophecy?

Letter to Andrew No. 6: What does the future hold?

- › The shortest world history was written 2,600 years ago. It shows us “what will be in the latter days”.
- › Of the six predictions, five have already been fulfilled.
- › Will Europe achieve political unity? What is still to come?

Letter to Andrew 8: Prophecies about Jesus Christ

- › Probability of fulfillment 1:10¹⁷
- › About the clothes of the crucified One: partially divided and partially lots were cast for it.
- › No bone would be broken. The Roman soldiers ignored the command and did what was foretold in the prophecies, without knowing it.
- › Betrayal for 30 pieces of silver – with 8 details.

Letter to Andrew 9: Prophecies about four cities

- › which were literally fulfilled although the mathematical probability is 1:200 trillion.
 - The Golden Gate of Jerusalem
 - The strange rock city of Petra
 - The legendary Babylon
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