

## **SIGNS OF CHRIST'S COMING AND THE END OF THE WORLD**

While Jesus was seated on the Mount of Olives, his disciples came up to him privately and said: "Tell us, when will all this occur? What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the world?"

In reply, Jesus said to them: "Be on your guard. Let no one mislead you (1). Many will come in my name saying, 'I am he' and 'The time is at hand.' Do not follow them (2). Many will come attempting to impersonate me. 'I am the Messiah!' they will claim, and they will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. Do not be alarmed. Such things are bound to happen, but that is not yet the end. Nation will rise against nation, one kingdom against another. There will be famine and pestilence and earthquakes in many places. These are the early stages of the birth pangs." (3) Jeremiah prophesied this centuries ago: "Be not discouraged for fear of rumors spread in the land: this year the rumor comes, then violence in the land, tyrant against tyrant." (4)

Jesus went on, "Be on your guard with respect to others. They will take you into court, they will flog you in the synagogues (5). They will hand you over to torture and kill you. Indeed, you will be hated by all nations on my account. Many will falter then, betraying and hating one another.

"False prophets will rise in great numbers to mislead many. Because of the increase of evil, the love of most will grow cold. Whoever holds out to the end, however, will see salvation (6). You will be hated by all on account of me. But, whoever holds out till the end will escape death (7). The good news of the Kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world as a witness to all the nations. Only after that will the end come." (8).

### **The Fall Of Jerusalem**

Jesus continued, "When you see the abominable and destructive thing which the prophet foretold standing on holy ground (9) -- for armed forces will move at his command and defile the sanctuary stronghold, abolishing the daily sacrifice and setting up the horrible abomination (10). From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the horrible abomination is set up, there will be one thousand two hundred and ninety days (3 ½ years) (11) -- when, I say, you see the abominable and destructive presence standing where it should not, those in Judea must flee to the mountain (12). When you see Jerusalem encircled by soldiers, know that its devastation is near (13).

"On that day, if a man is on the rooftop and his belongings are in the house, he should not go down to get them; neither should the man in the field return home (14). If a man is in the field, he must not even turn back to pick up his cloak. It will be hard on pregnant or nursing mothers in those days. Keep praying that you will not have to flee in winter or on a Sabbath, for those days will be more filled with anguish than any from the beginning of the world until now or in all ages to come." (15)

Daniel foretold this time when he said, "At that time, there will arise Michael, the great prince, guardian of your people; it will be a time unsurpassed in distress since nations

began until that time. At that time, your people will escape, everyone who is found written in the Book." (16) "Indeed, Jesus went on, "if the period had not been shortened, not a human being would be saved. For the sake of the chosen, however, the days will be shortened. If anyone tells you at that time, 'Look, the Messiah is here,' or 'He is there,' do not believe it (17). They will tell you he is to be found in this place or that. Do not go running about excitedly." (18)

### **The Rise Of The Lawless One**

On the question of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and on your being gathered to him, do not be so easily agitated or terrified, whether by prophecy or rumor, into believing that the day of the Lord is here. Let no one seduce you, no matter how. The mass apostasy has not yet occurred, nor has the man of lawlessness been revealed -- that son of perdition and adversary who exalts himself above every so-called god proposed for worship, who seats himself in God's temple and even declares himself to be God (19).

This leader will do as he pleased, exalting himself and making himself greater than any god; he will utter dreadful blasphemies against the God of gods. He will prosper only till divine wrath is ready, for what is determined must take place (20). You know what restrains him until he will be revealed in his own time. The secret force of lawlessness is already at work, mind you, but there is one who holds him back until that restrainer will be taken from the scene. Thereupon, the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will destroy him with the breath of his mouth and annihilate him by manifesting his own presence (21).

Jesus will judge the poor with justice and decide aright for the land's afflicted. He will strike the ruthless with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked (22). Out of his mouth will come a sharp sword for striking down the nations.

He will shepherd them with his iron rod; it is he who will tread out in the winepress the blazing wrath of God the Almighty (23).

The lawless one will appear as part of the workings of Satan, accompanied by all the power and signs and wonders at the disposal of falsehood -- by every seduction the wicked can devise for those destined to ruin because they have not opened their hearts to the truth in order to be saved. God is sending upon them a perverse spirit which leads them to give credence to falsehood, so that all who have not believed in the truth but have delighted in evil doing will be condemned (24).

### **False Messiahs And False Prophets**

False messiahs and false prophets will appear, performing signs and wonders so great as to mislead even the chosen if that were possible (25). In times past, there were false prophets among God's people, and among you also there will be false teachers who will smuggle in pernicious heresies. They will go so far as to deny the Master who acquired them for his own, thereby bringing on themselves swift disaster. Their lustful ways will lure many away. Through them, the true way will be made subject to contempt. They will deceive you with fabricated tales in a spirit of greed (26). Beloved, do not trust every

spirit, but put the spirits to the test to see if they belong to God, because many false prophets have indeed appeared in the world (27).

Jesus said, "Remember, I have told you all about it beforehand; so, if they tell you, 'Look, he is in the desert,' do not go out there' or 'He is in the innermost rooms,' do not believe it.

As the lightning from the east flashes to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. Where the carcass lies, there the vultures gather.

### **The Second Coming Of Christ**

Immediately after the distress of that period, 'the sun will be darkened, the moon will not shed her light, the stars will fall from the sky, and the hosts of heaven will be shaken loose!' (28) On that day, says the Lord God, I will make the sun set at midday and cover the earth with darkness in broad daylight (29). There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish, distraught at the roaring of the sea and the waves (30). Then, the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and "all the clans of the earth will strike their breast" as they see "the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven" with power and great glory (31).

Daniel spoke thus of this time: "I saw one like a son of man coming on the clouds of heaven; when he reached the Ancient One and was presented before him, he received dominion, glory, and kingship; nations and peoples of every language serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not be taken away; his kingship will not be destroyed." (32).

The Lord himself, then, will come down from heaven at the word of command, at the sound of Archangel's voice and God's trumpet; and those who have died in Christ will rise first (33). See, he comes amid the clouds! Every eye will behold him, even of those who pierced him. All the peoples of the earth will lament him bitterly. So shall it be! Amen! (34)

He will dispatch his angels with a mighty trumpet blast, and they will assemble the chosen from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other (35). In Christ, all will come to life again, but each one in proper order: Christ the first fruits and then, at his coming, all those who belong to him (36).

Now, I am going to tell you a mystery. Not all of us will fall asleep (in death), but all of us are to be changed -- in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trumpet. The trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed (37). Then we, the living, the survivors, will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thenceforth, we will be with the Lord unceasingly. Console one another with this message (38).

### **The Time Is Unknown - Stay Prepared**

As regards the specific times and moments, we do not need to write to you (39). As for the exact day or hour, no one knows it, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but the Father only (40). The exact time is not yours to know. The Father has reserved that to

himself (41). Learn a lesson from the fig tree, however. Once the sap of its branches runs high and it begins to sprout leaves, you know that summer is near (42). Likewise, when you see all these things happening, you will know that he is near, standing at your door (43). Though the grass withers, and the flower wilts, the word of our God stands forever (44). "Raise your eyes to the heavens, and look to the earth below; though the heavens grow thin like smoke, the earth wears out like a garment, and its inhabitants die like flies, my salvation will remain forever and my justice will never be dismayed," says the Lord (45). Shaken, created things will pass away, so that only what is unshaken may remain (46).

### **Modern Predictions Connected With The Bible**

"As we approached the year 2000, an avalanche of predictions descended upon us about some great but disastrous events that were about to come. These events, it was claimed, were explicitly foretold in the Bible.

"As many people read, and are reading, these prophecies, it seems worthwhile to say a few words on this question. First, remember that, in the revelatory experience of Jesus, there is no timetable for these events. It is not clear that the signs that he does mention refer to the destruction of Jerusalem only or to the final end also. In fact, Luke in Acts 1:7 presents Jesus as saying to them, 'It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.' Jesus' statement in Mark 13:32, 'But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father,' is variously interpreted by scholars, either as an avowal by Jesus of a total lack of knowledge, or of a lack of knowledge only of the exact day and hour coupled with an expectation of imminence, or else the statement is seen as an addition by the early Church to account for the delay of the Second Coming of Christ.

"Second, down through the ages, the Book of Revelation has been interpreted countless times as referring to a given day and year. The knowledge of history makes one rather wary of such predictions, although the cry of wolf may not always be false.

"Third, Revelation or the Apocalypse begins, 'The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him to show to his servants what must soon take place.' The book ends, 'Surely, I am coming soon.' Literally, at least, these words do not prepare us for an event two thousand years later.

"Lastly, most biblical scholars see the Book of Revelation as a book that falls within the literary genre of 'apocalyptic.' Some of the characteristics of apocalyptic are: 1) it is written during a time of persecution; 2) it contains a code encased in a number of symbols; 3) there is a stylistic use of surrealistic, cosmic visions offering a message about end-time, culminating in a great battle between God and anti-God; 4) the purpose is to inculcate the conviction that all stands under the transcendent power of God. Many of these 'visions' refer to events that have already happened but that are placed in the future.

Thus, apocalyptic is not primarily prophecy in the sense of prediction, and I did not consider it previously under predictive prophecy.

"To understand the *literal* sense of a book of the Bible, one must consider not only the text, but the context, that is, its literary genre. Thus, John's Apocalypse refers primarily to the time of the Roman emperor Domitian, circa 90-96 A.D. Thus, the Apocalypse predominantly refers to events contemporary with the early Christian persecutions. It is a book of trust and hope offered to a people in great suffering. Daniel, to which it refers, similarly is related to the contemporary persecutions by Antiochus IV Epiphanes who desecrated the Jerusalem temple about 167 B.C.

"But, is there not in the Apocalypse a prediction about some final triumph of God, and might it not refer to our own day? From the Book of Revelation, it is impossible to make any predictions about times or dates of God's final triumph in history." John J. Heaney, *The Sacred And The Psychic*

### **Walk In Constant Preparation For Christ's Coming For You**

You may not be around at the end of the world, but you will be here when he comes for you at the time of your own death. This is the coming for which you must be personally prepared.

You know very well that the day of the Lord is coming like a thief in the night (47). The coming of the Son of Man will repeat what happened in Noah's time. In the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and being married, right up to the day Noah entered the Ark. They were totally unconcerned until the flood came and destroyed them. So will it be at the coming of the Son of Man (48). By water, that world was then destroyed; it was overwhelmed by the deluge (49).

The day of the Lord will come like a thief, and, on that day, the heavens will vanish with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and all its deeds will be made manifest (50). Just when people are saying, "Peace and security," ruin will fall on them with the suddenness of pains overtaking a woman in labor, and there will be no escape. You are not of the dark that the day should catch you off guard, like a thief (51).

Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal; one will be taken and one will be left. Stay awake, therefore! You cannot know the day your Lord is coming (52). (This does not refer to "the Rapture") The moral is this: keep your eyes open, for you know not the day or the hour (53) when Jesus is coming for you.

Call to mind how you accepted what you heard; keep to it and repent. If you do not rouse yourselves, the Lord will come upon you like a thief, at a time you cannot know (54). There was a time when you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live, then, as children of light. Light produces every kind of goodness and justice and truth. Be

correct in your judgment of what pleases the Lord. Take no part in vain deeds done in darkness; rather, condemn them (55). All of you are children of light and of the day. You belong neither to darkness nor to night (56). "I am the Light of the world," Jesus said. "No follower of mine will ever walk in the darkness: not, he or she will possess the Light of life." (57) Therefore, do not be asleep like the rest, but awake and sober (58)

Be sure of this: if the owner of the house knew when the thief was coming, he would keep a watchful eye and not allow his house to be broken into. You must be prepared in the same way. The Son of Man is coming at the time you least expect. Who is the faithful, farsighted servant whom the Master has put in charge of his household to dispense food at need? Happy is that servant whom the Master discovers at work on his return. I assure you, he will put that one in charge of all his property. But, if the servant is worthless and says, "My Master is a long time in coming," and begins to beat fellow servants, to eat and drink with drunkards, that person's Master will return when he is not ready and least expects him. He will punish that servant severely and settle with him or her as is done with hypocrites. There will be wailing then and grinding of teeth (59). The angels will hurl them into the fiery furnace, where they will wail and grind their teeth (60).

The night is far spent; the day draws near. Cast off deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Live honorably as in daylight, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual excess and lust, not in quarreling and jealousy. Rather, put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the desires of the flesh (61). Stay sober and alert. Your opponent, the devil, is prowling like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (62) Sleepers sleep by night and drunkards drink by night. You who live by day must be alert, putting on faith and love as a breastplate and the hope of salvation as a helmet (63).

Put on, therefore, the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil (64). God has not destined you for wrath but for acquiring salvation through your Lord Jesus Christ. He died for you that all of us, whether awake or asleep, together might live with him. Therefore, comfort and build up one another, as indeed you are doing (65).

--compiled and edited by Patrick J. Hession

- (1) Matthew 24:3 & 4
- (2) Luke 21:8
- (3) Matthew 24:5-8
- (4) Jeremiah 52:46
- (5) Matthew 10:17
- (6) Matthew 24:9-13
- (7) Matthew 10:22
- (8) Matthew 24:14
- (9) Matthew 24:25
- (10) Daniel 11:31
- (11) Daniel 12:11
- (12) Mark 13:14; Matthew 24:16

- (13) Luke 21:20
- (14) Luke 17:31
- (15) Matthew 24:18-21
- (16) Daniel 12:1
- (17) Matthew 24:22 & 23
- (18) Luke 17:23
- (19) 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4
- (20) Daniel 11:36; Ezechiel 28:2: "Son of Man, say to the prince of Tyre: "Thus says the Lord God. Because you are haughty of heart, you say, "a god am I!" - and yet, you are a man and not a god, however you may think yourself like a god."
- (21) 2 Thessalonians 2:6-8
- (22) Isaiah 11:4
- (23) Revelation 19:15
- (24) 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12
- (25) Matthew 24:24
- (26) 2 Peter 2:1-3a
- (27) 1 John 4:1
- (28) Matthew 24:24-29; Isaiah 13:10: "The stars and constellations of the heavens send forth no light; the sun is dark when it rises, and the light of the moon does not shine." Ezechiel 31:7: "When I snuff you out, I will cover the heavens and all their stars I will darken; the sun I will cover with clouds, and the moon will not give its light."
- (29) Amos 8:9
- (30) Luke 21:25
- (31) Matthew 24:3
- (32) Daniel 7:13 & 14
- (33) 1 Thessalonians 4:16
- (34) Revelation 1:7
- (35) Matthew 24:31
- (36) 1 Corinthians 15:23
- (37) 1 Corinthians 15:51 & 52
- (38) 1 Thessalonians 4:17 & 18
- (39) 1 Thessalonians 5:1
- (40) Matthew 24:36
- (41) Acts 1:7
- (42) Mark 13:28; Matthew 24:32
- (43) Matthew 24:33
- (44) Isaiah 40:8
- (45) Isaiah 51:6
- (46) Hebrews 12:27
- (47) 1 Thessalonians 5:2
- (48) Matthew 24:37-39; cf. Genesis 7:11-23
- (49) 2 Peter 3:6
- (50) 2 Peter 3:10
- (51) 1 Thessalonians 5:3 & 4
- (52) Matthew 24:40-42

- (53) Matthew 25:13
- (54) Revelation 3:3
- (55) Ephesians 5:8-11
- (56) 1 Thessalonians 5:5
- (57) John 8:12
- (58) 1 Thessalonians 5:6
- (59) Matthew 24:43-51; Luke 12:39-46
- (60) Matthew 13:42
- (61) Romans 13:12-14
- (62) 1 Peter 5:8
- (63) 1 Thessalonians 5:7 & 8
- (64) Ephesians 6:11
- (65) 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11