

LIVING IN THE LAST HOUR

1 John 2:18

In the second chapter of his first letter, the Apostle John reveals that we are living in the last hour. According to the Bible, the end times run from the resurrection of Jesus Christ to His return. We don't know when Jesus is coming back, but we can see that we are closer to that day today than ever before.

Jesus said there are six signs that the end is getting near: false messiahs, wars, natural disasters, persecution, turning away, and good news about the gospel. According to LifeWay Research, there are almost 5,000 cults in the United States. They are growing by 180,000 people per year. False teaching looks like something good, but when we get one degree off course, we end up miles off down the road.

There has been an increase in wars from 1870 to date. And there are more earthquakes, hurricanes, and tornadoes since 1950. Today, it is more dangerous than ever to be a Christian. In countries that used to be open, people are losing their jobs just for being Christian. Open Doors reported that we are at the worst levels of persecution in modern times. Persecution is now hitting nearly every continent in the world.

In 2016, the Center for Studies on New Religions determined that in 2015, 90,000 Christians were killed worldwide for their beliefs. Nearly a third were killed at the hands of Islamic extremists. The study also found that as many as 600 million Christians were prevented from practicing their faith in 2016.

In a White House briefing, a U.S. State Department official said there are 55 full-time State Department staff members working on religious freedom. That was not happening in 1950 or any year before.

Americans with no religious affiliation grew from 8 percent in 1990 to 20 percent in 2012. A large percentage of the increase is among young people. Currently, 35 percent of Millennials do not identify with any religion. That is twice the number of the previous generation who didn't identify with any religion. And back even another generation, there were only 11 percent who did not identify with any religion. We need to reach Millennials for Christ.

On the other hand, the number of unreached or unengaged people groups went down from 3,800 in 2011 to 700 in 2015. It is the fastest drop in the history of Christianity. Even though this is awesome, it also confirms that the end is getting closer and closer. The more we know about Christ returning and what is taking place, the more our Christian character must grow.

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