

TODAY'S HEADLINES WRITTEN OVER 2000 YEARS AGO

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts...” — 2 Peter 1:19

There is worldwide apprehension that forces of change are about to overturn the world as we know it. These changes are actually fulfilling Bible prophecy, and are something Christians should anticipate at the time of Christ's second advent. And indeed, it is so, for according to a recent Pew Research Poll, 41% of Americans believe Jesus' second advent will be within the next 40 years.

News headlines around the world manifest the work Jesus prophesied he would accomplish at his return. Four of the most momentous of his works demonstrate to those watching a preparation of earth for his kingship and reign of righteousness.



1. ISRAEL RETURNS TO HER HOMELAND

Headlines about the tiny nation of Israel illustrate one major prophecy which was to manifest itself in our time. Israel is spoken of symbolically in Scripture as a *fig tree*. In Matthew 24:32, Jesus mentioned leaves budding forth on the fig tree in context with the work he would accomplish upon his return. Clear fulfillment of this prophecy is evident as Israel has taken its place in the world as one of the most productive and stable nations.

God promised Abraham that Israel, his earthly seed, would be a blessing to all nations. (Genesis 12:2; 22:18) Whenever there is a natural disaster, Israel is in the news, fulfilling this prophecy. For example, *The Israel Forum for International Humanitarian Aid* is an Israeli-based organization that responds to emergencies, helping in every aspect of disaster relief, from search and rescue, to rebuilding communities, to medical assistance and post-psychotrauma care.

Since Israel became a nation in 1948, she has desired to live in peace and to be a blessing, but, prophecies indicate that Israel becoming a nation would become one of the world's most contentious issues. Jerusalem is the focal point of this trouble because of its centrality in God's plan. He promised He would regather His people and that the nations would eventually have to come to Israel to learn about Him and His ways. (Isaiah 2:2-4; 60:3; Zechariah 8:20-23) But both Muslims and Catholics claim Jerusalem as their religious capital, and struggle with the notion that this Holy city belongs to the Jewish people alone. Nations and religions are unaware that their efforts to control Jerusalem

will fail. Zechariah 12:2-3 foretold that Jerusalem would be a *“trembling cup”* in the hands of the nations and a *“burdensome stone”* to the people of the world. Current controversies surrounding Jerusalem are signs that this present evil world is ending and a new righteous world under Christ will soon begin.

2. INCREASED KNOWLEDGE & RAPID TRANSPORTATION INNOVATIONS

Daniel 12:4 states that in the *time of the end* *“many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.”* A recent headline in *U.S. News and World Report* reads: *“Private Space Travel Company Expects First Test Flights with People in 2017.”* Headlines such as these

were alluded to in Daniel's prophecy over 2000 years ago, and the news can hardly keep up with innovations in technology and travel. In fact a headline on *industrytap.com* reads: *“Knowledge Doubling Every 12 Months, Soon to be Every 12 Hours.”* The article goes on to read: *“...until 1900 human knowledge doubled approximately every century. By the end of World War II knowledge was doubling every 25 years. Today things are not as simple as different types of knowledge have different rates of growth. For example, nanotechnology knowledge is doubling every two years and clinical knowledge every 18 months. But on average human knowledge is doubling every 13 months. According to IBM, the build out of the ‘internet of things’ will lead to the doubling of knowledge every 12 hours.”* There should be no doubt that since the end of the 19th Century, the fulfillment of this prophecy has amazed even the most learned. Today, even the poorest people of the world have the ability via cell phones to witness and report news instantly as it happens around the world.

There is a glorious reason for this increase of knowledge and travel. Christ is drawing the nations together for the purpose of replacing the corrupt oppressors of the poor with his righteous government. The result will be that ALL people will be blessed and will serve God together in peace and harmony. *“...my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, 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

3. UNPRECEDENTED WORLDWIDE TROUBLE

Daniel 12:1 states: “. . . *there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation . . .*” Headlines concerning worldwide trouble should be an evidence to all of the fulfillment of prophecy. These, too, are signs of the effect of our Lord working to prepare the earth for his glorious reign of righteousness. Concerning his second advent, Jesus stated: “*For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time . . . except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved . . .*” Matthew 24:21-22

Just prior to the establishment of Christ’s peaceable kingdom will be 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. (Revelation 16:15, 16) Events such as these dominate world news headlines:

- Evils have been exposed as never before (Luke 12:2; 1 Corinthians 4:5)
- The weak, such as ISIS, say that they are strong (Joel 3:10)
- Spiritism and the occult have increased (Matthew 24:26)
- Wars and war preparations continue to intensify (Joel 3:9-11; Matthew 24:6)
- False prophets and false Christs appear everywhere (Matthew 24:5)
- Natural disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, floods increase (Mark 13:8)
- Infidelity from presidency to pulpit is rampant (Luke 18:8; 2 Timothy 4:1-4)
- Men seek pleasures rather than godliness (2 Timothy 3:1-5, 13)
- Strife continues to intensify between capital and labor (James 5:1-4)
- Juvenile delinquency and lack of respect plagues families (2 Timothy 3:2)

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 the desire of all nations shall come.*” (Haggai 2:7) As a result of his blessed reign, Christ “*shall judge the afflicted of the people, he shall give help to the children of the needy; but he shall crush the oppressor . . . In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace shall be so long as the moon endureth . . . He will deliver the needy when he crieth; the afflicted also who hath no helper . . .*” Psalm 72:4-14

4. RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS BEGUN

Although there is great trouble prophesied, there is also blessed peace which shall follow, “*...when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord... whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things...*” (Acts 3:29-31) Awareness and equality of the races, human rights, women’s rights, animal rights, environmental rights, etc. — all that was lost in Adam due to his disobedience, is being gradually restored. Liberty has been the cry and has dominated world headlines ever since the end of the 19th Century:

- Slave trade, still rampant in the world, is being exposed in the news and is being rooted out worldwide.
- The formation of the ASPCA in 1866 has transformed the minds of people worldwide as to the humane treatment of animals.
- In 1872, President Ulysses S. Grant signed into law the first

- of many beautiful national parks — Yellowstone National Park.
- The 19th Amendment granted U.S. women the right to vote in 1920.
- News of the blood diamond trade has enlightened the masses and is beginning to limit the harsh cruelty upon oppressed people.
- Headlines reveal that women in third-world countries are being allowed an education and are gaining victories against oppression.
- In 2009, a man of color became President of the United States.
- In 2016, a woman presidential candidate gained the popular vote of the American people.
- Governments around the world gather yearly to limit the assault of environmental pollutants and dangers upon our planet.

Yes, times of refreshing and restitution result from the Lord’s preparation of the earth for his loving and equitable reign.

“ALL WERE IN EXPECTATION”

At Jesus’ first advent, all men of faith had great expectations of the coming deliverer of God’s people. (Luke 3:15) Yet, their misguided expectations were that a mighty general would ride into Jerusalem and immediately overthrow the oppressing governments. When, instead, Messiah was the lowly and meek *lamb of God*, their expectations soon turned to disappointment. (Isaiah 53:1-3) In fact, after his resurrection, Jesus appeared to two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus, and not knowing it was Jesus, they said to him, “*We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.*” (Luke 24:21) At that point, Jesus

revealed to them the meaning of the prophecies which indicated that he must first suffer to accomplish the ultimate freedom of the entire human race. “*But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.*” Luke 17:25

As at his first advent, Jesus was among his brethren, but they recognized him not as their Messiah, so too, it will be in the parallel of this time during his second advent. John the Baptist said to the Jews, “. . . *there standeth one among you, whom ye know not.*” (John 1:26) 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 we know not? And could it be for the very same reason — that the kings and nobles of our day must be unaware in order for the Lord to accomplish the work of tearing down this old order to bring in the new?

Another factor which fuels the expectancy of Jesus’ second advent is Bible chronology. Even if various denominations are off by a few years of one another’s chronology, most agree that we are now in the seventh thousand-year since Adam was created. Those who believe in Bible chronology await Christ’s reign with even greater expectancy, for the promise is that after 6,000 years of the permission of evil, his benevolent reign will follow. Many Bible scholars agree that the seventh creative “*day of rest*” in Genesis is symbolic of this future *day of rest* and is 1,000 years in length. “*...a day to the Lord is as a thousand years.*” (2 Peter 3:8) Soon, the expectations of all will be rewarded when Christ shall reign with everlasting peace and rest — “*the desire of all nations.*” Haggai 2:7



CHRIST RETURNS AS “A THIEF IN THE NIGHT”

We suggest that the second presence of Christ is not a cataclysmic event as many expect, but a period of time during which he accomplishes the preparation of the world for his Messianic Kingdom. Although the news headlines are filled with prophetic evidence of this work, only those who are watching will be on the alert for his *thief-like* presence. 1 Thessalonians 5:2

When his disciples asked Jesus, “...*what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*” he did not leave them without an answer, but proceeded to list many evidences which would be indications of this time. (Matthew 24:3) But, keep in mind that the proper thought of the word “*coming*” in this citation has been lost in translation. Consider that a more correct translation of the Greek word “*parousia*” is “*present*”—*para* — means beside or along side of, and *ousia*, is a form of the verb “*to be*.” When the roll is called in the schools of Greece, the proper response to one’s name is to reply “*parousia*,” that is, “*present*.” Thus, the scripture would be more properly translated: “*what shall be the sign of thy presence.*”

The second part of the disciples’ question was, “*What shall be the sign . . . of the end of the world.*” The Greek word for *world* is “*aion*” and means *age*. Hence, Jesus’ answer would indicate the end of the Christian Age — *the harvest* — the time period in which he would return. Proper translations, therefore, are critical because mistranslations lead to false expectations. For example, many Christians have the impression that Christ will destroy the earth at his return. This contradicts the scripture which assures us that “*the earth abideth forever.*” (Ecclesiastes 1:4) How comforting to know that Jesus was not referring to the end of the literal world, but to the end of the Christian Age.

“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) Matthew 24:30 states: “. . . *they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds.* . . .” These scriptures seem to pose a real disharmony with the thought that he would return *as a thief in the night* while the world sleeps. Bible symbolism resolves this seeming conflict. Harmony is achieved by an understanding of the definition of the word *see*. We use the term *see* when we *understand* another person’s viewpoint. Thus, at Jesus’ second advent, 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. (1 Peter 3:18; 2 Corinthians 5:16) Jesus emphasized this thought when he told his disciples: “*Yet a little while, and the world [literally] seeth me no more.*” John 14:19

Additional understanding results when we determine the symbolism of Christ “*coming in the clouds.*” The Scriptures use the term *clouds* to picture *trouble*. As the news headlines clearly prove, we certainly are living in troublous times, and every eye is beholding the fulfillment of this prophecy. “*That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress . . . and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness...*” Zephaniah 1:15

Similarly, we are informed that “*the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God . . .*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16) Again, we must harmonize this with the Apostle Peter’s statement, “*...there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming [parousia—presence]...?’*” (2 Peter 3:3-4) It is not reasonable to suppose that during this thief-like presence the scoffers would hear a literal shout. If so, they would not be scoffing, but would heed the trumpet call. No, the trumpet call is only for those who are watching and eager to welcome their returned Lord. They will be listening for the sound of the trumpet amid the tumultuous end time events, and they will know that these are evidences of Jesus’ return.

THE “DAYS OF NOAH”

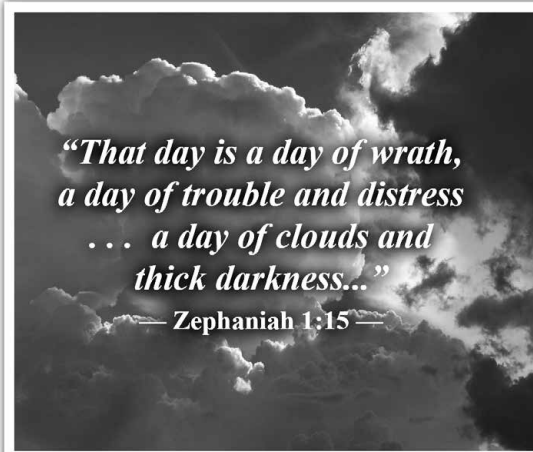
One such evidence of *the end of the age* was that “. . . *as the Days of Noah were, so shall also the coming [parousia] of the Son of man be.*” (Matthew 24:37) To many Christians the concept of Christ’s coming (parousia—presence) merely means the imminence of his actual return. However, likening the presence of Christ to the *days of Noah* will show a far more dynamic significance. The Luke 17:26 account states: “*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 should be that the Son of man would be present in “*the days of the Son of man.*”

This prophecy of Jesus continues by elaborating the events of *Noah’s day* which would find their parallels in the *days of the Son of man*. Matthew 24:38, 39 reads:

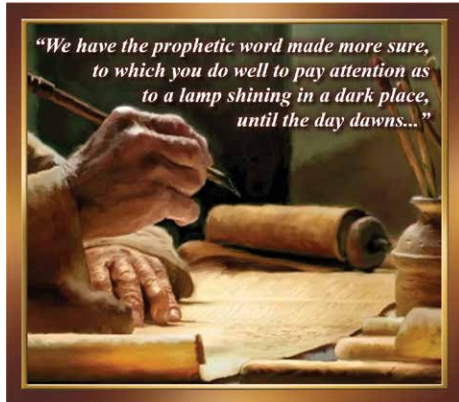
“*For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*” Although the wickedness is great in our day, it was the *lack of awareness* more than the *wickedness* of Noah’s day that illustrates what would parallel the events at the time of the return of Christ. Additionally, it was not the flood, but the *presence* and *work* of Noah before the flood which prefigured the return of Christ at his Second Advent. This, then, is the import of *the days of Noah*. 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

“MEN’S HEARTS FAILING THEM FOR FEAR”

Truly, the events of the past two centuries have been unprecedented on every front compared to that of all history. News headlines signal clearly that we are living in the very “*days of the Son of man.*” Although the headlines can be particularly alarming, to those who are watching and praying, there is no need to fear, for, as promised, “*times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.*” A peaceful refreshing shall result from the presence of our Lord, after he has done the work of removing the old, corrupt order, and the world looks to him for *real* reform and lasting blessings.



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