

Should We Stop Having Babies?

by Staff

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For most of the events prophesied in the Bible, we can only prepare ourselves spiritually, submit to God and wait patiently for events to unfold.

But parts of Matthew 24 portray a different scenario! During this time of worldwide upheaval, Satanic persecution and brotherly betrayal, a specific moment occurs when God says the world will be so dangerous and time so precious that we must flee without one moment's attention to material goods (Matthew 24:17-18). Keep a towel on the shower door!

Perhaps the crisis in those days will be so apparent we will keep our children close—not down at the mall or the playground. Perhaps we will need to train them so well that any instruction from a parent, such as "Come with me now!" will be instantly heeded, as opposed to "Yeah, when the commercial comes." These will be very dangerous times.

God warns us to pray that our flight take place not in the winter or on the Sabbath day (Matthew 24:20). Events will accelerate so rapidly that we will pray, "Not this winter, Father. Please allow this season to pass." We will realize that our flight is so imminent that we will be praying during the week that it would not occur on the upcoming Sabbath.

This warning indicates that our flight may be physically arduous, especially if inclement weather is involved. It will be more than a comfortable drive to the airport, a routine jet flight and a helicopter drop. Even if it goes smoothly, conditions will be extremely dangerous and tense. Jesus slept comfortably during dangerous storms and rough seas, censuring the disciples for their tight jaws and white knuckles (Mark 4:35-40). Will we have matured to His level of faith by then?

"Woe to Those Who Are Pregnant"

Certainly, we can and should be praying now. Although it is not yet time to start speculating on the specific year or winter, and certainly not on a specific Sabbath day, the warning in verse 19 requires more preparation than these. It is not a prepare-yourself-and-see-what-happens warning, but one in which we play a significant part. "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those with nursing babies in those days!" (Matthew 24:19).

This requires careful planning. Figure a year from "the gleam in the eye until the baby's cry," allowing time for conception, gestation and birth. Then add two years of nursing—as was generally practiced in Israel in biblical times. Walking, talking and potty training should also be factored in, since we are instructed not to go into the other room for anything, even diaper bags! Consider effective birth control at least three years before this upcoming upheaval.

This is not a command from God—each of us is a free moral agent of his own salvation. But God does say "Woe!" to those with dependent children. A study of God's use of "woe" in the Bible may profoundly affect one's view of this.

No man has ever been known to become pregnant, so the warning in Matthew 24:19 is primarily to women, since they will be the ones most affected. Yet it is not uncommon for a man to be callous and insensitive to his wife's needs and desires. Many consider only their own pleasures or desires. Others are just careless of birth control, even when it has been decided between a couple that it is the husband's responsibility.

When a couple decide that the time has come to heed this warning from Jesus Christ, husbands should be very sensitive to and considerate of their wives. Or, if only she has reached this conclusion, *a converted husband will submit to her*, as Paul admonished in Ephesians 5:21—especially since she is the one in the greatest jeopardy! Conversely, if only the husband feels this way, the wife should submit to him, even against her own desires for children. Christ does say, "Woe!"

When?

So, when should we make this decision? No one can tell you. At some point Peter and Paul would probably have advised that the time was close. Paul implies in I Corinthians 7 that in times of great distress a man and woman should not marry because their focus needs to be on God alone. Of course, Paul later understood that Christ would not return in his lifetime, but will He return in ours?

We must work out our "own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). In personal matters we must consider these warnings on our own with, of course, the guidance and the counsel we can get from other scriptures and people of like mind.

Later in Matthew 24 in the parable of the fig tree, Christ warns us to be watching so that we can discern the time of His coming (verses 32-34). Can we see any fig leaves? How many are there? How mature are they? All of us must watch and pray (Luke 21:36).

Matthew, Paul, Peter, John and others warned us nineteen hundred years ahead of time. Billions of babies have been born since. When are we to take this specific warning seriously? In football games a two-minute warning sounds so that a team can make a last-ditch effort to win the game. For us, such a warning is not nearly enough; we need to see about three years ahead to avoid the hardships of Matthew 24:19.

Is this warning premature? Or is it several months overdue? You must reach your own conclusion based on your observation of the "fig leaves."

This will be a time of physical hardship from which we will not be comfortably whisked away, nor can it be spiritualized away. Also, it must be calculated ahead of time by as many as three years.

We need to consider this prayerfully as we plan our families. Eventually, God's people will flee and Christ will return in someone's generation. God says so. Let us fervently hope and pray it will be ours!