

(2b) POMPEII'S GLOBAL WARNINGS: How Near is the End?

Pompeii was a large city in Italy during the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. It was a city given to pleasure and lust. But always in the background was Mt Vesuvius – a volcano that had been inactive for the last 700 years. However in 62AD Mt Vesuvius came to life and caused an earthquake that destroyed much of Pompeii. But the people built it up again, giving little heed to the warning signs. Suddenly on August 24, 79AD, Mt Vesuvius blew its top and rained red hot pumice on the city for 3 days, completely burying it. Archaeologists discovered the last tragic moments of the victims – a city and people that failed to heed the warning signs

Many scientists, politicians, law enforcers, and sociologists believe we are living on a global time bomb and it is not a case of will the world end, but how near is the end? We need to go back to the Mt of Olives in Jerusalem 2000 years ago. Jesus was asked by his followers to tell them the signs of his coming and the end of the world (Matthew 24:3). He first made some astounding predictions concerning Jerusalem, the temple and the Jewish nation: 1. A rampart would be built around it during its siege (Luke 19:43) – we now know that the Roman general, Titus built a 5 mile wall around Jerusalem in an endeavour to starve the Jews into submission; 2. The temple would be completely demolished with not one stone left on another (Matthew 24:2) – the Romans pulled the temple apart to get the gold that melted and ran down between the huge stones when a fire destroyed the temple; 3. Many Jews would be killed (Luke 21:24) – some 1 million Jews perished in the Roman siege; 4. The Jews were to be scattered among the nations (Luke 21:24) – Jews were driven from Palestine and to this day large numbers of Jews are scattered all around the world; 5. Gentiles would occupy Jerusalem (Luke 21:24) – for centuries Arab Muslims and non-Jewish Christians have occupied the old city of Jerusalem with the temple mount still under the control of Arab Muslims.

Following these amazingly accurate predictions, Jesus then spoke about His return to this earth and the signs that would show it was near. The signs He gave read like today's newspapers or daily TV news. In Matthew 24, He speaks of famines – and we all see the images of starving children and hear of the thousands who die from hunger each day. And He speaks of earthquakes – and who can forget the 222,000 lives that were taken in the Haiti earthquakes of 2010, or the Japanese earthquake in 2011 where over 15,000 died. In Luke 21:25, Christ predicted *distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring* – and we remember the South East Asian tsunami in 2004 that left 230,000 dead, the floods in Pakistan in 2010 that covered 20% of the country, as well as the tsunami that washed over the coast of Japan in 2011. Jesus was so accurate.

Nations today are anxious about such terrifying events.

Again in Matthew 24, Jesus predicted international conflicts on a global scale before The Last Empire is set up. *For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom* (Matthew 24:7). And the book of Revelation states that *the nations were angry* (Revelation 11:18). In the 20th century alone, there were 180 million deaths from war alone! And now world leaders fear the big one – nuclear conflict, with even nations like North Korea and Iran developing their arsenals. Yes, the predictions that Jesus spoke about are being fulfilled before our eyes!

Jesus also spoke about moral decay in society just before He returns. *And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold* (Matthew 24:12). And Paul, one of Christ's followers, made some mind boggling predictions about society that also sound just like our TV headlines in his Bible book 2 Timothy 3:1-5 – *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.* Without doubt these are all happening around us in a cruel and violent world.

And Revelation predicts signs in the financial world, as we see the economies of nations crumbling around us, putting the world on the brink of global financial disaster. See Revelation 18:10,11,17.

Jesus also warned about deceptive signs and wonders in the religious world. *For false Christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect* (Matthew 24:24). Many are not aware that miracles, signs and supernatural events are rapidly increasing around the world today in both Christian and non-Christian religions, and with such diverse beliefs and practices they cannot all be from God.

But before He returns, Jesus also predicted that the last sign would be the global spread of the gospel. *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). Some years ago Time Magazine ran an amazing article on the spread of Christianity, noting that if Christians really believed the words of Jesus they should believe the end is near. It then showed how rapidly Christianity is spreading globally – thousands are finding new meaning in South America; the same is happening in the Philippines; one of the fastest growing places for the gospel is in Africa; and in former Communist countries it has taken root in the hearts of millions. But the fastest growing place for the gospel today is in Hindu India. Millions have

discovered that the gospel of God's love through Jesus brings joy, peace of mind, and a purpose in life with a forever hope. God's love for the whole world is on the move today.

Jesus promised in Matthew 24:33 that *when you see all these things, know that it (His return) is near – at the doors!* But are we listening to these warning signs? Are we like the people of Pompeii who, without heeding the warning signs, rebuilt their city on the same site after Mt Vesuvius had erupted and caused an earthquake that destroyed much of their city? Then in August of 79 AD Mt Vesuvius erupted again, destroying them and their city. Jesus urges us to *take heed ... lest ... that Day come on you unexpectedly* (Luke 21:34). He also says that *when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near* (Luke 21:28).

The good news is that God loves us! He has a plan for our lives, and we have no need to fear the things that are happening around us in the world. God is still on His throne and in control, and we need only put our lives in His hands and look forward to His coming. Jesus died just outside Jerusalem 2,000 years ago so that we could be part of His coming kingdom. Why not ask Him to direct your life as you place it in His hands?