

TROUBLE THAT LEADS TO HOPE

“In the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here.” —2 TIMOTHY 3:1.

HAVE you heard about—or witnessed—any of the following sad events?

- A fatal disease claims dozens of lives.
- A famine sends hundreds to their grave.
- An earthquake kills thousands and leaves many more homeless.

On the pages that follow, you will review some sobering facts about events like these. You will also see that the Bible predicted such conditions for the period of time called “the last days.”*

The purpose of these articles, however, is not to convince you that we live in a troubled world. You likely see this trouble first-hand. Rather, they are designed to give you hope. They will show that the fulfillment of these six prophecies means that “the last days” will soon end. This series will also consider some common objections to this evidence and will provide good reason to believe that something better lies just ahead.

* As to why God permits these bad conditions, see the article “Why Does God Allow Evil and Suffering?” on pages 16 and 17 of this issue.



1. EARTHQUAKES

“There will be great earthquakes.”—LUKE 21:11.



“We [geophysicists]
call them great
earthquakes.
Everybody else
calls them horrible.”

—KEN HUDNUT,
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY.

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● Winnie, 16 months old, is pulled from the rubble in Haiti. A TV crew reporting on the disaster had heard her faint moans. She survives the earthquake, but her parents do not.

WHAT DO THE FACTS SHOW? When a magnitude 7.0 earthquake struck Haiti in January 2010, more than 300,000 people were killed. An additional 1.3 million were rendered homeless in an instant. Although extreme, the quake in Haiti was not an isolated event. At least 18 major earthquakes occurred earth wide between April 2009 and April 2010.

WHAT IS A COMMON OBJECTION? We are not experiencing more earthquakes; because of modern technology, we are just more aware of them than people were in the past.

IS THAT OBJECTION VALID? Consider this fact: The Bible does not emphasize the number of earthquakes during the last days. However, it does say that “*great earthquakes*” will occur “in one place after another,” making them one of the notable features of this momentous period of history.—Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? Are we seeing great earthquakes, just as the Bible foretold?

Earthquakes alone may not seem to be conclusive evidence that we are living in the last days. Yet, they are only one prophecy that is being fulfilled. Consider a second.

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2. FAMINE

“There will be food shortages.”—MARK 13:8.

● A man seeks refuge in the village of Quaratadji, Niger. The man’s cousins, brothers, and sisters have also come from the interior of the country in an effort to flee the hunger. Yet, the man lies alone on a mat on the ground. Why is he alone? “He cannot feed [his family] and cannot continue to look them in the eye,” explains Sidi, the village chief.

WHAT DO THE FACTS SHOW? Worldwide, almost 1 person in 7 does not get enough to eat each day. The numbers are worse in sub-Saharan Africa, where 1 in 3 is considered chronically hungry. To put that figure in perspective, imagine a family consisting of a father, a mother, and a baby. If there is only enough food for two of them, who will go hungry? The father? the mother? the baby? This is the choice that such families must make on a daily basis.

WHAT IS A COMMON OBJECTION? The earth produces more than enough food for everyone. Earth’s resources just need to be better managed.

IS THAT OBJECTION VALID? True, farmers can produce and transport more food than ever before in history. Ideally, human governments should be able to manage earth’s food supply to solve the hunger problem. However, even after decades of trying, they have been unable to do so.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? Is Mark 13:8 being fulfilled? Despite advances in technology, are food shortages afflicting mankind on a global scale?

Earthquakes and famine often precede problems that arise from another facet of the sign of the last days.



“More than one-third of children who die from pneumonia, diarrhoea and other illnesses could have survived had they not been undernourished.”

—ANN M. VENEMAN, FORMER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE
UN CHILDREN’S FUND.

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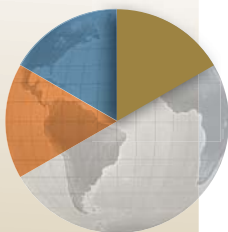
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⁺ CD also available.

[°] MP3 CD-ROM also available.

[°] Audio recordings also available at www.jw.org.



3. DISEASE

“People will . . . suffer terrible diseases.”—LUKE 21:11,
Contemporary English Version.



“It’s horrible to be eaten from without by a lion or something, but it’s equally horrible to be eaten from the inside out by some terrible bug and to see that going on all around you.”

—EPIDEMIOLOGIST MICHAEL OSTERHOLM.

© William Daniels/Panos Pictures

● Bonzali, a public health officer in an African country torn by civil war, does what little he can to treat mine workers in his town who are dying of Marburg virus.* His pleas for help from officials in a larger city have gone unanswered. Four months later, assistance finally arrives, but Bonzali is dead. He contracted Marburg from the miners he tried to save.

WHAT DO THE FACTS SHOW? Lower respiratory infections (such as pneumonia), diarrheal diseases, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria are among the most destructive diseases that afflict mankind. In a recent year, these five categories of disease killed an estimated 10.7 million individuals. Put another way, the diseases killed approximately one person every three seconds, all year long.

WHAT IS A COMMON OBJECTION? The world’s population continues to grow, so there are, of course, more cases of disease. There are more people who can be infected.

IS THAT OBJECTION VALID? The world’s population has increased drastically. But so has man’s ability to diagnose, control, and treat disease. Logically, then, should not disease be losing its grip on the human family? Yet, just the opposite is happening.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? Are people suffering from terrible diseases as the Bible foretold?

Earthquakes, famine, and disease are impersonal forces that wreak havoc on millions of people. Millions more suffer at the hands of fellow humans—many being victimized by those who should protect them. Note what Bible prophecy says would happen.

* Marburg Hemorrhagic Fever is caused by a virus that is related to Ebola.

4. LACK OF NATURAL LOVE

“People will . . . lack normal affection for their families.”—2 TIMOTHY 3:1-3, God’s Word Bible



● Chris works for a domestic-violence help group in North Wales. “I remember one lady coming in who was so badly beaten up I could not even recognise her from the last time I had seen her,” says Chris. “Other women are so emotionally damaged they won’t even lift their eyes off the floor.”

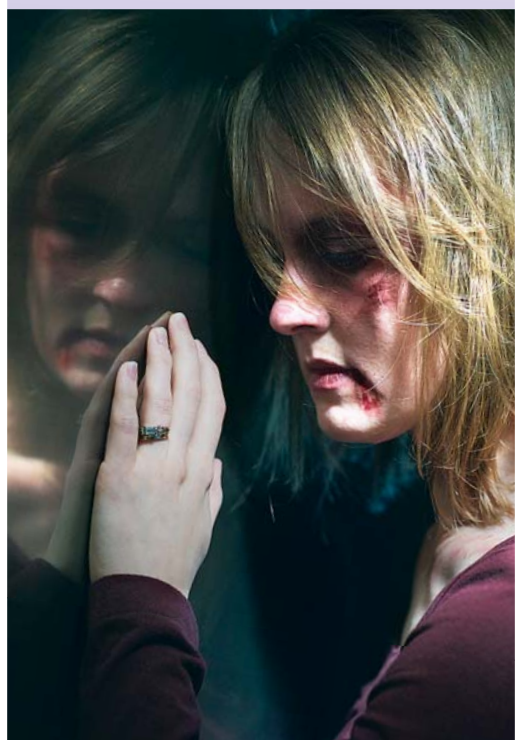
WHAT DO THE FACTS SHOW? In one African country, approximately 1 out of every 3 women has been sexually abused as a child. A survey conducted in that same country found that more than one third of men felt that it was acceptable to beat their wives. However, women are not the only victims of domestic violence. In Canada, for example, nearly 3 out of 10 men have been battered or otherwise abused by their partners.

WHAT IS A COMMON OBJECTION? There has always been domestic violence. It is just receiving more attention today than it did in times past.

IS THAT OBJECTION VALID? Awareness of domestic violence has been heightened in recent decades. But has greater awareness of the problem reduced the number of incidents of domestic violence? No, that has not been the case. A lack of natural affection is ever more prevalent.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? Is 2 Timothy 3:1-3 being fulfilled? Do many lack the affection for their families that should come naturally?

The fifth prophecy you are seeing fulfilled involves our home, the earth. Consider what the Bible states on this subject.



“Domestic violence is acknowledged as one of the most chronically under-reported crimes in society. On average a woman will be assaulted by her partner 35 times before contacting the police.”

—A SPOKESWOMAN FOR WALES DOMESTIC ABUSE HELPLINE.



5. RUINING OF THE EARTH

“[God will] bring to ruin those ruining the earth.”

—REVELATION 11:18.

● Mr. Pirri works as a palm-wine tapper in Kpor, Nigeria. His trade has been devastated by a massive oil spill in the Niger Delta. “It kills our fish, destroys our skin, spoils our streams,” he says. “I have no livelihood left.”

WHAT DO THE FACTS SHOW? According to some experts, 6.5 million tons of litter enter the world’s oceans each year. An estimated 50 percent of that litter is plastic that will drift for hundreds of years before it degrades. Besides polluting the earth, humans are depleting its natural resources at an alarming rate. Studies show that the earth needs one year and five months to regenerate what humans consume in a year. “If population and consumption trends continue, we will need the equivalent of two Earths by 2035,” reports the Australian newspaper *Sydney Morning Herald*.

WHAT IS A COMMON OBJECTION? Humans are resourceful. We can reverse these problems and save the earth.

IS THAT OBJECTION VALID? Many hardworking individuals and groups have raised awareness of environmental issues. Yet, the earth continues to be polluted on a grand scale.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? Is there a need for God to intervene and save our planet from being ruined—just as he has promised to do?

In addition to the five prophecies just considered, the Bible also foretold positive developments for the last days. Consider one example in the sixth prophecy.

“I feel like I’ve gone from owning a piece of paradise to owning a toxic waste dump.”

—ERIN TAMBER,
A RESIDENT OF THE
GULF COAST, UNITED STATES,
CONCERNING THE EFFECTS
OF THE 2010 OIL SPILL IN THE
GULF OF MEXICO.

U.S. Coast Guard photo

Is God Responsible?

Since the Bible predicted the bad conditions we see today, does that make God responsible for them? Does he cause us to suffer? You can find satisfying

answers to those questions in chapter 11 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

6. A GLOBAL PREACHING WORK

“This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth.”—MATTHEW 24:14.

● Vaiatea lives on a remote Pacific island in the Tuamotu Archipelago. Although Tuamotu consists of nearly 80 atolls spread across an area of more than 310,000 square miles (802,900 sq km), it has a population of only some 16,000 inhabitants. Yet, Vaiatea and her neighbors have been contacted by Jehovah’s Witnesses. Why? Because the Witnesses wish to share the good news about God’s Kingdom with all people—no matter where they live.

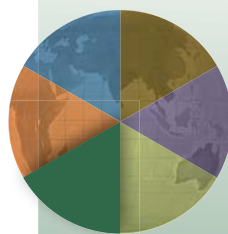
WHAT DO THE FACTS SHOW? The Kingdom message is reaching all corners of the globe. In 2010 alone, Jehovah’s Witnesses spent over 1.6 billion hours proclaiming this good news in 236 lands. That is an average of 30 minutes in the preaching work each day by every Witness. Over the past decade, they have produced and distributed more than 20 billion items of Bible-education literature.

WHAT IS A COMMON OBJECTION? The Bible’s message has been preached for thousands of years.

IS THAT OBJECTION VALID? True, many have preached something about the Bible’s message. However, most have done so only for a brief time and on a limited scale. By contrast, Jehovah’s Witnesses are accomplishing an organized, global preaching campaign that reaches hundreds of millions of people. The Witnesses have persevered in their preaching work despite severe opposition from some of the most powerful and ruthless organizations in human history.* (Mark 13:13) Moreover, Jehovah’s Witnesses are not paid to preach. Rather, they volunteer their time, and they offer their literature free of charge. Their work is supported entirely by voluntary contributions.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? Is the “good news of the kingdom” being preached worldwide? Could the fulfillment of this prophecy mean that something better lies just ahead?

* For more information, see the three video documentaries “Faithful Under Trials,” “Purple Triangles,” and “Jehovah’s Witnesses Stand Firm Against Nazi Assault,” distributed by Jehovah’s Witnesses.



“As long as Jehovah permits, we will continue to preach the Kingdom good news with zeal, using every possible means to reach people.”

—2010 YEARBOOK OF
JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES.



BETTER TIMES JUST AHEAD!

“Just a little while longer, and the wicked one will be no more . . . But the meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace.”

—PSALM 37:10, 11.



WOULD you like to see the above-quoted prophecy come true? No doubt, you would. There are solid reasons for believing that it soon will.

The preceding articles discussed just some of the Bible prophecies that clearly indicate that we are living in “the last days.” (2 Timothy 3:1-5) God inspired the Bible writers to foretell those events so that we might have hope. (Romans 15:4) The fulfillment of such prophecies means that the troubles we now face will soon end.

What will follow the last days? God’s Kingdom will rule all mankind. (Matthew 6:9) Consider the Bible’s description of conditions on earth at that time:

- **Hunger will be eliminated.** “There will come to be plenty of grain on the earth; on the top of the mountains there will be an overflow.”—Psalm 72:16.

- **Disease will be eliminated.** “No resident will say: ‘I am sick.’”—Isaiah 33:24.

- **The earth will be renewed.** “The wilderness and the waterless region will exult, and the desert plain will be joyful and blossom as the saffron.”—Isaiah 35:1.

These are just a few of the encouraging Bible prophecies that will soon be fulfilled. Why not ask Jehovah’s Witnesses to show you why they are so confident that better times are just ahead?