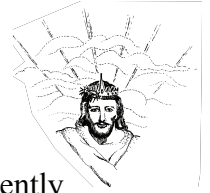


LESSON 1 . . .

Signs of the Second Coming



The second coming of Christ is the most frequently mentioned event in the New Testament. Our Lord's last recorded words in the Bible say He is coming soon (Rev. 22:20b). The Bible also tells us a time will come when people become skeptical about the Second Coming. Peter writes that during the last days mockers will be doing every lustful thing they desire (2 Pet. 3:3). Then, what does he write in 2 Peter 3:4a?

Today, even many Christians are skeptical about Christ's return. However, everything is exactly on schedule according to God's calendar. We can clearly see this by looking at **three** distinct signs of the Second Coming . . .



The Nation of Israel

Just a couple of days before Jesus' crucifixion, He and His disciples are in the temple area of Jerusalem. Some of Jesus' disciples comment on the magnificence and beauty of the Jewish temple (Lk 21:5). Located on top of Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, the temple was a massive, awe-inspiring sight and one of the most beautiful buildings in the ancient world. It was comparable to any of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The temple proper was made of imported marble that glistened in the sunlight. However, in Luke 21:6 what does Jesus predict about the huge stones that made up the temple?



In A. D. 70, less than forty years after the crucifixion of Christ, the Roman general Titus, after a three-year siege, completely destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple. That temple has never been rebuilt. For nearly two thousand years the Jews would have no temple and no homeland.

However, the book of Revelation tells us that at the end of the world there will be a nation of Israel, a city of Jerusalem, and a Jewish temple. For example, in Revelation 11:1, an angel gives the apostle John a rod and tells him to do what?

However, John wrote the book of Revelation in A.D. 95. That's 25 years after the temple was totally destroyed by Titus, and it has never been rebuilt. Also, during the tribulation period the Antichrist will exalt himself above God and everything else that is worshipped (2 Thess. 2:4). Then, what does that verse tell us the Antichrist will do?

For that to happen, there must be a nation of Israel, a city of Jerusalem, and a Jewish temple. Two of those now exist, because in 1948 Israel was once again established as a Jewish nation and homeland.

The Bible teaches that the nation of Israel will be at the center of the final world conflict. The stage for this event is being set today. For example, what do you think will happen if Iran, or another Islamic nation in the Middle East, acquires a nuclear missile that can reach Israel and then uses it? It could be the beginning of the final world conflict. Missiles could be what John is trying to

built the ark and preached (2 Pet. 2:5), the people of his day went about their business as usual, paying no attention to the Word of God spoken through Noah. Noah built the ark and preached for 120 years, but no one listened. His culture remained unmoved and unchanged. Still referring to the days of Noah, what does Jesus say in Matthew 24:39b?



The word translated *flood* (KATAKLUSMOS, kata-lus-mos) is the word from which we get our words “cataclysm” and “cataclysmic.” It means “a great flood,” but it has come to mean any great disaster. As in the days of Noah, people today will not listen to the Word of God regarding marriage or sexual morality. As a result, they face a “cataclysmic,” or disastrous, end because they will not be ready to meet God. That's why Jesus gives what warning in Matthew 24:44?

The **signs of the Second Coming** include **the nation of Israel, the Middle East crisis, and the likeness to the days of Noah.** Are you ready for Christ's return? If not, you must get ready right now! (You can begin by reading page 59 of this book.)



The Likeness to the Days of Noah

There will be a parallel between the culture of Noah’s day and the culture just preceding the return of Christ. What does Jesus say about His second coming in Matthew 24:37?

This means world culture at the time of the Second Coming will be like the days of Noah. What was Noah’s day like? The Bible tells us God looked at the earth and saw it was *corrupt*. (Gen. 6:12). The Hebrew word translated *corrupt* (SHĀHAT, shaw-hath) means to decay, or spoil. It carries the idea of moral decay and sexual perversion. In other words, the things of God had been corrupted.

In our country during the last few years, what institution, that originated with God, has become *corrupt* as never before? Marriage! God established the institution of marriage, and this generation has corrupted it as never before. What does God say about His design for marriage in Genesis 2:24?

Jesus repeated that statement in Matthew 19:5. God says marriage is to be between *a man* and *his wife*, not between a man and a man or a woman and a woman. However, in 2004 the state of Massachusetts legalized same sex marriage. Other states plan to follow suit, despite the clear teaching of God’s Word.



In regard to the days of Noah, Jesus also said that prior to the flood, people *were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage* until Noah entered the ark (Mt 24:38). While Noah

describe in Revelation 6:13a. What does he write?

How else would John describe a nuclear exchange? He lived even before the discovery of gunpowder.

Not only do the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem exist today, but the construction of the temple is probably coming soon. The following article appeared on *worldnetdaily.com* (June 8, 2005): “The Israeli rabbinical council involved with re-establishing the Sanhedrin is calling upon all groups involved in Temple Mount research to prepare detailed architectural plans for the reconstruction of the Jewish Holy Temple.”

If you see or hear of the Jewish temple being built in Jerusalem, be aware this is one of the final signs of the Second Coming. One possible scenario is if the Jews begin to rebuild the temple, it might be the last straw that unites Arab countries in trying to destroy Israel and thus beginning the final world conflict. However, the temple could be rebuilt after the Rapture, so it doesn’t necessarily have to be rebuilt for Jesus to return. That’s why 1 Thessalonians 5:2 gives us what warning?

God continually warns us by keeping the world’s eyes focused on Jerusalem. Almost every day, when we listen to world news or read a national newspaper, we find some mention of Israel. No parcel of real estate, per square foot, gets as much press as Israel. This is amazing when we consider the entire Middle East is approximately the same size as the state of Texas and Israel is less than half the size of the state of Maine (see maps on page 56).

Jerusalem is at the center of world unrest today because it is sacred ground to two world religions—Judaism and Islam. Standing today on the place where the Jewish temple once stood is the Dome of the Rock, the third most sacred site in all Islam. It is not a mosque; it is a Muslim shrine. It is sacred to Muslims because the dome is built over a stone they believe to be the place where the prophet Mohammad ascended into heaven.

It is insulting to Muslims for any part of Jerusalem to be in Jewish hands. Since the nation of Israel was founded in 1948, the city of Jerusalem has been the center of controversy and wars.

One of the great ironies is the Hebrew word translated *Jerusalem* (YERÛSHĀLAIM, u-ru-sha-laim) means “foundation of peace” or “city of peace.” Yet, today it is the center of conflict and war. However, the good news is someday Jerusalem will live up to its name. When Jesus, the Prince of Peace, returns to earth, He will stand on the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4a). Then, according to Zechariah 14:4b, what will happen to the Mount of Olives?

Jerusalem is on a tectonic (tec-tonic) plate fault known as the Great Rift Valley, much like the San Andreas Fault that runs from Mexico through California. Plate tectonics is a term used to describe the theory that the earth’s surface consists of large plates, or slabs, which are in constant motion. They grind against each other, building up pressure that causes earthquakes. When Jesus returns to earth, His feet will first touch the Mount of Olives, the hill just east of Jerusalem that overlooks the temple. It could be the Great Rift Valley fault that causes the mountain to split at that moment.

The first sign of the second coming of Christ is **the nation of Israel**. The second is . . .



The Middle East Crisis

Next to the Israeli-Palestinian problem, the most serious chronic crisis in the Middle East is Iraq and Iran. The most frequently mentioned city in the Bible is Jerusalem—over 800 times. The second most often mentioned city is Babylon—over 280 times.

The city of Babylon was founded in unknown antiquity on the Euphrates River, about 50 miles south of modern-day Baghdad. Revelation 17-18 tells us Babylon is finally destroyed by God just before the second coming of Christ, described in Revelation 19. Babylon, or Iraq, will play an important role in future world history because it sits on top of the third largest known crude oil reserve in the world (115 billion barrels). Only Saudi Arabia and Iran have more.

Isn’t it interesting that in the last few years Iraq seems to have come out of nowhere to take center stage in world affairs? Jesus told the Pharisees and Sadducees they could tell if the day was going to be fair or stormy by reading the signs in the sky (Mt 16:2-3a). Then, what does our Lord say to them in the last half of verse 3?

The stage is set for the final world conflict, and it will begin in the Middle East. God put the oil in the ground and set the stage for world history to end, just as He reveals in the Bible. All we must do is discern *the signs of the times*. When the world comes to an end, Iraq (ancient Babylon) will play a prominent role.

The signs of the second coming of Christ are **the nation of Israel**, **the Middle East crisis**, and . . .