

(Rev. 1:7, see also Matt. 24:27). It is not only the “spiritually enlightened” that will see Christ return: “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, 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.” (Matt. 24:30). Some believe that Christ returns secretly and snatches the believers away to heaven to spare them the Tribulation. But this is not Biblical. Jesus returns with “all the holy angels” to gather those who have put their faith in Him (Matt. 25:31, 24:31). It will also be a very loud event. Those who have died in Christ will wake up from their sleep and rise from their graves. Then these will ascend together to meet Christ in the air: “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” (1 Thess. 4:16-17, see also 1 Cor. 15:51-53). If we have our trust in Jesus, the End of the World is nothing to be afraid of. Jesus is returning to bring His beloved people back to their rightful home in Heaven without sin, death and suffering (John 14:1-3, Rev 21:4).

Are You Ready?

Christ longs to bring every person to Heaven. But He cannot bring those with Him that love sin, because Heaven would then fast be filled with sin! Those who are not ready when the “stone” hits the “statue”, will be crushed (Dan. 2:44). They have again and again refused to have their stony, proud hearts broken, while the appeals of conscience have been heard (Ezek. 36:26, Ps. 51:17). When they see Christ return, great remorse will cease them and they will beg the rocks to fall on them and crush them (Rev. 6:15-17). Jesus’ holiness and glory is too much for sinners to bear and they will be consumed. Christ is the Rock. He said: “whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.” (Matt. 21:44). Either we fall on Christ with broken hearted confession or we will be among those who ask the rocks to fall on them.



When will Christ Return?

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Before His ascension, Jesus had promised His disciples that He would come again (John 14:1-3). The angels had assured them that this would be the case (Acts 1:9-11). The apostles called this event the “blessed hope” (Tit. 2:13). The stone that struck the image in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was the Kingdom of God. It is at the Second Coming of Christ that God’s Kingdom will visibly appear (1 Cor. 15:23-24, Luke 19:11-12). But it has now been almost 2000 years since Christ ascended to heaven. Will He really return? When will He return? Does Bible Prophecy give us any more clues as to the timing?

The Olivet Discourse

One time when Jesus sat at Mt Olivet outside of Jerusalem, looking down upon the beautiful temple, his disciples asked him about this timing. Jesus had just told them that Jerusalem and the temple would be utterly destroyed. In their amazement, the disciples thought that Jesus must be speaking of the end of the world and Christ’s Second Coming and they asked: “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matt. 24:3). Jesus had, however, merely referred to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. But in a masterful parallel prophecy, Jesus likens the end of the world with the end of the Jewish nation, and answers thereby both questions at once. His instruction gives us insight into when Christ will return and what the signs of the times will be: “Heaven and earth will pass away... But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.” (Matt. 24:35-36). We cannot know the exact time.

This does however not mean that we cannot have any idea about its nearness. In the verses before Jesus said: “Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it [the Second Coming] is near – at the doors!” (Matt. 24:32-33, see also 25:13). Jesus asks us to watch for the signs of His imminent return. If we watch we will not be taken by surprise on that day (1 Thess. 5:1-6, Rev. 3:3).

The Signs of the Times

But what signs are we to watch for? This was the question the disciples asked Jesus: “what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matt. 24:3). Jesus answers by declaring sign after sign, which will increase in intensity and frequency the closer we get to the end of the world, similar to the birth pains of a woman in labor (Matt. 24:4-8).

- Wars and Terrorism (Matt. 24:6-7a; Luk. 21:9-10, 26)
- Natural Disasters (Matt. 24:7b; Luk. 21:11, 25; Isa. 24:5)
- Famines (Matt. 24:7b; Luk. 21:11)
- Pestilences/Diseases (Matt. 24:7b, Luk. 21:11)
- Religious Deception (Matt. 24:4-5, 11, 24; 1 Tim. 4:1-2)
- Moral Decay (Matt. 24:12; 2 Tim. 3:1-5)
- The Gospel Reaching the Whole World (Matt. 24:14)

Our modern world cannot be described much more accurately. The 20th century, with its two world wars, was the bloodiest in history. The 21st century has not begun much better. Out of the 22 deadliest famines in world history, 18 of them happened in the last 200 years. Every day thousands of children starve to death worldwide. One out of 7-9 people in the world are estimated to suffer from malnutrition. Deadly earthquakes have increased dramatically. Of the 20 deadliest earthquakes, more than half (12) have happened the last 100 years. 4 of them in the 21st Century. The tsunami of 2004 and the Haitian earthquake in 2010 killed in total

about half a million people. We find more and more deadly and strange diseases in our world. AIDS kills 2 million people every year and more are infected each year. Some time ago SARS, Swine-flue, and Ebola pandemics struck terror in people’s hearts. On the religious arena, many sects and deceptive teachers have appeared. From the 19th century and onward more Messianic figures have appeared than ever before. Religious extremism, terrorism and deception in God’s name have become more and more common today. The description of 2 Timothy 3:1-5 fits perfectly with our society: “For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power.” (2 Tim. 3:2-5). Society today encourages us to live for money, pleasure and excitement. Duty, humility, temperance, parental respect and self-control are foreign words to many. The movies and computer games get ever more violent and brutal. We see school shootings and terrorist attacks like never before. Divorce is skyrocketing (cf Matt. 24:12). Sexual morality is out the window. Today anything goes, except Biblical morality. This spirit will also take possession of the church (have a form of godliness). These are all serious signs of the times, that, for the watchful seeker, proclaim loud and clear that Christ is at the door.

How will Christ Return?

What then will happen on the Day Christ returns and the world ends? First of all, we can conclude that the Second Coming will mean Christ’s literal, physical return to earth. Two angels told Christ’s disciples on Ascension Day as they were gazing up into the cloud that took Christ away: “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:11). The Second Coming will not be some invisible, metaphoric, spiritual presence. The Bible says in fact that “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him”