



## SIGNS OF THE COMING OF JESUS

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The fourteenth chapter of John contains one of the most beautiful promises of Scripture - a promise that has been at the very heart of all Christians since it was first given. "Let not your heart be troubled:" said Jesus, "ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:1-3)

In this promise is contained the great hope of all Christians as they have patiently awaited "that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Titus 2:13) Even before Jesus returned to the Father, His disciples gathered with Him on the Mount of Olives and inquired: "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24:3) Jesus responds to this question by giving ten distinct signs.

1. *False christs would arise.* "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (verses 4, 5).
2. *There would be wars and rumors of war.* "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet (verse 6).
3. *Nation would rise against nation.* Just within the last century we can see the awesome fulfillment of this in World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Bosnia/Herzegovina, the numerous Middle East and African confrontations with the loss of millions of human lives. At this moment there are more than 50 countries on this planet involved in armed disputes, rebellions, or full-fledged international wars that kill over 41,000 human beings every month.
4. *There would be famines, which are increasing daily around the world.* Approximately 57 million people die each year from famines. This amounts to 156,000 people every day. Statistics declare that 60% of the world's population are malnourished and 20% are starving.
5. *Pestilences (diseases) would abound.* Who would have thought just a few years ago that

such deadly diseases as AIDS, SARS, Legionnaires disease, Niles Virus, Manta virus, and a host of others would be so rampant today. These things were unheard of.

6. *Earthquakes would occur in various places.* Each year there are 6,000 major earthquakes in the world and within the last century over 1.5 million people have lost their lives in these devastating upheavals. But of these things Jesus had warned: “nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places” (verse 7).
7. *Affliction and persecution.* “Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another” (verses 9, 10).
8. *False prophets would arise.* “And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many”(verse 11). We can see a fulfillment of this in the explosion of interest in the psychic phenomena that is so prevalent today. There are over 3,000 astrology columns in North American newspapers, but one source reports that “out of 250 specific published predictions, we found less than 3 percent (i.e. 6) that we could list as reasonably fulfilled and 97 percent (244) that missed the mark completely.” However, this sign refers to the proliferation of false preachers as well as those who claim to foresee the future. Many today are being deceived by these false teachers.
9. *People would become sinful and loveless.* “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (verse 12). While sin is daily on the increase, it is a subject that is seldom mentioned anymore. As a result love is fast being replaced by lust and self-seeking. However, Jesus declared “he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (verse 13). The assurance is given only to those who endure to the end. Endurance signifies the bearing of hardships, mockery, ridicule, and persecution.
10. *The gospel would go to all the world.* “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (verse 14). Today more than 98% of the world can hear the word of God in their own language.

The apostle Paul lists another 26 signs of the coming of Jesus that meets with absolute fulfillment in our day. Notice the similarity between this passage and your daily paper or nightly newscast.

“This know also, that *in the last days* (1)perilous times shall come. For men shall be (2)lovers of their own selves, (3)covetous [desiring things that belong to another], (4)boasters, (5)proud, (6)blasphemers, (7)disobedient to parents, (8)unthankful, (9)unholy, (10)Without natural affection, (11)trucebreakers, (12>false accusers, (13)incontinent [without self control], (14)fierce, (15)despisers of those that are good, (16)Traitors, (17)heady [rash or reckless], (18)highminded [blinded by pride], (19)lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; (20)Having a form of godliness, but (21)denying the power thereof: from such turn away.... (22)Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do (23)these also resist the truth: (24)men of corrupt minds, (25)reprobate concerning the faith.... But (26)evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, (27)deceiving, and being deceived.” (2 Timothy 3:1-13)

That the times are indeed perilous today is evidenced by the fact that there is one murder every 24 minutes, one forcible rape every 7 minutes, one robbery every 68 seconds, one aggravated assault every 51 seconds, one burglary every 10 seconds, one larceny theft every 5

seconds, one motor vehicle theft every 29 seconds, one violent crime every 27 seconds, and one property crime every 3 seconds. According to the *U.S. News and World Report*: “Every hundred hours more youths die in the streets than were killed in the Persian Gulf warfare.” Today over 33 million violent crimes are committed in North America each year. Even in our schools 6,250 teachers suffer bodily injury each year at the hands of their students. It is also extremely evident that the old adage “crime doesn’t pay” does not refer to monetary profit when one discovers that the yearly profits of the Mafia are greater than U.S. Steel, AT&T, GM, Exxon, IBM, RCA, GE, and Ford Motor Co. combined.

The absolute accuracy of Paul’s statement that men would be “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” can be seen in the fact that each year people spend 20 billion dollars on entertainment, 70 billion on gambling, 28 billion on tobacco and alcohol, and only 8 billion on gifts and offerings. In addition to this one, survey of church members shows 5% of those on church books do not even exist, 20% never pray, 30% never go to church, 70% never give to missions, 80% do not attend church regularly, and a startling 95% have never won a soul for Christ. More people are professing to be Christians, but the crime rate is increasing, divorce is becoming ever more prevalent, and immorality is abounding. The signs are there.

God’s word further warned that “the time will come when *they will not endure sound doctrine*; but after their own lusts shall they *heap to themselves teachers*, having itching ears; *And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables*” (2 Timothy 4:3, 4) for “in the latter times some shall *depart from the faith*, giving heed to *seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils*.” (1 Timothy 4:1) These signs are some of the most painful, for here God is speaking of the preachers who lead people away from the truth of God’s word and present to them, not only fables, but “doctrines of devils.”

A survey of five leading ministerial colleges several years ago revealed that 91% of the students did not believe the Bible was God's word, 31% did not believe that Christ rose from the dead, 51% did not believe in the virgin birth (and other miracles), and 61 % did not even believe Christ actually forgives sin. Now it is extremely important to realize that these men are no longer in school, but are behind the pulpits of churches today.

Is it any wonder there are so many who mock and ridicule the religion of Christ and reject His word today. The apostle Peter described our current situation in these words: “Knowing this first, that there *shall come in the last days scoffers*, walking after their own lusts, *And saying, Where is the promise of his coming?* for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and *the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*” (2 Peter 3:3-7) Yes, there are “scoffers” who mock, ridicule, and reject the second coming, creation, the flood, and the soon destruction of this world. They laugh, they mock, they scoff; even in the churches. However, when you come across these people, do not be distressed, but simply tell them: “You are the best sign I have seen today that the word of God is true and we are near the coming of Jesus for His word told me you would be on the scene to verify that we are living “in the last days.”

In addition to the 49 signs mentioned above, Jesus gave two very significant signs through His prophet Daniel. “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time

of the end: *many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.*” Consider how we are able to travel about the world today in comparison to those of the past. For example, if Adam traveled, it was either on foot or the back of an animal. When we advance nearly 2,000 years to the time of Noah, travel remained the same with the exception of the introduction of a ship (there was no need of these before the flood for there were no great oceans). This remained virtually unchanged during the span of Abraham, Moses, etc. until the time of Jesus, nearly 2,000 years after the flood. However, transportation still remained unchanged for nearly another 2,000 years and beyond the founding of this country. It was not until the late 1820's that the first railroads were constructed in the United States. Progressing to the time of many of our grandparents or great-grandparents (nearly 6,000 years from Adam), man still traveled by foot, animal, boat, or train. Yet today, we are not only able to travel around the world in a matter of hours, but also travel outside of this planet. In addition to this, knowledge has increased (and is increasing) at a phenomenal speed. So much so that most of the inventions we have today have come to us within this last century and most of these inventors are either still living or have died within the last 60 years. The increase in knowledge has enabled us to go from walking or riding animals to jet airplanes and space travel, from primitive spears and knives to atomic weapons, from drums and smoke signals to telephones and the Internet, and most momentous - from just another date in history to “the time of the end” and the coming of Jesus.

In the seventeenth chapter of Luke the Bible gives us signs 52 and 53. Here Jesus declares “*as it was in the days of Noe (Noah), so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.*” (Luke 17:26) Thus, the question to which we need an answer is: “What was it like in the days of Noah?” The answer is easily found in God’s word. “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of *the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*” (Genesis 6:5) Jesus continued by stating: “Likewise also *as it was in the days of Lot....* Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.” (Luke 17:28-30) Notice what it was like in the area where Lot lived. “Even as Sodom and Gomorrhah, and the cities about them in like manner, *giving themselves over to fornication* (illicit sexual activities), and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” (Jude 1:7)

The Scriptures declare that when people change “the truth of God into a lie” and worship themselves more than God, they set themselves up to be left to their “vile affections.” Notice how clear God’s word is on this subject. “Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for *even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men* working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as *they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient* [appropriate].... Who knowing the judgment of God, that *they which commit such things are worthy of death*, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.” (Romans 1:25-32) God does not view this as “an alternate lifestyle,” but something that makes one “worthy of death” and one of the signs that we are living in the time just before Jesus returns “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and

that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.” (2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9) This is what Peter meant in referring to God “turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample [example] unto those that after should live ungodly.” (2 Peter 2:6)

The final signs to consider before we conclude our study are found in Revelation chapter 6 where we read: “And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was *a great earthquake*; and the *sun became black* as sackcloth of hair, and the *moon became as blood*; And the *stars of heaven fell* unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.” (Revelation 6:12, 14) Though many are unaware of it, these signs have already occurred.

The first of these is often referred to as the Lisbon earthquake and is a striking fulfillment of this prophecy. In his book, *Wonders of the World*, Robert Sears has given us the following account of that catastrophic event.

"The great earthquake of 1755 extended over a tract of a least four million square miles.... It pervaded the greater portion of the continents of Europe, Africa, and America; but its extreme violence was exercised on the southwestern part of the former....

"In Africa this earthquake was felt almost as severely as it had been in Europe.... It is probable...that all Africa was shaken by this tremendous convulsion. At the North, it extended to Norway and Sweden, Germany, Holland, France, Great Britain and Ireland were all more or less agitated by the same great and terrible commotion of the elements." (Robert Sears, *Wonders of the World*, pp. 50, 58)

History also reveals that "In the ports of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, ship's anchors were snapped. The quake dried up hot springs in Bohemia, almost 1,400 miles away. An ugly fissure occurred in Derbyshire, England. Another chasm gaped open for fifteen miles through the Pyrenees. Norway, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, Corsica and the West Indies all felt the earth move. Mt. Vesuvius (Italy), then in eruption, suddenly ceased its bellowing. Cadiz, Spain was elevated several feet by the quake. People on a ship in the West Indies were thrown up a foot by the seismic waves that hit there.

"A sixty-foot seawave struck Cadiz, and a fifty-foot wave hit Cornwall, England, the Canaries, the Azores and Madeira. The wave traveled in less than an hour to Leyden, Holland, and reached the Gulf of Finland hours later. A 'black wall of water' twenty-two feet high, roared against the Lesser Antilles. In Martinique and Barbados water rose to the roofs of houses and receded in seconds." (Jay Robert Nash, *Darkest Hours*, p. 339)

It has been estimated that as many as 90,000 to 100,000 persons lost their lives on that fatal day. The magnitude of this upheaval becomes even more evident when we consider Sir Charles Lyell's graphic description of it.

"A sound of thunder was heard underground, and immediately afterwards a violent shock threw down the greater part of the city (Lisbon). In the course of about six minutes, sixty thousand persons perished. The sea first retired, and laid the bar dry; it then rolled in, rising fifty feet above its ordinary level...eight leagues from Morocco, a village, with the inhabitants to the number of about eight or ten thousand persons, together with all their cattle, were swallowed up. Soon after the earth closed again over them...a great wave swept over the coast

of Spain, and is said to have been sixty feet high at Cadiz." (Ainsworth Spofford & Charles Gibbon, Eds., *The Library of Choice Literature*, pp. 162-163)

While other earthquakes may have been as severe in particular areas, none meet all of the necessary conditions to constitute it a fitting event to mark the opening of the sixth seal as does the Lisbon earthquake of 1755. It is also interesting it was determined that this tremendous earthquake, with its more than 500 aftershocks, was "caused by the sudden movement of a submarine fault off the coast" (although there are no deep trenches in the ocean floor off the coast of Portugal). It is indeed "the most notable earthquake of history" in exact fulfillment of the time line of this prophecy.

The second and third of these four events to take place are for the sun to become black and the moon as blood. As we look into history, we discover that the fulfillment of this event occurred on May 19, 1780.

"Almost, if not altogether alone, as the most mysterious and as yet unexplained phenomenon of its kind, in nature's diversified range of events...stands the dark day of May 19, 1780 -- a most unaccountable darkening of the whole visible heavens and atmosphere in New England." (R. M. Devens, *Our First Century*, pp. 89-90)

This event is little known today, yet in the last century it was considered so important that Noah Webster defined it in his *American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828 Ed.

"Dark Day, The, May 19, 1780---so called on account of a remarkable darkness on that day extending over all of New England... The obscuration began about ten o'clock in the morning and continued until the middle of the next night, but with differences of degree and duration in different places... The true cause of this remarkable phenomenon is not known." (Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828 Ed.)

Professor Samuel Williams gives this account in *Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*:

"The appearance and effects were such as tended to make the prospect extremely dull and gloomy. Candles were lighted up in the houses; the birds, having sung their evening songs, disappeared, and became silent; the fowls retired to roost; the cocks were crowing all around, as at break of day; objects could not be distinguished but at a very little distance; and everything bore the appearance of gloom and night." (Samuel Williams, *Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 1, pp. 234-235)

"The darkness of the following evening was probably as gross as ever has been observed since the almighty first gave birth to light... I could not help conceiving at the time, that if every luminous body in the universe had been shrouded in impenetrable shades, or struck out of existence, the darkness could not have been more complete. A sheet of white paper held within a few inches of the eyes, was equally invisible with the blackest velvet." (Samuel Tenney, *Collections of Massachusetts Historical Society for the Year 1792*, Vol. 1, pp. 97-98)

In the event that some may assume that what occurred here was merely an eclipse of the sun, consider the following statements.

"'Although the moon rose nearly full about nine o'clock, yet it did not give light enough to enable a person to distinguish between the heavens and the earth.' 'The moon, though in the full, gave no light.' 'The moon, which was at the full, had the appearance of blood.'" (James Edson White, *The Coming King*, p. 119, 120)

Had this unusual phenomenon been nothing more than an eclipse, it would have lasted only

a short period of time, not fourteen hours, or until nightfall as was the case here. Furthermore, the moon was in the full at this time and an eclipse of the sun can occur only at new moon. And finally, science shows that the moon was more than one hundred and fifty degrees from the sun all that day.

The great astronomer, Sir William Herschel, in speaking of this unaccountable event has said, "The dark day in North America was one of those wonderful phenomenon of nature which will always be read with interest, but which philosophy is at a loss to explain." (R. M. Devens, *Our First Century*, p. 90)

The questions which remain to be settled are: Does this dark day of May 19, 1780 fulfill the prophecies in Matthew 24:29, Mark 13:24, Revelation 6:12? Is this one of the signs placed upon the face of nature to warn us that we are living in the "time of the end?" If so, how shall we place ourselves with relation to it?

If this event is so important that Christ has presented it to us so many times in His Word, it is certainly of such importance to us that we should ponder it well. Remember well the words of our dear Savior: "Take heed that no man deceive you." Do not allow anything or any individual to belittle an event which was important enough for the Lord Jesus to foretell so explicitly.

The fourth sign to take place is the falling of the stars. As we have discovered, the great earthquake took place November 1, 1755 and the dark day May 19, 1780. Therefore, the falling of the stars would have to occur sometime after 1780. This event was literally fulfilled in the great meteoric shower which took place November 13, 1833. Denison Olmsted of Yale University has given the following account of this spectacular occurrence:

"The shower pervaded nearly the whole of North America, having appeared in nearly equal splendor from the British possessions on the North, to the West India Islands and Mexico on the South, and from sixty-one degrees of longitude East of the American coast, quite to the Pacific Ocean on the West. Throughout this immense region, the duration was nearly the same. The meteors began to attract attention by their unusual frequency and brilliancy, from nine to twelve o'clock in the evening; were most striking in their appearance from two to five; arrived at their maximum, in many places, about four o'clock and continued until rendered invisible by the light of day." (Denison Olmsted, *The Mechanism of the Heavens*, p. 328)

Professor Olmsted also gives this account: "'The meteors did not fly at random over all parts of the sky, but appeared to emanate from a point in the constellation Leo, near a star called Gamma Leonis, in the bend of the sickle.'" (Quoted by J. E. White, *The Coming King*, p. 127)

Try to imagine if you can, what it must have been like to have lived through this experience. To have looked up from beneath a canopy of "shooting stars." To have seen them flying forth from one central point and being flung to the farthest points of the compass in all directions, as they descend covering you as a giant umbrella of brilliant streaks of light. Then picture in your mind the tremendous magnitude of the area covered by this phenomenon as it stretches from the Sargasso Sea, east of Bermuda, and across the vast expanse of North America and into the Pacific Ocean. To have extended from Canada, the United States, Mexico, and on into the West Indies and the Islands of the Caribbean. This event had such a tremendous impact on the people who witnessed it that even the secular papers recognized its correlation to the prophecy of Revelation 6:13.

*The New York Journal of Commerce* of November 14, 1833, the day following this phenomenal event, contains this record:

"The stars fell `even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken by a mighty wind.' Here is the exactness of the prophet. 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; those which appeared in the south...fell toward the south; and they fell, not as 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; and in the multitude falling, some cross the track of others, as they are thrown with more or less force, but each one falls on its own side of the tree." (*New York Journal of Commerce, November 14, 1833, Vol. VIII, No. 534, p. 2*)

The number of these falling stars at some stations has been estimated as high as 200,000 an hour for as long as five or six hours. Peter Millman stated in *The Telescope* that "more than a billion shooting stars appeared over the United States and Canada alone." It rained stars all night, yet the heavens did not empty.

A young 17-year-old girl, Rose Grace, recorded the events of that memorable milestone of history and how people thought it was the end of the world and called for her to come and pray with them to which she responded: "I told them if that was so, it was too late to pray."

The last event to occur in this prophecy is for the heaven to depart as a scroll and "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel." (2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8) It is most evident that the period of time in which we are now living is somewhere between verses 13 and 14. The last of the signs given to John has already occurred and we can now confidently look for the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To the student of prophecy, there can be no question that this event is but another link in the chain of 57 prophetic events pointing to the nearness of the return of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven. In speaking of these very events and His second coming in Matthew 24:29-31, Jesus went on to say, "when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." Matthew 24:33 When this exact time is, no one can say, but we do know that it is very close indeed. This is why Jesus said, "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning." (Mark 13:35) "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is." (Mark 13:33) The watching and praying must be done now for when the Lord comes, be it tonight or tomorrow, it will be too late.

Before that eventful day comes upon us, if you have not already done so, won't you give your most serious consideration to your salvation? Through Christ Jesus you can claim the assurance: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Timothy 4:8)