

JESUS & THE LAST DAYS

"Calvary: Preview of the End of the World" 1

Desmond Ford

As the century and millennium dwindle to a close, we have been talking with our friends about many grim topics: the shootings at Columbine School in Littleton, Colorado; the NATO bombing in Kosovo, and the streams of refugees and displaced persons; the dreadful floods in the east and Mexico; the earthquakes in Turkey and Taiwan. The words we hear over and over are "sad," "horrible," even "tragic."

I'm reminded of a very wicked statement made by Stalin that unfortunately has a scintilla of truth in it. Stalin said: "A single death is a tragedy, a million deaths is a statistic."

Threats to our society

What happened in Kosovo is a drop in the bucket compared with what's been happening in the Sudan for years. What happened at Littleton is a drop in the bucket compared with the potential threat of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, illegitimacy, and divorce of parents. All these things have skyrocketed in American society since World War II.

Life is very cheap; not just at Littleton, but everywhere.

We live in a dysfunctional world. Our world is burdened with the breakup of the family, with the threat of terrorism, and with rampant suicide. All this is given some sort of meaning when we realize that we are a theater to the universe. Jesus, the great realist, promised that these sad events are signs of his coming consummation.

Abortion

We could populate a huge city every year with the lives taken when abortion is used as a means of birth control. There is a rare place for abortion. A mother's life must always come first. But there is no place for the careless use of abortion as a means of birth control. We take a million and a half lives every year in that manner.

Divorce and illegitimacy

Six out of every ten of our marriages in the USA end in divorce. Illegitimacy has soared since World War II.

The result of these two statistics is terrible trauma for young people growing up either without one or both parents.

(The leaders of our country do not always set us a good, moral example.)

Terrorism

We live under the threat of terrorism.

Biological and chemical terrorism are much more likely than all-out nuclear warfare.

If the wind is just right, any terrorist could release powdered

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Anthrax into the bay off Manhattan, New York. Tens of thousands of people would die in a few hours.

If you want to know how to do it, the internet will tell you. There are fourteen hundred sites on the internet about how to kill people.

Suicide

Today, more people kill themselves than kill others.

Except for accident, suicide is the main cause of death in the Western world, for people under forty.

As we consider the gruesome things that are ushering out our old millennium, the words of Scripture must come to our minds very strongly: "How long, O Lord, how long?"

That refrain is found throughout the Psalms and the prophets. Finally, it appears in the Bible's last book. "How long, O Lord?" (Revelation 6:10 KJV)

Theater of the universe

Of course, the Bible gives us some hints into the meaning of things when it tells us that we are made a theater to the universe.

For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. (1 Corinthians 4:9)

When the translators of the King James Version translated the Greek word "cosmos," they used the English word "world." It really means "everything made."

We are made a spectacle, a sight, a theater to the universe, to angels and to men.

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Ephesians 3:10-11 NIV)

Our world is the one lost sheep that has gone astray.

The great controversy between good and evil that began in one place will not cease until it has been fought out on a global scale.

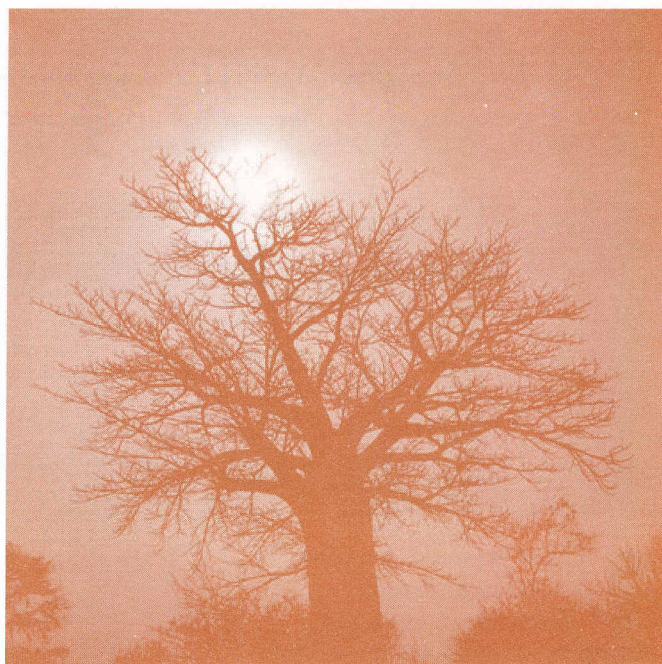
No more delay

In answer to the question, "How long, O Lord?," Revelation 10:6 says, "There will be no more delay!" (NIV). The KJV version says, "Time no longer." That is not the best translation. All modern versions speak about "delay."

In the next chapter of Revelation we read:

The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great—and for destroying those who destroy the earth. (Revelation 11:18 NIV)

"The time has come to destroy those that would destroy the earth." That reminds us of the apocalyptic chapter in Isaiah 24, where it says:



The Lord is going to lay waste the earth
and devastate it;
he will ruin its face
and scatter its inhabitants . . .
[because]
The earth is defiled by its people;
they have disobeyed the laws,
violated the statutes
and broken the everlasting covenant.
Therefore a curse consumes the earth;
its people must bear their guilt.
Therefore earth's inhabitants are burned up,
and very few are left. (Isaiah 24:1, 5-6)

Jesus on the last days

Jesus, the greatest optimist who ever lived—who was also the greatest realist—foretold our day when he said:

"There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world." (Luke 21:25-26)

Jesus also said that in the very last generation, things that had happened right through the centuries would suddenly burgeon on a worldwide scale. Nation would be against nation, kingdom against kingdom, and famines, earthquakes, and pestilences would be seen in many places.

And yet Jesus admonishes us:

"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." (Luke 21:28 KJV) 