

Natural Signs of Christ's Coming

During the fall of 2013 devastating storms churned the oceans into raging fury and swept across islands and continents, causing unprecedented damage (including the flattening of trees and utility poles), smashing homes and businesses, and shattering lives, hopes, and dreams. Arguably the most notable storm, Super typhoon Haiyan cut a swath of devastation across the Philippines on a scale beyond any living memory. The storm left more than 28,000 individuals injured, killed more than 6,150 persons, and displaced more than 3.9 million people.¹

Right here in the United States the National Weather Service issued more than 400 severe weather warnings and logged more than 600 reports of tornadoes, damaging winds, and/or large hail in November 2013. The Midwest and Ohio Valley regions were severely impacted as an amazing number of tornadoes destroyed lives and homes in this area. In fact, the National Weather Service Storm Prediction Center logged 81 reports of tornadoes on the ground in this region, making November the top-ranking month for tornadoes.

One might ask, "What shall we make of these storms?" With consternation, some have specifically asked, "Are these storms, of ever-increasing frequency and intensity, signs that the world is about to end?"

The Bible describes the signs that speak to the imminence of Christ's return. These signs, inclusive of natural disasters and calamities, would occur, Jesus said, with greater regularity in the final days of earth's history (Matthew 24:7, 8). Christ also distinctly foretold that there would "be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars" (Luke 21:25); specifying that "the sun [would] be darkened, and the moon [would] not give its light; the stars of heaven [would] fall, and the powers in heaven [would] be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory" (Mark 13:24-26).

Careful review of significant natural events in earth's history reveals that these prophetic signs have already occurred. On May 19, 1780, extraordinary darkness descended upon the northeastern part of the United States,² affirming the prophecy that the sun would be darkened and the moon would not give light. When considering the prophesied "falling of stars," it was on November 13, 1833, that there was a great falling of stars seen across North America.³ Of this meteoric shower one writer wrote, "For nearly four hours the sky was literally ablaze."⁴

The Bible repeatedly assures us that Jesus will return (see Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; John 14:1-3). Will He, however, come one year from now? Five years from now? Ten years from now? No one knows for sure. It was Jesus who declared, "Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matthew 24:36).

As followers of Christ, who with great expectation and excitement look forward to His soon return, we must properly prepare ourselves for this grand, climactic event! While signs in the natural world often have adverse physical effects, they serve as reminders of Christ's imminent advent. Our readiness for Christ's return in earth's final days is illustrated in Jesus' parable of the 10 virgins. The two classes of virgins represent the two kinds of believers who profess to be waiting for their Lord. When the bridegroom comes at midnight, only those who are ready, go in with Him to the marriage celebration, and then the door is shut. Eventually the foolish

virgins, who had gone to purchase more oil, return and say, "Lord, Lord, open [the door] to us!" But the Bridegroom answers, "I do not know you" (see Matthew 25:1-13).

All who accept God's message of mercy will rejoice at the prospect of the Second Advent. Theirs is the assurance, "Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!" (Revelation 19:9). It is at this moment of their deliverance from this earth, and with joy and adoration that they cry out, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us" (Isaiah 25:9).

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1 "Typhoon Haiyan," www.wikipedia.org.

2 "New England's Dark Day," www.wikipedia.org.

3 "Leonids," www.wikipedia.org.

4 Peter A. Millman, "The Falling of the Stars," *The Telescope*, May-June 1940.