**SIGNS OF CHRIST'S COMING**

My name is \_\_\_\_ and I'm emailing from the states... Arizona to be exact... and I'm in need of some information regarding this posting I found on the web site... and I was jus' wondering if you have any answers to all of this that was posted...

http://www.ellenwhite.org/egw42.htm

if could you help me out here... I'd really appreciate it... y'know...

Thanx

Thank you for contacting the Ellen G. White Estate. I went to the place you indicated and read the material there. I had not seen this before, so I took some notes. I do have some comments which may be helpful to you.

The document poses three questions. I will list them here and comment after each one.

1) "Why didn't the signs produce the effects described in the Bible?" By this, he means the response of kings and other to hide themselves, etc. (Rev. 6:15, 16). The reason, I believe, is that the signs have not all taken place as of yet. Rev. 6:14 precedes those verses: "The sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place." That's the final event that precedes the panic described in vv. 15 and 16.

2) "Why were the signs localized when the Bible seems to indicate a global scale?" It is true that reference to the sun, moon, and stars may make us think globally, but the text does not demand this. Even the question appears to recognize this when it says that the Bible "seems" to indicate a global scale. It is not definite, is it?

The events we are looking at are listed under the "sixth seal." Five seals have preceded this in Rev. 6. The events of the other seals, as we understand them, are not universal either. For instance, the second seal is illustrated by a red horse whose rider "was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that men should slay one another." Was that universal destruction? Was it global war? Those of us who see these seals as representing certain eras in history do not find a time when the whole world was at war, not even in the two "World Wars" of our century. A sign does not have to be universal or global to fulfill its purpose.

3) "Why didn't those who witnessed the signs see the return of Christ?" The answer to this question is really the same as the first--the signs have not all been fulfilled as of yet.

Much of the rest of what the document does is not really relevant to these questions. The author spends considerable time "proving" that the signs Mrs. White referred to were not the most spectacular such occurrences in the world's history. But such things are really not provable. Death counts, for instance, are not measures of the earthquakes themselves but of the disasters they cause; an earthquake under the Sahara might be bigger than one under California, but likely far fewer people would die. As for the intensity itself, whose Richter scale measured these things over the last thousand years or so? There were no measurements. The numbers assigned to the various earthquakes he cites are someone's estimates. The estimates of others may vary. A friend tells me that another source put the Lisbon earthquake at an intensity of 9, instead of the 8.1 (or was it 8.2?) that appeared in the document you referred me to. Meteor counts are similarly subjective. Who can count 60,000 an hour? Who can tell that it is not 100,000 an hour?

Even if we could prove these things one way or another, this would not demonstrate whether the events were the prophesied signs. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that these events had to be the most spectacular ever in order to be the signs spoken of. The fact that Mrs. White spoke of them in superlative terms (the greatest, etc.) reflects the best information of that day, but the relative size of these events does not determine whether they could be the signs the Bible foretold. For that, we have to look at the timing and sequence. They came shortly after the "tribulation" of the middle ages; they came in the exact order foretold. And, we might add, they occurred where people were studying the Scriptures and were prepared to recognize them for what they were.

Below my signature I am including a copy of a section from "God Cares," vol. 2, by C. Mervyn Maxwell. It is a very helpful commentary on the book of Revelation. (Volume 1 is on Daniel.) I think you will find that he deals with these matters quite openly and in a way that makes sense.

I hope these thoughts will be useful to you. Let me know if I can be of further service. Thank you again for writing, and God bless.

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From "God Cares," vol. 2, by C. Mervyn Maxwell (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1985), pp. 193-202, and 214:

III. Signs of the End Time

We have promised ourselves more than once that we would look at Revelation's list of end-time signs. As we do so now, let us remember that in the Olivet Discourse Jesus didn't seem eager to give the disciples very many signs.

The disciples wanted a sign so they could know when Jerusalem would fall and Christ would return. See Matthew 24:3. In His answer, Jesus helpfully showed that the fall of Jerusalem would not be the same as the end of the world. But instead of providing many signs, Jesus dwelt on the importance of "preparing" for the second coming through personal religion, service to others, and character development. See pages 19, 20, 36-42.

But Jesus did give the disciples a few signs. For the fall of Jerusalem He gave one sign, the "abomination of desolation"--Roman armies (Luke 21:20)--surrounding the Jerusalem temple. See Matthew 24:15, K.J.V. In connection with His second coming, He spoke about the gospel going to all the world. And He mentioned especially the supreme "sign of the Son of man," His personal appearance on the clouds, as visible as the lightning. Verses 30 and 27.

But in the course of the Olivet Discourse, Jesus also talked about the "great tribulation" of the 1260 year-days and added that \_"immediately after\_ the tribulation of those days" and prior to His reappearance "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken." Matthew 24:29.

This list of signal phenomena is strikingly similar to John's list recorded in Revelation 6:12-14, except that John's list is longer and more detailed. The similarity is not surprising, inasmuch as Jesus was the source of both lists. "When he [Jesus Christ, the Lamb] opened the sixth seal," John says, "I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale; the sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place."

In comparing the two lists, many Bible students have become convinced that Christ's Olivet list has already been remarkably fulfilled and that the longer list He gave John under the sixth seal has already been fulfilled in part. The sky hasn't yet rolled back nor has the final earthquake taken place. But the other predictions, they say, have been fulfilled in the Lisbon earthquake of November 1, 1755, the dark day (accompanied by a peculiarly red moon) of May 19, 1780, and the magnificent display of Leonid meteors in the early morning of November 13, 1833.

The suggested events are well worth looking into.

\_The Lisbon earthquake.\_ The Lisbon earthquake of November 1, 1755, was no mere dish-rattler. It is still listed in almanacs and encyclopedias as one of the major earthquakes of world history.

Lisbon, the capital of Portugal, is a commercial port on the Tagus River. Rich and religious in the 1750s, it boasted wealthy merchants and more than forty large churches. The Inquisition had a headquarters there.

November 1, 1755, All Saints Day and a Saturday, dawned bright and clear. But at 9:30 a.m. the ground roared and trembled, tearing fearsome fissures in the fabric of public edifices. After a pause, homes, churches, government buildings, and palaces swayed for two eternal minutes like reeds in the wind. Masonry crumbled, marble beams and pillars tore like tissue, roofs and walls crashed to the ground. After another pause, another attack. Then a suffocating, all encompassing cloud that turned morning into night as the dust thrown up by the falling masonry settled back down.

When the obscurity cleared, people were seen crawling out of the wreckage, bleeding, an arm or a leg useless. Children ran around screaming for their parents. Parents searched and shouted for their children. Injured dogs and horses struggled. Priests, some of them badly hurt, spoke comfort and held up crucifixes.

Cries could be heard from beneath the ruins. They would be heard for several days. Flames flickered, the onset of a week's holocaust. Tidal waves, surging up the Tagus River, engulfed crowds who thought the open waterfront safer than the city streets.

Some old accounts, even one by the famed geologist Sir Charles Lyell, reported that fire mysteriously leaped out of cracks in the ground. Surprisingly, a recent study gives scientific support to the possibility.8

How many victims died? Early reports spoke of 100,000. Modern almanacs and encyclopedias may give 60,000. Lately the toll has been lowered to 15,000 or 10,000.

Casualty counts in several other earthquakes have been far higher; the Lisbon earthquake, nonetheless, was impressive. It could even be called the Lisbon-Fes earthquake, for when Lisbon suffered, the North African city of Fes, 400 miles away, and its sister city, Meknes were leveled, with heavy loss of life. The ground shook noticeably in other North African cities as well and in Europe as far off as Strasbourg, 1100 miles distant. Rivers and lakes were disturbed all the way to Scandinavia, 1500-2000 miles distant. About 6:00 p.m. a tidal wave struck the island of Barbados in the Caribbean, some 4000 miles away.

For a comparison on North American terrain, imagine the 1906 earthquake destroying not only San Francisco but also Los Angeles as well, nearly 400 miles to the south. Imagine the earthquake also shaking Seattle, Salt Lake City, Denver, and Albuquerque, and disturbing the Great Lakes and even the Hudson River.

For much of this survey we've been following "The Lisbon Earthquake," an excellent study written in honor of the 1955 bicentennial by Sir Thomas Kendrick, then director of the British Museum.9 Kendrick says that although not the greatest disaster of its kind, "the earthquake of 1 November 1755 was nevertheless a colossal seismic disturbance that was felt over so large an area that it caused general alarm and astonishment and a great output of scientific speculation."10

Kendrick shows that the quake also produced a considerable output of theological and philosophical speculation, much of it centering on the disaster's relationship to God, the age-old "theodicy" question about God and the presence of evil. Kendrick's chapter "Optimism Attacked" cites the wrestlings of such renowned philosophers as Kant, Rousseau, and Voltaire. Voltaire's highly influential "Candide" included scenes set in the Lisbon disaster and did much to stimulate skepticism. With the assistance of Voltaire and others, the earthquake helped to bring the "end of optimism." Thereafter, says Kendrick, "pessimism became a more familiar and understandable mood."11

More and more people began to say, "If God isn't looking out for us, we'd better look out for ourselves." It was a mood that burgeoned until it expressed itself a generation later in the gross violence of the French Revolution, an earthquake of a different sort that certainly helped change the course of history.

\_The Dark Day of May 19, 1780.\_ The dark day of May 19, 1780, followed hard on the heels of a tough New England winter.12 Patches of snow still stubbornly spotted the countryside. America's Declaration of Independence was not yet four years old. The Revolutionary War had drawn many husbands and sons from their farms. Inflation was rampant and the future uncertain.

On May 12 the skies over New England became noticeably overcast and the air hazy. The sun was sometimes dim enough to look at with the naked eye. A farmer planting corn on the seventeenth couldn't make out the end of his field. On the eighteenth a thick gloom settled on the lowlands. The sun disappeared half an hour early. The calm was portentous. When the full moon came up, it was coppery red and stayed that way.

Sunrise on Friday the nineteenth was visible in most of New England, but like the moon the night before, the sun remained red as it climbed. A large black cloud loomed ominous in the southwest. A fresh wind from the same direction spread the cloud steadily to the northeast. It continued to Boston, to Portland, Maine and beyond, and affected 25,000 square miles.

Trees and grass exchanged their springtime green for yellowish brown and vanished in the gloom. Cattle returned lowing to their barns. Cocks crowed and sought their roosts. People flocked into the streets to share their fears--and rushed to their churches to find meaning.

The Connecticut legislature adjourned at eleven o'clock because the members couldn't see one another's faces. At the Connecticut council, however, a motion to adjourn was defeated when Colonel Davenport remarked that either the day of judgment was at hand or it was not. If it wasn't, he said, there was no cause for alarm. If it was, he would like to be found at his duty. Would someone light the candles?

Candles were lit in the council chambers. They were lit in many other places too, for the darkness became so dense, even at noon, that newspapers and almanacs couldn't be read and women couldn't see to cook.

The 25,000 square miles we mentioned a moment ago in western New York, northern New Jersey, and southern New England, were not darkened all at once or all at the same time. The center of the darkness kept moving, so that its intensity was felt typically in a place for two or three hours. At varying times in the afternoon it lifted considerably, only to return rather generally before night. In many places, the moon, still nearly full, was not seen until hours after it was expected. The strange darkness in some localities actually seemed to shroud and impede candlelight.

Contemporaries attributed the phenomenon both to natural causes and to God. A smoky smell in the air, a sooty scum on still water, a belt of ash washed up along the shore, all attested the action of fire. Numerous forest fires were known to be raging in northern Vermont, northern New Hampshire, and in Canada, some set by settlers to clear the land.

Calm weather for several days had kept the smoke from dissipating. Then layers of wind, transporting the accumulated smoke from the north, and ocean clouds from the east, produced a double-decker obscurity that completely eclipsed the sun.

But why then? And why there? There have been other exceptionally gloomy days, even in North America, before and since. But none, in North America at least, has been as dark, or has remained as dark for so long.13 Many readers of this book can remember the strange darkness of September 24-30, 1950, when smoke from a vast Alberta forest fire spread deep gloom from the Great Lakes to the East Coast, and the Cleveland Indians took the Detroit Tigers 2-1 under lights in the afternoon. But, as on the other occasions, the darkness of September 1950 failed to reach the intensity of May 19, 1780, except locally perhaps for a few minutes. Nor apparently did it cause the same sober reflection.

In the Olivet Discourse Jesus said, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days [the 1260 year-days] the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light." Matthew 24:29. Catholic persecution virtually ceased in Europe in the middle of the eighteenth century. The last "heretic" to be martyred in France, a Reformed pastor, died in 1762. Pope Clement XIV personally outlawed the Jesuits (the Society of Jesus) in 1773.

So the timing of the May 19, 1780, event was right. And people reflected on it, for the place was right. New England was a center of Bible study, noticeably so even in comparison with the other newly independent American states.

\_The Leonid star shower of November 13, 1833.\_ The same observation about time and place applies to the brilliant display of shooting stars seen on the long-remembered morning of November 13, 1833.14

This amazing stellar performance began to attract attention along the eastern seaboard of North America about nine the previous evening, as the frequency of meteors increased well above normal. By two in the morning the display was bright enough to awaken people. The peak came about four, and only with difficulty did the dawn finally put it out. On the Great Plains, American Indians recorded the event on their calendars and named the ensuing season the "Plenty-Stars" or "Storm of Stars" winter. In sparsely settled California, a military company saw the sky "completely thickened" with meteors. Their army horses tried repeatedly to stampede.

Normally in one hour a careful observer, scanning a clear, dark sky, may see about ten meteors brightly scar the heavens. Subjective estimates at the height of the 1833 star shower ran to 60,000 or more an hour. Some people spoke of a "snowstorm" of stars. Significantly, the meteors seemed to proceed from a central point. Many of them left a glowing trail, or train. As the thousands of trains lingered momentarily, all radiating outward from the common center, they appeared like the ribs of a gigantic umbrella.

Most of the meteors appeared to be star-sized; a few seemed as large as the moon. A good many burst into shiny fragments. They burst "silently," as the vast, shimmering, celestial spectacle sailed entrancingly overhead in the frosty chill of the early morning.

The 1833 star shower was significant for astronomy as well as for prophecy. It gave birth to the modern study of star showers. Denison Olmstead, professor of science and mathematics at Yale, prepared a careful report for the January 1834 issue of \_The American Journal of Science and the Arts.\_ In it he noted that the meteors radiated outward from a point (the "radiant") in the sickle of the constellation Leo. He also made the pregnant observation that this central point proceeded westward along with the constellation as the night advanced. The display was named "Leonid" after the constellation Leo, and a search was launched for other historic Leonid showers. H. A. Newton, also of Yale, discovered records of occasional displays dating back to A.D. 902.

Calculations were carried out and a theory was developed. According to the theory, a certain comet, later labeled Temple-Tuttle, swings around the sun on a far-flung elliptical orbit that carries it through Earth's orbit and out beyond Uranus, some 2 billion miles, or 3 billion kilometers, from the sun. The comet itself is slowly coming apart. All along its orbital path, many miles apart, particles of it called meteoroids are strung out individually; and right behind the comet, a great number of these particles cluster together.

Our earth passes through the comet's orbit each year in November. As it does, our gravity intercepts some of the straggling particles and attracts them into our atmosphere for their moment of incandescent glory. Thus, every year in mid-November larger numbers of meteors than usual seem to fall from the constellation Leo.

They do not actually come from Leo. They seem to do so, because faraway Leo shines directly behind them. They do not really radiate like the ribs of an umbrella. They fall parallel to one another, but perspective plays optical tricks.

Every thirty-third and thirty-fourth year our earth may, if we are lucky, plow head on at over 150,000 miles an hour into the main swarm just to the comet's rear. If it does, our gravity attracts vast numbers of the meteoroids into our atmosphere, and we enjoy a celestial celebration like the one of November 13, 1833.

Good showers were anticipated for November 1866 and 1867, and observers in different parts of the world were gratified. But the learned forecasts of astronomers to the contrary notwithstanding, no special shower greeted eager eyes in 1899. Or in 1933. The theory was restudied and hopes were set on 1966.

I stepped outdoors in my bathrobe in the small hours of November 17, 1966, and was deeply disappointed to find the sky overcast in Lincoln, Nebraska, where I was living. I didn't bother to waken my wife. Most of eastern North America was also overcast, disappointing millions of other would-be stargazers. But after all, the cloud cover made very little difference; astronomers who flew above the overcast encountered only a dismal performance.

But about 5:00 a.m., when the sun had already risen in the east and Leo twinkled high above the horizon of Arizona, the skies of the American Southwest told a very different story. For one enchanted hour before the dawn, a snatch of 1833 returned. While observers exulted, precision instruments recorded a rate of up to 100,000 meteors an hour.

But let's go back for a moment. If astronomers were edified on November 13, 1833, not a few ordinary people were terrified. Some lay on the earth imploring the Lord to have mercy. Many others, alarmed that judgment day might find them thieves, returned what they had stolen, giving rise to the appropriate appellation, "The Night of Restitution."

But many ordinary people, filled with awe, were also inspired with joy in the hope of the second coming. Frederick Douglass, the future journalist and diplomat, was still a slave in 1833. To him the star shower was a "sublime scene," a "gorgeous spectacle," a "harbinger of the coming of the Son of Man." He had read in the Bible that the stars would fall, and here they were now falling. "I was suffering very much in my mind," he wrote in his autobiography. "I was looking away to heaven for the rest denied me on earth." "I was prepared to hail Him as my friend and deliverer."15

Another serious but joyful observer was Henry Dana Ward, a Harvard graduate and the rector of the Anglican church of St. Jude in New York City. Ward jumped up from a deep sleep when he heard someone shouting. He took one look out the window, awakened his wife, and hurriedly pulled on his clothes. Soon he was out on the street, and as the shower continued, he walked with a couple of friends to a local park for a fuller view.

"We felt in our hearts," he wrote almost immediately to the "New York Journal of Commerce"16 "that it was a sign of the last days. For, truly, 'the stars of heaven fell "unto the earth," even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken by a mighty wind.'--Revelation 6:13. This language of the prophet has always been received as metaphorical," he said. "Yesterday it was literally fulfilled....

"How did they fall?" he asked--and answered, "The falling stars did not come, as if from several trees shaken, but from one: those which appeared in the east fell toward the East; those which appeared in the north fell toward the North; those which appeared in the west fell toward the West, and those which appeared in the south (for I went out of my residence into the Park,) fell toward the South; and they fell, not as the \_ripe\_ fruit falls. Far from it. But "they flew," they WERE CAST, like the "unripe" fruit, which at first refuses to leave the branch; and, when it does break its hold, flies swiftly, "straight off," descending."

Ward assumed that "natural causes" undoubtedly produced the phenomenon; but he saw it as nonetheless a fulfillment of the prophecy made 1800 years before.

\_Significance of these events.\_ Before leaving these events, the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, the dark day of 1780, and the Leonid star shower of 1833, let us take another overview of them. How well do they qualify as the fulfillment of Christ's prediction in the Olivet Discourse and John's prediction made under the sixth seal?

1. \_Their magnitude.\_ Each event was notable in its own right. The Lisbon earthquake shook an unusually large portion of the earth's surface. It also shook up people's thinking, helping to end an era of optimism and open an era of gloom. The dark day of May 19, 1780, has not been equalled, at least in North America, in the 200 years that have since come and gone. The Leonid shower of November 13, 1833, launched a new branch of astronomy, and it, too, has not been matched since, in spite of scientific expectations that it would be. The 1966 shower, though at least equally brilliant, was much shorter and was visible over a much smaller area. Our three events were noteworthy.

2. \_Their location.\_ Our events occurred in Europe and North America primarily, where people were studying the Bible and pondering the prophecies. They happened where people were prepared to perceive their importance, where communication could take place. A dark day over the Sahara or in New Guinea would have said little about the second coming of Christ to cannibal headhunters or Muslim nomads.

Events don't need to be universal to deliver a global message. A few square miles at Hiroshima and Nagasaki were sufficient to announce the atomic age. A stable in Bethlehem ushered in the Christian era.

Only a few hundred people saw Jesus after His resurrection (see 1 Corinthians 15:3-8), but these told others. Thomas said he wouldn't be convinced unless he himself saw Christ. Jesus obliged him, and Thomas believed. "My Lord and my God," he cried. But Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." John 20:28, 29. Not one of us living today was there when He rose from the dead, but some people were there to pass the word along, and that was enough.

Some years ago a newsmagazine told of a train that tooted its horn regularly and rapidly as it approached a crowded station. The waiting passengers paid little if any attention. A few railroad personnel, however, recognized the sound as a signal--a "sign"--that the train's brakes had failed. At once, they ordered everyone off the platform and out of the waiting rooms. The train plowed into the platform and ground to a halt. Equipment was damaged, but no one was hurt--because a few people understood the "sign" and interpreted it to others. Because our phenomena occurred where they did, some people understood them likewise and passed the meaning on. That was enough.

3. \_Their timing.\_ Jesus said that the sun and moon would be darkened and the stars would fall "immediately after the tribulation of those days." And so it came about. Our events came at the right time.

Nonetheless, Jesus also said, "Then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, . . . and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven . . .; and he will send out his angels . . ., and they will gather his elect from the four winds." Matthew 24:30, 31. These events have not happened yet.

So what shall we say about timing? Well, within a few years of the 1833 star shower Jesus fulfilled one of the most notable of all Bible prophecies. In 1844, at the close of the 2300 year-days of Daniel 8: 14, He traveled as Son of man on the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days (see Daniel 7:9-14) to inaugurate the final judgment. See GC 1:237-243. Ever since, He has been holding the four winds in check while actively sealing His 144,000 precious end-time people. See Revelation 7:1-8. Through the symbolic angels of Revelation 14 He has been notably expanding the proclamation of the gospel toward His goal of reaching every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.

When everyone living at that time has had a chance to accept or reject the gospel, the plagues must fall on the finally impenitent. God delays that somber development, "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." 2 Peter 3:9. But when the gospel has been preached throughout the whole world, "then the end will come." Matthew 24:14. See pages 44-46.

The events we have been discussing on the earth and in the sun, moon, and stars have done double duty as signs. They have witnessed to the coming of the Son of man to the judgment as well as to the general nearness of His coming as Son of man at the second advent.

Will the signs be repeated, as some have suggested, immediately prior to Christ's return? They may be. See "Your Questions Answered," page 214. In the excitement of Christ's actual arrival, our solar system may perform some amazing and startling tricks. But the series of signs that were to take place "immediately after the tribulation of those days" has evidently been fulfilled.

In terms of the sixth seal, we stand today between the star shower of Revelation 6:13 and the momentous time in verse 14 when the heavens will roll back like a scroll, the mountains and islands will move out of their places, and sinners will ask the rocks to hide them from the Lamb.

The information communicated to us through the events we have discussed may be regarded as part of the "sealing" process. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. Knowing that we are indeed living in the end time and that the judgment is already in process helps us evaluate our priorities. It energizes our will to live close to the Lord and be ready for His appearing.

The Lamb seals and shields us, not only with His blood and His name, but also by opening the seven seals and revealing to us the course of history and prophecy.

[page 214] 4. Will the "signs" of Matthew 24:29 be repeated? The possibility that another dark day, blood-red moon, and shooting- star shower will take place immediately prior to Christ's actual return is not denied in the Bible. Jesus didn't say how many times these events might occur, and neither did John, when presenting his similar list under the sixth seal. Since 1833 there already has been another notable star shower. Since 1755 there have been many serious earthquakes. There have been several other dark days.

It may be significant that the prophet Joel gives two lists of signs, similar to those of Jesus and \_\_\_\_ but in some ways different from theirs and even different from each other. In both of Joel's lists, as in the others', the sun is spoken of as being darkened. But only one of Joel's lists talks about a blood-red moon, and this list also speaks of "blood and fire and columns of smoke." Joel 2:30. Joel's other list says that the moon, like the sun, will be "darkened," and adds that the stars too will "withdraw their shining." Joel 3:15. The stars on November 13, 1833, didn't withdraw their shining!

Joel's lists are not tied to the "tribulation of those days." Perhaps both of his entire lists remain to be fulfilled, on some vast cosmic scale, as God in mercy seeks to call earth's attention to Christ's near return.

Or perhaps the lists John and Jesus gave are simply different formulations of the same information Joel presented.

In the Olivet Discourse, Christ was not keen on multiplying last-day signs. The evidence already before us is arresting. The Lisbon earthquake of 1755, the dark day of May 19, 1780, and the Leonid star shower of November 1833 were each noteworthy events. As a series they came in the right order and at the proper time. They occurred where people lived who could take appropriate notice of them. They stimulated wide reflection. They played a distinct part in alerting those who had "ears to hear" to the commencement of the final judgment and the arrival of the end time. "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." John 20:29.

[p. 220]

REFERENCES 8. Thomas Gold and Steven Soter, "The Deep-Earth-Gas Hypothesis," "Scientific American," June 1980, pp. 154-161. After examining many earthquake accounts, this article suggests that the escape of methane and/or other gases from the earth's mantle may explain ocean bubblings, killed fish, reports of fire issuing from cracks, and even tsunamis better than any other proposed explanations of such earthquake phenomena. 9. T. D. Kendrick, "The Lisbon Earthquake" (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., n.d.). 10. \_Ibid.,\_ pp. 46, 47. 11. \_Ibid.,\_ preface and p. 209. 12. The information about the dark day, including a few paraphrasings, is taken from various sources but mainly from Deryl Herbert Leggitt, "An Investigation Into the Dark Day of May 19, 1780: Its Causes, Extent, and Duration" (M.A. thesis, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1951). 13. Leggitt, "Dark Day," pp. 60, 105. 14. The information about the 1833 star shower is based on various sources including "Encyclopaedia Britannica," 15th ed., 1979, art. "Meteors," by P. M. Millman; "November Showers," "Time," November 18, 1966, pp. 118, 119; "Stars Fell on Arizona," "Time," November 25, 1966, pp. 71, 72; and LeRoy Edwin Froom, "The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers," 4 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1946-1954), 4:289-300. 15. Frederick Douglass, \_Life and Times of Frederick Douglass\_ (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1941), in Froom, "Prophetic Faith," 4:298. 16. Ward's letter was published in the November 16, 1833, issue of "The New York Journal of Commerce" (misdated November 14), and part of it was repeated in the issue for November 27. See Froom, "Prophetic Faith," 4:298, 299.