

# A Convergence of Calamities

## Sane and Sensible Perspectives on the Last Days

Occasional disasters have sadly been a fact of life all over the planet. In our generation, however, we have never seen a volcano explode with anything like the climate changing force of Tambora in Indonesia in 1815 which caused “the year without summer” even in the United States. As for outbreaks of disease, the influenza pandemic following World War I killed more than the great war itself—an estimated 20 to 40 million people worldwide. Nevertheless, there is something about the calamities of our day which proclaim that the “End of Days” is at our doorstep.

4 And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. 5 For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. 6 And you will hear of **wars and rumors of wars**. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. 7 **For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.** 8 **All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.** Matthew 24:4-8 ESV

## Watching for the Birth Pains

On the Mount of Olives, Jesus taught His disciples that a period He called “the Birth Pains” would precede the Great Tribulation. These are “pains, sorrows and travail, especially of childbirth” (Strong’s) which we can watch for as early signs of the more intense trouble to come. At the top of His list are wars and natural disasters, as quoted above. He continues by adding persecution, martyrdom, apostasy and betrayal, the rise of false prophets and lawlessness. That’s a lot to watch out for!

9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. 11 And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. 12 And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. Matthew 24:9-12 ESV



Some of the above should be so obvious that we’d have to be dead not to notice it. Or so it would seem. Remember the well-known example of crabs being brought to a boil? They don’t seem to notice that the temperature in the pot is escalating to life-threatening degrees. It may be already so for us. Throughout Church history, the world has seen a great deal of all the above activity. The real question for us is not, “Are these birth pains happening?” Jesus said these painful events “must take place, but the end is not yet.” What we can watch for are not the signs themselves, but an escalation of them.



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## Measuring the Birth Pains

Can the Birth Pains be measured? This is such a formidable task that we will limit this exploration to the first two categories of sorrows mentioned by Jesus, wars and natural disasters. Has there been an escalation of these events? It certainly seems that there has. Leaving aside conflicts for the moment, just consider the apparent increase of earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, mud slides, tsunamis, and volcanoes. These disasters wrench at us through the news, tugging frequently at our hearts and our purse strings. We are overwhelmed at times by the sight of such disasters happening all over the world.

Some would argue, however, that our perception of escalation is almost entirely due to the tremendous increase of media coverage that these events receive in our day. A century ago, it took days or weeks to get reports out due to the more primitive technologies available. Additionally, many tragic events happened unnoticed by the world because there simply weren't enough reporters to cover the globe. All that has changed now that any person with a cell phone can report an event to a watching world through social media.

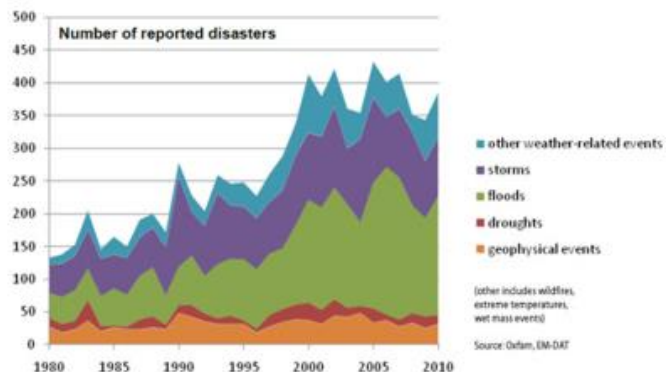
A further complication is that the cost of natural disasters has increased dramatically. This is due not to the scale of the disasters, but to the increased value of the homes, personal property, and infrastructure involved. Nevertheless, it too creates a perception of escalating "sorrows."

## What Do the Studies Show?

Perception is one thing; reality often another. In this case, our perception of escalation in natural disasters is justified by the facts on the ground. According to a report online by the Borgen Project, "the number of natural and geophysical disasters taking place each year is noticeably skyrocketing." The chart they provided shows an across the board increase of reported disasters over the past three decades.

Here is an excerpt from [their report](#):

Geophysical disasters include earthquakes, volcanoes, dry rock-falls, landslides and avalanches. Climatic disasters are classified as floods, storms, tropical cyclones, local storms, heat/cold waves, droughts and wildfires.



In 1970, the average of natural disasters that were reported was 78; in 2004, this number jumped to 348. According to AccuWeather, since 1990, natural disasters have affected 217 million people every single year.

From 1980 to 2009 there was an 80 percent increase in the growth of climate-related disasters. Between 2001 and 2010, more than \$1.2 trillion was lost to the increased rates of natural disasters. This was a dramatic rise, which between 1981 and 1990 had been roughly \$528 billion.



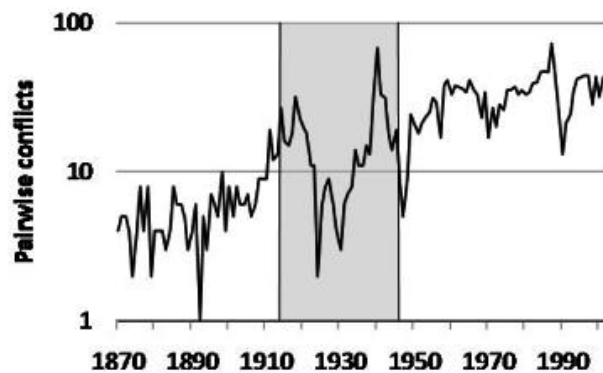
The cause of this increase is still being studied, but scientists seem to agree that it is a combination of natural and man-made elements. For now, global warming is not seen as the sole cause. From a Christian perspective, however, we can readily imagine that there may be supernatural activity behind these prophesied trends.

## What about Wars?

It turns out that wars are also increasing at an alarming rate. According to [historytoday.com](http://historytoday.com), armed conflict by nation states are escalating due to two factors: the pressure of economic growth and an increase of borders. Because there are now four times as many countries as there were a hundred and fifty years ago (from 47 to 187), there has been a corresponding increase of cross border wars. The evidence shows a startling increase in the number of wars between nations ("pairwise conflicts"):

The frequency of wars increased by 17% per year in the period of the First and Second World Wars, and by 31% per year during the Cold War. In the 1990s, the frequency of wars between states rose by 36% per year.

The Versailles Treaty that ended the First World War created many new nations along ethnic lines. This trend towards ethnic division increased as the colonial empires left new nation states in their wake. A fragmentation is now going on whereby nations are falling into deadly internal conflicts, as well as cross border wars. One of the driving forces for this is ethnic hatred and rivalry, sometimes going back for centuries.



Jesus predicted this very thing: "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (verse 7 above). While kingdom (realm) does indeed indicate our modern nation states, nation (ethnos) would be better described as "ethnic groups." The accompanying chart only shows conflicts between nations, not civil wars between ethnic groups within nations. Those numbers would likely send the graph's arc far higher.

## Putting the Signs Together

What this means is that we have not one increasing "sorrow", but many, if not all, of the ones Jesus mentioned. Wars are increasing. So are all manner of natural disasters. Each one would have sign value in itself, but taken as a whole we have a genuine convergence. A convergence of calamities. That certainly fits the picture of the Birth Pains which Jesus outlined. But where are we on the timeline? At what point do birth pains spill over into labor pains? When do we transition from the Birth Pains to the Tribulation? Perhaps, it is still too soon (in 2017) to tell about that, but it may be the right time to say the "beginning of sorrows" has begun.



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For over a decade Steve Evans and [Healing Streams](#) have been helping people recover inner peace and freedom through the free eCourse for healing, [Matters of the Heart](#). Through Forerunners4Him he has been showing how we can be saved for heaven and teaching the way to live a Spirit-filled life on earth. Go now to receive a completely free primer, [Getting to Heaven](#) and/or an introduction to [Living in the Spirit](#) at our website.



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