

The following article presents beliefs and ideas for you to ponder, explore, and perhaps make your own.

## The Broken Blue World

Even though things seem fine as you read this, our planet is beginning to break up — and here's just one example. The day after Christmas, 2004, my childhood home of Thailand was inundated with crashing waves that approached 100 feet in height. Why? A 1,600-km ridge called the India Plate decided to slide under its neighboring Burma Plate. The whole ocean floor jumped up several meters; seven cubic miles of water were displaced. The oceanic hiccup released  $1.1 \times 10^{17}$  joules of energy — that's the same as 26 megatons of TNT or 1,500 Hiroshima atomic bombs. In terms of a Richter Scale, the tsunami earthquake registered a nasty 9.1.

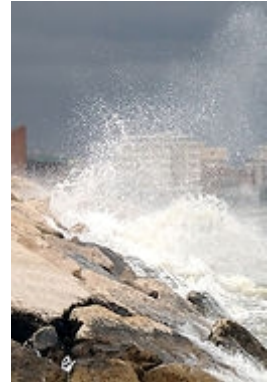


Photo: Dreamstime

It was such a brutal event the entire planet flattened out to the point where the day was actually shortened by 2.68 microseconds. I told my students this and they immediately suggested we should dismiss class early in order to compensate.

Well, that's a very humorous observation . . . which doesn't negate the fact that more than 230,000 people in fourteen countries lost their lives. And who's to say when the next earthquake, or Hurricane Sandy, or Arab Spring uprising, or other world conflict will reach out its deadly tentacles and erase an entire generation?

All these signs are not the most important reason why — but they certainly do give the Christian believer an eagerness to prepare for and witness the soon return of Jesus. The second coming of Christ is one of the most discussed and firmly promised rescue events in both Testaments of the Bible. Jesus Himself gave His followers a destination and ironclad pledge: If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am (John 14:3). The final verses in the Bible have this heartening exchange between Jesus and His loyal friends: He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

One special reason why the people of God have absolute confidence in the second Advent is obvious: the first coming of Jesus is a verified historical fact. Jesus was here; He lived among the human race. He died in agony for the sins of a lost world. Why would a Son of God spend 33 years on a mission of redemption — something even secular people acknowledge as fact — pay an ultimate ransom in order to rescue human trophies, triumphing over the forces of evil (Colossians 2:15) . . . and then not ever come in triumphant glory to claim His prize?

Interestingly, Jesus' post-Calvary departure from our world reveals how He will come back; Acts

1:11 tells us Jesus will return “in like manner.” In other words, a physical Jesus, visible and real and victorious! Every eye shall see Him, it says in Revelation 1:7. A trumpet will sound; millions of angels will attend the celestial event. It will be incredibly powerful, sensory, loud, and palpably real. Some Christian groups posit that the Bible teaches a secret rapture, pointing to the metaphor of a thief slipping into your garage at midnight. It’s true that burglars do tend to arrive noiselessly, but the main point of the passage (1 Thessalonians 5:2) seems to be that the coming of Jesus will be unexpected, not quiet!

The Word of God lists a number of signs in addition to earthquakes, famines, and wars. Technology will increase at an explosive rate; the gospel will flicker around the world at the speed of an Internet connection. The colorful prophecies in Daniel give a clear time-line of the rise and fall of empires; by every interpretation our planet is now in the last ticks of the clock. Despite the attendant anxiety we feel, these signs do give the believer hope that we truly are living in the final days! However, some of the heralded celestial signs were noted by Christians a century or more ago, and we need to always remember that, one, God works according to His own timetable, and two, no man knows the day or the hour.

What specifically happens to the human race when Christ appears in the skies above us? Again, denominations vary in their interpretations, but virtually all agree on the Bible’s plain declaration (1 Thessalonians 4) that the saved of all ages who have been laid to rest will be resurrected. Rebels who have rejected God’s offered gift of salvation will be overwhelmed by the glory of this great event, destroy[ed] by the splendor [brightness] of His coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8). If we take Jesus’ promise of John 14 at face value, the saved will be rewarded with heavenly homes and fellowship with God and the angels! In other words, our world will be very quickly depopulated.

But only for a while . . .