

SIGNS OF THE END

1. The classic signs of Matthew 24 have not worked well
 - a. Jesus' "six signs":
 - 1) Wars and rumors of war (Matt. 24:6-7)
 - 2) Natural disasters (Matt. 24:7)
 - 3) Persecution of Christians (Matt. 24:9)
 - 4) Apostasy (Matt. 24:10, 12)
 - 5) False teachers (Matt. 24:5, 11)
 - 6) The gospel preached to the world (Matt. 24:14)
 - b. The problem with these so-called signs:
 - 1) These things happen all the time
 - 2) And have been happening since the days of the apostles, including preaching the gospel to the world (Acts 17:6; Col. 1:6, 23)
 - 3) Thus they are not helpful in pinpointing a time for the end
2. The popular signs of today are not working well
 - a. The signs given by modern Bible prophecy preachers do not hold up well over time
 - b. Some examples of popular signs that are coming up short:
 - 1) The establishment of the nation of Israel in 1948 and the countdown for the final 40-year "generation" (Matt. 24:34)
 - 2) An Arab-Israeli conflict setting off Armageddon
 - 3) Soviet (Russian) expansion down into the Middle East as "Gog from the north"
 - 4) The gathering of temple material and the birth of a "red heifer" in anticipation of rebuilding the Jewish temple
 - 5) The calculation of a name that adds up to 666

3. When God does give a real sign, it always works well
 - a. God's sign to the shepherds outside of Bethlehem was unique and precise (Luke 2:12)
 - b. Jesus' sign for the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD was so clear that Christians fled the city
 - 1) Jesus warned his disciples to flee when they saw Daniel's "abomination of desolation" (Matt. 24:15-21)
 - 2) The Gospel of Luke explains the sign to be an army that surrounds Jerusalem (Luke 21:20-24)
 - 3) Jesus also noted the conquering army would use a siege strategy and build an earthen wall around Jerusalem (Luke 19:43-44)
 - 4) When the Roman army approached Jerusalem, Jews retreated behind the walls of the city
 - 5) Christians fled to the mountain fortress of Pella in Perea (Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* 3.5.3)
4. It is best that Christians not spend much time looking for signs of the end
 - a. Jesus said that the timing of his return was to be a mystery for everyone except God (Mark 13:32-37; Acts 1:6-7)
 - b. Jesus' coming is to be like a "thief in the night" with no advance notice (1 Thess. 5:1-3; 2 Pet. 3:10)
 - c. The so-called "signs of the end" are better viewed as precursors that build anticipation rather than as signs that indicate timing
 - d. The best use of the second coming prophecies in Scripture is to let them motivate us to get spiritually ready (2 Pet. 3:10-14)