



SIGNS OF THE COMING OF JESUS CHRIST

Reading: Luke 21

The Lord Jesus will return to the earth

The Bible clearly shows that the Lord Jesus Christ will return to the earth. His second coming is part of God's plan for the world. He will set up God's kingdom on earth. He will be 'King of Kings', ruling the world from his throne in Jerusalem in the land of Israel. This was the promise that God made to the Jews in Old Testament times, and it is the message of the New Testament. The early followers of the Lord Jesus looked forward to the day when:

"the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

The second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ will be an amazing event that will change the lives of everyone who is living on the earth at that time.

When will the Lord Jesus return?

We do not know the exact date of Christ's return. Jesus himself said,

"But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only" (Matthew 24:36).

When Jesus told his disciples that the great temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed, they asked, **"Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?"** (Matthew 24:3).

The temple was indeed destroyed about 40 years later (AD 70), when the Roman army attacked Jerusalem and killed many thousands of Jews. In his answer, however, Jesus did not give any date for this destruction but warned his disciples of events that would happen just before it began. To people who knew his words and thought carefully about them, his prophecy acted as a warning so that they could escape from Jerusalem before the terrible slaughter of its inhabitants began.

As well as the warning signs about the destruction of the temple, Jesus also spoke of signs that would happen in the world before his return to the earth. He did this so that the believers living at this time will be ready when he comes. He ended his answer by saying,

"So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates" (Matthew 24:33).

We believe that we are living at the time close to Christ's return. The Bible calls this time period 'the last days'. Just as the disciples escaped the slaughter in Jerusalem because they acted upon Jesus' words, so we need to watch for the signs of his second coming and prepare ourselves.

What signs show that we are living in the last days?

1. Signs about the Jews

The Bible says that in the last days before Christ's return:

- (a) the Jews will return to the land of Israel
- (b) the Jews will become a nation again in their own land
- (c) Jerusalem will be freed from its enemies.

(a) The Jews were scattered among the nations of the world in AD 135, about 100 years after they had put Jesus to death. From that time, for nearly 2,000 years, they had no country of their own. But about 150 years ago the Jews began returning to their land. This fulfils Bible prophecy:





“For behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah, says the LORD, and I will bring them back to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall take possession of it” (Jeremiah 30:3).

(b) In May 1948 the State of Israel was set up, even though many nations were strongly against the idea. So Israel once again became a nation in its own land. Long before the birth of Jesus, God had said that this would happen:

“Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and bring them to their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel” (Ezekiel 37:21,22).

(c) Jerusalem is now the capital city of the State of Israel. Read the words of Jesus in Luke 21:24 about the scattering of the Jewish people. He says that Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles **until the times of the Gentile are fulfilled** (anyone who is not a Jew by birth is a Gentile). For almost 2,000 years other nations controlled Jerusalem and very few Jews lived there. When the State of Israel was formed in 1948, its capital was the coastal city of Tel Aviv. However, in June 1967 the Jews fought the Six-Day War and partially freed Jerusalem from Gentile nations. This allowed Jerusalem to become the capital city. These events show that the times of the Gentiles are nearly fulfilled (at an end), and they are a clear sign that the coming of the Lord Jesus is near!

Luke 21:24 They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

2. Signs in our world

(a) People not interested in God

Most people do not want to hear the truth written in the Bible. They do not want to know about Jesus Christ returning to set up God’s kingdom on earth. They prefer to go their own way. They listen to anyone who will tell them what **they** want to hear. The apostle Paul tells us:

“For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths” (2 Timothy 4:3,4).

The apostle Peter said that in the last days before the return of the Lord Jesus people would mock God’s Word. He said:

*“that scoffers will come **in the last days** with scoffing (mocking), following their own sinful desires. They will say, ‘Where is the promise of his (Jesus’) coming?’ ” (2 Peter 3:3,4).*

This is what people today say. We are in the last days!

(b) Falling moral standards

The apostle Paul described what the world would be like in the last days:

*“But understand this, that **in the last days** there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:1-4).*

It is like this today. This is a direct result of people ignoring God and His laws. People lack self-control. They are greedy (the Bible calls this ‘covetousness’). They do not care how much others suffer as long as they have the riches or power **they** want.

(c) Troubles that world leaders cannot solve

Jesus knew that there would be huge problems in the world before his return. Look at Luke 21:25-28. Jesus talks about signs in the sun, moon and stars. These could be





literal, but the heavenly bodies are sometimes used in the Bible to represent governments and organisations in our world. Similarly, the roaring of the sea in this passage could be literal, like the tsunami that killed thousands in December 2004, but it can also refer to unrest amongst the nations of the world (see Isaiah 57:20,21).

Jesus said that the nations would be in perplexity. The word 'perplexity' means 'with no way out' – and that is true of the problems the world faces today. People cannot find a way out of them. There are:

- problems of pollution
- increasing energy demands and decreasing natural resources (we are rapidly using up oil and minerals which can never be replaced)
- violence and wars throughout the world bringing suffering and death
- problems of terrorism and suicide bombers
- diseases like AIDS which affect huge numbers of people
- millions of people starving, while others have plenty to eat.

Jesus also said that just before his return people would be fainting with fear at what was happening to the world. There is no doubt that more and more people are worried about the future of the earth and can see no solution to its problems.

Luke 21:25-28 And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in **perplexity** because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people **fainting with fear** and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.

Daniel 12:1,2 And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time ... and many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

So at a time when there seems to be no answer to all these problems, the Son of Man (the Lord Jesus himself) will return with power and great glory (Luke 21:27). We are very close to the time when the Lord Jesus Christ will come! The prophet Daniel spoke of our time as "*a time of trouble, such as never has been*", and we know that this is a true picture of the world today.

Note that the "*time of trouble*" in this passage must refer to the last days before the return of Christ, because the passage also speaks of the resurrection of the dead. This is what the Lord Jesus will do when he returns from heaven. These verses show that the Lord's return is very near.

Israel and the nations

The Jews have always been God's witnesses (Isaiah 43:10) and an important part of His plan with the world. Israel is often in the news and we should watch what is happening there because significant changes have to take place in Israel immediately before the Lord Jesus returns. The modern State of Israel is one of our most important signs today.

Israel is surrounded by enemies. Many Arab nations want to completely destroy the Jewish nation and re-possess the land which they consider to be theirs. There is constantly trouble and unrest on Israel's borders.

The Arabs believe that the land of Israel belongs to them, but long ago God promised it to the Jews. The struggle between Jews and Arabs continues.

Eventually all nations will fight against Israel. Zechariah 14:2-4 is a Bible prophecy that has not

Zechariah 14:2-4 For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. On that day his (*Jesus'*) feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives ...





yet happened, but when it does, the Lord Jesus will return and help his people, the Jews. At that time the Lord Jesus will also give immortal life to people from all nations who have faithfully prepared for his second coming. Since this time is near we need to be ready, as we read in 2 Peter 3:11:

“Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness ...” ?

That is a question we all have to answer for ourselves.

Summary

We do not know the exact date when Christ will return from heaven to the earth, but there are many signs to show that his coming is near. Here are some of them.

- The return of the Jews to their land.
- The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.
- Jerusalem – the capital of Israel since 1967.
- People not interested in God.
- Falling moral standards.
- World problems.
- People fearful of the future.
- Israel’s enemies waiting to attack her.

A verse to learn: Luke 12:40

You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Verses to read:

Matthew 24:1-14, 24-27, 29-30, 44 – Page 1 of this lesson refers to this chapter.

Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?” And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.”

“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. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

“For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, ‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out. If they say, ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”

“Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

