

PROPHETIC DAY OF THE LORD IS HERE!

According to Bible chronology, it is just over 6,000 years since Adam was expelled from the Garden of Eden. This is significant because prophetically we are now living in the period called “*the time of the end,*” when Christ is expected to return and prepare the world for his righteous Kingdom and deliverance from this “*present evil world.*”

To many, the second coming of Christ is viewed as an earth-shattering event which will be obvious to all. If so, how do we explain this text describing his return “*as a thief in the night*”? (1 Thessalonians 5:2-4) We suggest that the second presence of Christ is not a cataclysmic, single event, but a period of time during which he accomplishes the preparation of the world for his Messianic Reign.

COMING? OR PRESENT?

Jesus’ disciples asked: “...*what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*” (Matthew 24:3) Greek scholars agree that the word “*coming*” is a poor translation of the word “*parousia*” — *para*, meaning *beside* or *along side of*, and *ousia*, a form of the verb *to be*. The thought is to be in the *presence* of another. Thus, this text would be more properly translated: “*what shall be the sign of thy presence...?*”

The disciples’ second question was, “*What shall be the sign . . . of the end of the world?*” The Greek word *world* is “*aion*” meaning *age*. Thus, Jesus’ answer would indicate that he would return at the conclusion of the Christian era — the *Harvest*. He did not mean that the world would come to a literal end, for God declared in Ecclesiastes 1:4 — “*One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever.*”

But what of these two questions? Jesus did not leave his disciples without an answer. He proceeded in Matthew Chapter 24 to list several prophetic evidences which would be unmistakable indications of his second *presence*. Other Bible prophecies point out additional important *signs*, which clearly mark evidence of Christ’s promised presence.

Israel Returns to Her Homeland

The nation of Israel illustrates one major prophetic evidence of our Lord’s second presence. Israel is spoken of symbolically in Scripture as a *fig tree*. Matthew 24:32 mentions this *sign* as leaves budding forth on a *fig tree* in context with the work Jesus would perform during his second presence.

Fulfillment of this prophecy is evident to all that Israel has taken its place in the world as one of its most productive and stable nations. When Israel became a Nation in 1948, there was no stopping her *hope* of one day becoming a praise to the Lord in all the earth! “*I am returned unto Zion... and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts...*” Zechariah 8:3

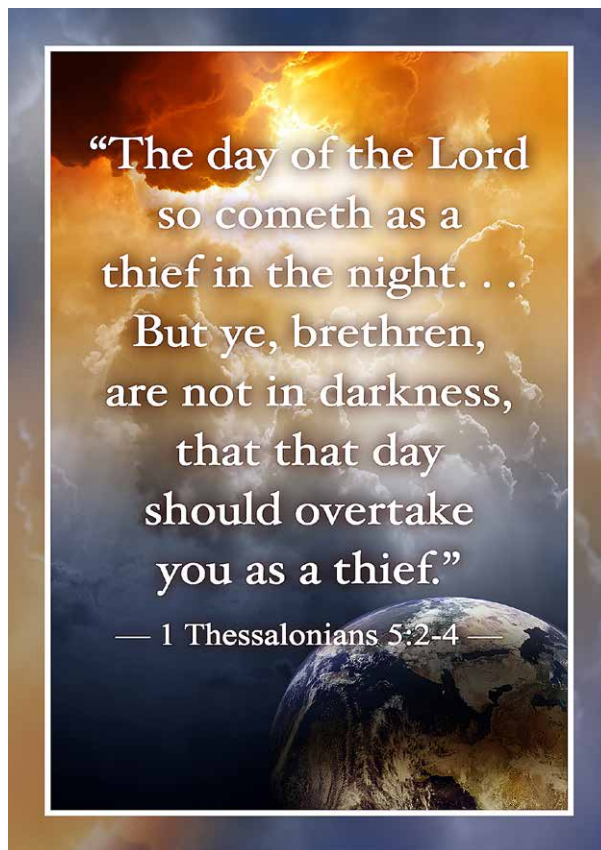
INCREASED KNOWLEDGE & GLOBAL TRAVEL

Over 2000 years ago, Daniel prophesied that in the “*time of the end*” “*many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.*” (Daniel 12:4) Until 1900, knowledge doubled every century; in 1945 it doubled every 25 years; by 1982 it doubled every 13 months; today, knowledge doubles every 12 hours!

(Buckminster Fuller, BFI.com) Technology has allowed humans to travel in orbit at 17,320 MPH! There should be no doubt that since the early 1900s, the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy has amazed even the most learned.

Even in the poorest countries, today, people have the ability via cell phones to witness and report news events as they happen — sending these in an instant around the world. Recent momentous events illustrate this fact. The horrifying death of George Floyd was viewed by billions, and within hours set off a global tsunami of protests!

One reason for this increase of knowledge and travel is that Christ is drawing the nations together for the purpose of educating all people. Oppressive systems will be replaced during his reign of equality and liberty for ALL. “...*judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to*



light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts..." (1 Corinthians 4:5) A great leveling will be the result: "...my determination is to gather the nations... to pour upon them mine indignation... For **then** will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent." Zephaniah 3:8, 9

UNPRECEDENTED WORLDWIDE TROUBLE

Daniel prophesied of another important feature which would result from the second presence of the Lord: "...there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation..." (Daniel 12:1) Jesus confirmed this expectation related to his return: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world..." Matthew 24:21

Just prior to the establishment of Christ's *peaceable* Kingdom there is a great struggle between the forces of good and evil.

Trouble and controversy afflict the earth as the kingdoms of this world are about to pass from Satan's control to Christ's Messianic Kingdom. Revelation 11:15-18

Headlines concerning global trouble are an evidence to all who are watching for the fulfillment of prophecy:

- Evils are exposed as never before. (Luke 12:2; 1 Corinthians 4:5)
- The weak, such as ISIS, say that they are strong. (Joel 3:10)
- "Signs & lying wonders" increase in many insidious forms. (2 Thessalonians 2:8-11)
- Wars occur on a global scale, starting with WWI. (Joel 3:9-11; Zephaniah 3:8)
- Natural disasters increase: hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, fires, and pest infestations (Mark 13:8).
- Infidelity pervades from presidency to pulpit. (2 Timothy 4:1-4)
- Pandemics plague health systems and strain financial markets. (James 5:1-6)
- False prophets deceive for glory and financial gain. (Matthew 24:5; Titus 1:11)
- Hearts fail for fear. (Luke 21:26; 1 Thessalonians 5:3)
- Children disrespect parents and authority. (2 Timothy 3:2)
- Love of pleasures dismisses godliness. (2 Timothy 3:1-5, 13)

Daniel 2:44 explains why there is global turmoil: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed... it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." Yes, all of this shaking and turmoil is because the new King is tearing down the corrupt civil, social, financial and religious institutions. "I will shake all nations, and [then] the desire of all nations shall come" (Haggai 2:7) — the *peaceable* Kingdom!

"TIMES OF REFRESHING SHALL COME FROM THE PRESENCE"

This *shaking* process in the *end times* is being caused by another prophetic fulfillment: "...times of refreshing shall come from the **presence** of the Lord: And he shall send Jesus Christ... whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things..." (Acts 3:19-21) Yes, Christ comes to *restore* what was

lost. Recall that, along with the death penalty upon Adam and his children, several other conditions would occur as a consequence of being expelled from the Garden. "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said... cursed is the ground for thy sake... Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee... In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread..." (Genesis 3:16-19) As we look about us we can see the *curse* upon men and women being lifted to a limited degree by the advent of labor-saving devices and advances in health care — all a result of the increase of knowledge.

The increase of knowledge has also put a spotlight on social injustice and has prompted significant reforms world-wide. These social reforms are but a foregleam of the full restitution blessings promised to come in Messiah's Kingdom. Yes, at this time, there

is a great leveling *process* going on in which those who are oppressed by selfish systems are demanding equality and justice.

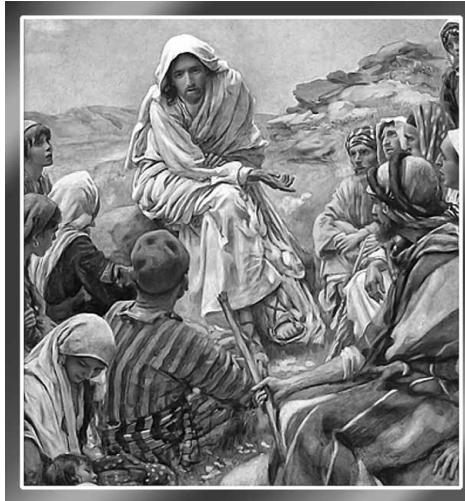
Not until the 1800s has liberty and justice for all been even a remote possibility. Rights for all races, women's rights, animal rights, environmental rights, etc. — all that was lost in Adam due to his disobedience, is being gradually brought to light. The cry of liberty can be heard on the news every day, and like it or not, old, oppressive systems are being forced to review their unjust policies. Since the advent of international communication, ignorance and inaction will no longer be tolerated. This process of restitution has been causing trouble because there is resistance

from those in power who selfishly wish to keep the status quo. But, "He shall break in pieces the oppressor... [and] deliver the needy when he crieth..." Psalm 72:4, 12

Yes, positive change is inevitable, because the new King is enlightening the eyes of the blinded world. The light now shining has forced into view the dark realities of the past and those which still remain. These are indeed *times of refreshing* resulting from the Lord's **preparation of the earth** for his loving and equitable Messianic reign. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped." Isaiah 35:5

"EVERY EYE WILL SEE HIM"

The majority of Christians today expect a return of Christ so obvious that "every eye will [literally] see him." (Revelation 1:7) This text could pose a real disharmony with the thought that Christ returns as a *thief in the night* while the world sleeps. But, an appreciation of Bible symbolism will resolve this seeming conflict. Matthew 24:30 states: "...they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds..." The Scriptures use the term *clouds* to picture *trouble*. As the news headlines clearly prove, we certainly are living in *troubled* times, and every eye is painfully aware of the fulfillment of this prophecy, yet unaware of the cause. "The great day of the LORD... is a day of wrath,... a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of **clouds** and thick darkness, A day of



the trumpet and alarm..." (Zephaniah 1:14-16) Jesus returns in the *clouds of trouble* and every eye is beholding the effect.

Harmony is also achieved by an understanding of the term "see" — symbolically, to *perceive* or *discern*. At Jesus' second presence, no one will actually *see* him with their literal eyes, for he gave his flesh for the life of the world and is now a powerful, invisible spirit being. Jesus emphasized this thought when he told his disciples: "*Yet a little while, and the world [literally] seeth me no more.*" John 14:19; 1 Peter 3:18

But what about 1 Thessalonians 4:16? "*...the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God...*" The trumpet call is only for those who are awake and listening for the sound of the trumpet amid these tumultuous *end time* events. Having studied the *signs* of his coming, they will *perceive* that this is evidence of the Bridegroom's *return*. Although the news headlines are filled with prophetic evidence of this work, only those who are awake, watching and listening will be aware of Christ's *thief-like* presence.

THE "DAYS OF NOAH"

Another *sign* Jesus gave of his second presence compares our *day* to the *days* of Noah. "*...as the Days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of [parousia: presence] the Son of man be.*" (Matthew 24:37) Luke 17:26 reads: "*As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.*" As Noah was present in the *days of Noah*, so it will be that the *Son of man* will be present in the *days of the Son of man*.

It was not the flood, but the presence and work of Noah **before** the flood which prefigured the Second Advent of Christ. "*For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming [parousia: presence] of the Son of man be.*" (Matthew 24:38, 39) Not only were the hearts of humanity morally depraved, but there was a complete lack of interest in what faithful Noah was warning. Today, as life continues its hectic pace with its eating, drinking, and marrying, it is a temptation for the Christian to be swept along by this current of events and become drowsy. "*Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.*" 1 Thessalonians 5:6

THE WISE AND THE FOOLISH VIRGINS

In the Chapter following the *signs* of the *end of the age*, Jesus gave his disciples a parable which further warns Christians to be awake and watching for the evidence of his return. He compared his disciples to a faithful Bride waiting for her beloved Bridegroom. (2 Corinthians 11:2) "*Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins. . . five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps [God's Word], and took no oil [spirit of truth] with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their*

lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom [he is here!]; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps [searched the Scriptures and trimmed away every vestige of error]. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. . ." (Matthew 25:1-13) Jesus was again warning his disciples that there would come a time when he would return and seek those who would be awake, watching and searching the Scriptures for the evidence of his presence.

This parable concludes: "*Afterward came also the other [foolish] virgins saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.*" (Matthew 25:11-13) It is important to note that Jesus is **not** saying this hour would never be known, for why would he have given so many *signs* to identify his return? No, this parable

illustrates *conditions* among his followers at the time of his return. The virgins are broken up into two classes — one which is diligent and excited about their coming Bridegroom, and the other which is careless and rather indifferent. The first class is ready when the Bridegroom returns and the second class lacks the oil — the *spirit of truth* gained by diligent study, prayer, and fellowship with other Christians.

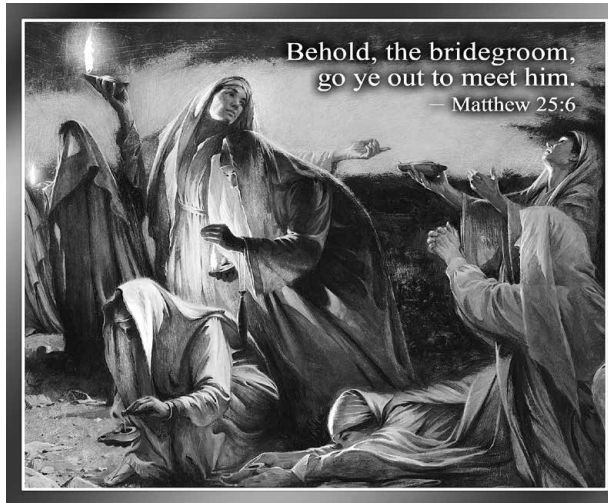
The consequence of being unprepared is that the foolish virgins are unaware of the return of the Bridegroom and lose the *chief blessing* of being a part of the "*Bride of*


Christ." Revelation speaks of this unwise group as a *great multitude* of believers who serve him **before** the throne in heaven and not **on** the throne. These were rewarded but of a lesser honor. Revelation 7:9-15

REMOVING THE OLD ORDER TO ESTABLISH A "KINGDOM ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN"

At Jesus' first advent, all Israel had great expectations of their Messiah, assuming he would deliver them from the Roman yoke and set them up as an independent Nation. (Luke 3:15) Yet, while Jesus was in the midst of Israel, his people recognized him not: "*...there standeth one among you, whom ye know not.*" (John 1:26) So too it is today. The Apostle Paul stated the reason for this secrecy: "*...none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*" (1 Corinthians 2:8) Could it be that there standeth one among us whom the Christian world knows not? And could it be for the very same reason — that the kings and nobles of our day must be unaware of Jesus presence in order for him to accomplish the work of tearing down this old order to bring in the new?

These great changes that are transforming the world are no mistake. We are indeed in the *end times*, and these changes are the fulfillment of prophecy at the mighty hand of the King of Kings! Behold! "*Thy God Reigneth!*" Isaiah 52:7





“The day of the Lord
so cometh as a
thief in the night. . .”

— 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4 —

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While the world remains totally unaware of the work our Lord is doing in preparation for God’s merciful Kingdom, the true Church need not be in darkness. She is promised “meat in due season” to provide all truth necessary to prove faithful in the Harvest of the Gospel Age. Psalm 145:15

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