

## **A Birth Announcement**

The day our first son was born, my wife was awakened at 3 o'clock in the morning with contractions. We timed their duration and frequency, called our doctor, and headed to the hospital. Over the next ten hours, the contractions became longer, more intense and closer together until his wonderful birth took place. Time and creation are also in labor, as Jesus affirms in today's Templates of Truth.

On a casual stroll past the temple, one of the disciples commented on what a beautiful structure it was. Jesus seized the opportunity to teach His disciples about the end of the world by remarking, *"Not one stone shall be left upon another which will not be torn down."* (Mark 13:2). Curious, they asked Him, *"When will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"* (Matthew 24:3). Just like knowing and watching for the signs that indicate a woman is in labor and about to give birth, Jesus revealed to them the signs that would indicate time & creation were nearing a completion. He characterized them as *"birth pangs."* (Mark 13:8).

The disciples asked Jesus three questions. First, they wanted to know the signs that would indicate the *end of the age*. I believe they were asking Jesus when the Rapture would occur, for we know Scripture teaches that it will happen at the end of the church age. Next, they wanted to know the signs that would indicate His second *coming*. Scripture teaches that Jesus will return to earth at the end of the seven-year Tribulation Period, which begins immediately after the Rapture. Then, His disciples wanted to know *when* these events would take place. To this, Jesus assured them, *"But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone."* (Mark 13:32). Throughout chapter 13, Jesus then offers more than a dozen different signs that indicate the time for these events is drawing exceedingly near.

When a woman thinks she is in labor, one of the first questions her doctor may ask is, "has your water broken?" That is usually an indication that labor is officially in process. If time is in labor, when did the water break? Many Bible students would point to May 14, 1948 – the historically significant day when Israel became an official state, and the event which directly fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 66:8. Since that time, the birth pangs have grown stronger, longer and closer together. How close is birth? Jesus said, *"When you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door."* (Mark 13:29). The Greek meaning of this phrase is like someone has walked up the walkway, climbed the steps, crossed the porch, and is already standing at the door, ready to open it and enter. That's close – much more so for us than it was for them.

When you study the Bible and understand these prophetic signs, you realize the world conditions affirm, like never before in history, that the time is very near. The great Battle of Armageddon will be the mother of all wars. Many believe it will be a nuclear holocaust. In order for that to happen, the alliance against Israel must be firmly in place. In just the past 20 years, we have

seen the Islamic offense developing militantly against Israel and the nations that support her. It will be these forces that meet in the valley of Armageddon. It is no mistake that countries like Iran, North Korea, and Pakistan are currently making international headlines as they develop enriched uranium. The nuclear arsenals for Armageddon are currently being stockpiled!

Earthquakes are increasing. Unusual weather patterns and atmospheric events are becoming more dominant. As we have seen in our country, the world economy is extremely vulnerable and unstable. Our dependence on foreign, Islamic oil puts us at even greater risk. Internet and satellite technology facilitate instant communication and transference, world-wide in real time. These conditions will eventually lend themselves to the establishment of a one-world system that will dominate the Tribulation Period by the world dictator Scripture reveals as the Antichrist. The last pieces of the puzzle are moving strategically into place right before our very eyes! Birth is close.

Paul understood this analogy. He said, *“The whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth...even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.”* (Romans 8:22-23). Time and life as we have known it are about to radically change forever. Are you ready? Lift up your head because your redemption is drawing near.

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide in Christ. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in the Lord Jesus.

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