

Lesson #1 - Seven Signs that Reveal the Nearness of Jesus' Coming!



This is the first lesson of a thirty-two lesson course on vital issues of concern today. Featuring the major end-time prophecies and other great Bible themes, each lesson points to Scripture passages which answer today's most important questions.

To begin, you'll need a King James Version Bible which is the textbook for the course. Each lesson contains questions and Bible references. Carefully read each question. Find the text in your Bible, and look for the answer. It might be the entire verse, but usually the question is well answered in a single phrase. Copy the necessary portion of the verse on the line provided. The line is enclosed in quotation marks to indicate that you are quoting Scripture.

If you have a hard time finding the answer, first check to make sure you have the right verse. Then read the question again. If the verse still does not make sense, copy it anyway and go on to the next question. As you continue, the verses that follow should help to clarify it. When you are finished, it is always good to read through the lesson again to get the whole line of connected thought before checking the boxes on the back.

Before Jesus would leave his disciples, he gave them the promise that he would one day come again for them. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:1-3)

Shortly after Christ would return to heaven in 31 A.D. , various groups began to spread false ideas regarding his coming. In fact, Paul had to warn the Thessalonians not to anticipate the coming of Christ in their day for Jesus would not come back until the "Man of Sin" had been revealed. "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." (II Thessalonians 2:1-5)

The opposite extreme is just as dangerous, namely that Jesus will not return or that his coming is still far off in the future. "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (II Peter 3:3, 4)

This lesson will cover seven signs that reveal the nearness of Jesus' coming.

1. What two events did the disciples ask Jesus about?

Matt.24:1-3 _____

Note: While Matthew records numerous signs that were given by Jesus, we will examine seven in detail that highlight the nearness of His advent. Many would argue that there have always been wars and famines and so these phenomenon are not anything extraordinary; thus we will look at some of the unique aspects of this

prophecy.

2. What was the first warning that Jesus gave?

Matt. 24:5 _____

Note: Even in the days of Jesus there were “false Christs”. “Barabbas”, which means “Son of the Father”, claimed to be the Messiah; he was a robber and a murderer responsible for leading insurrections against the Roman authority.

Jim Jones, founder of the Peoples Temple group, authored a booklet, called "The Letter Killeth" which identified contradictions, absurdities, and atrocities in the Bible. In addition to claiming to be an incarnation of Akhenaten, Buddha, Lenin, and Father Divine; he blasphemously called himself the incarnation of Jesus. Through manipulation and aided by the Devil, he would tragically lead nearly one-thousand persons in a mass suicide in Jonestown, Guyana.



Vernon Howell, who would later change his name to David Koresh, was the leader of the Branch Davidians who perished in Waco, Texas. As countless others, Howell claimed divinity. To bolster his claim, he would choose a name - “David” - which would have Biblical significance to represent his rulership of the house of David stemming from the promise that God gave to him (King David) that a seed would always sit on the throne (see II Samuel 7:12-16); “Koresh” which is a transliteration of “Cyrus”, the Persian King who scripturally is spoken of as a type of Christ in his role of delivering Israel from Babylonian captivity (see Isa. 44:27, 28; Isa. 45:1-4). Thus Koresh, while claiming to be the “Lamb of God”, believed that he was divine and had been raised by God to lead his people out of modern Babylon. Tragically, seventy-six persons, including Koresh, would perish in the deadly siege.

Currently, there are at least twenty-seven persons around the world who claim to be Jesus.

3. What would be carried to all the world before Jesus comes? _____

Note: “This gospel” is the same as the “Everlasting Gospel” recorded in Rev. 14:6-12. Before Christ returns, every inhabitant on the Earth will have had the opportunity of hearing the true gospel and also of seeing it demonstrated effectively as a true “witness” in the lives of His followers.

4. Following the persecution of the church, what did Jesus say would happen to the sun and moon?

Matt. 24:29 _____

Note: On May 19, 1780, an unexplained midday darkness fell over New England. The length of time the phenomenon lasted varied depended on the location of the observer, but the various accounts indicate that it was at least several hours in duration.

“In the month of May, 1780, there was a terrific dark day in New England, when ‘all faces seemed to gather blackness,’ and the people were filled with fear. There was great distress in the village where Edward Lee lived, ‘men’s hearts failing them for fear’ that the Judgment-day was at hand; and the neighbors all flocked around the holy man,” who spent the gloomy hours in earnest prayer for the distressed multitude.” Tract No. 379, American Tract Society; Life of Edward Lee.

“Candles were lighted in many houses. Birds were silent and disappeared. Fowls retired to roost. It was the general opinion that the day of Judgment was at hand.” President Dwight, in Connecticut Historical Collections.

“The darkness was such as to occasion farmers to leave their work in the field, and retire to their dwellings. Lights became necessary to the transaction of business within doors. The darkness continued through the day.” Gage’s History of Rowley, Mass.

“It was midnight darkness at noonday. . . . Thousands of people who could not account for it from natural causes, were greatly terrified; and indeed, it cast a universal gloom on the earth. The frogs and nighthawks began their notes.” Dr. Adams.

5. After the darkening of the sun and moon, what would happen to the stars?

Matt. 24:29

Note: “On Nov. 13, 1833, just as the Bible predicted, history records that the stars fell from heaven in a meteoric display that has never been equaled. “At the cry, ‘Look out of the window,’ I sprang from a deep sleep, and with wonder saw the east lighted up with the dawn and meteors. . . . I called to my wife to behold; and while robing, she exclaimed, ‘See how the stars fall!’ I replied, ‘That is the wonder;’ and we felt in our hearts that it was a sign of the last days. For truly ‘the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.’ Rev. 6:13. This language of the prophet has always been received as metaphorical. Yesterday it was literally fulfilled. The ancients understood by aster in Greek, and stella in Latin, the smaller lights of heaven. The refinement of modern astronomy has made distinctions between stars of heaven and meteors of heaven. Therefore the idea of the prophet, as it is expressed in the original Greek, was literally fulfilled in the phenomenon of yesterday, so as no man before yesterday had conceived to be possible that it should be fulfilled. The immense size and distance of the planets and fixed stars forbid the idea of their falling unto the earth. Larger bodies cannot fall in myriads unto a smaller body; and most of the planets and all the fixed stars are many times larger than our earth; but these fell toward the earth. And how did they fall? Neither myself nor one of the family heard any report; and were I to hunt through nature for a simile, I could not find one so apt, to illustrate the appearance of the heavens, as that which St. John uses in the prophecy before quoted: ‘The stars of heaven fell unto the earth.’ They were not sheets, or flakes, or drops of fire; but they were what the world understands by falling stars; and one speaking to his fellow, in the midst of the scene, would say, ‘See how the stars fall!’ And he who heard would not stop to correct the astronomy of the speaker, any more than he would reply, ‘The sun does not move,’ to one who should tell him, ‘The sun is rising.’ The stars fell ‘even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.’ Here is the exactness of the prophet. The falling stars did not come as if from several trees shaken, but from one. Those which appeared in the east fell toward the east; those which appeared in the north fell toward the north; those which appeared in the west fell toward the west; and those which appeared in the south (for I went out of my residence into the park), fell toward the south. And they fell not as ripe fruit falls; far from it; but they flew, they were cast, like the unripe, which at first refuses to leave the branch, and when, under a violent pressure, it does break its hold, it flies swiftly, straight off, descending; and in the multitude falling, some cross the track of others, as they are thrown with more or less force, but each one falls on its own side of the tree.” New York Journal of Commerce, Nov. 14, 1833.



“Extensive and magnificent showers of shooting stars have been known to occur at various places in modern

admiration by one class in the community, or with so much dread and alarm by another. . . . During the three times; but the most universal and wonderful which has ever been recorded, is that of the 13th of November, 1833, the whole firmament, over all the United States, being then, for hours, in fiery commotion. No celestial phenomenon has ever occurred in this country since its first settlement, which was viewed with such intense hours of its continuance, the day of judgment was believed to be only waiting for sunrise.” *Our First Century*, p. 329.

6. What marked the opening of the sixth seal?

Rev. 6:12

“The 1755 Lisbon earthquake, also known as the Great Lisbon Earthquake, took place on November 1, 1755, at 9:40 in the morning. It was one of the most destructive and deadly earthquakes in history, killing between 60,000 and 100,000 people. The quake was followed by a tsunami and fire, resulting in the near-total destruction of Lisbon. The earthquake accentuated political tensions in Portugal and profoundly disrupted the country's eighteenth-century colonial ambitions.” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1755_Lisbon_earthquake

“The great area over which this Lisbon earthquake extended is very remarkable. The movement was most violent in Spain, Portugal, and the north of Africa; but nearly the whole of Europe, and even the West Indies, felt the shock on the same day. A seaport called St. Ubes, about twenty miles south of Lisbon, was engulfed. At Algiers and Fez in Africa, the agitation of the earth was equally violent, and at the distance of eight leagues from Morocco, a village, with the inhabitants to the number of about eight or ten thousand persons, together with all their cattle, was swallowed up. Soon after, the earth closed again over them.”

“The shock was felt at sea, on the deck of a ship to the west of Lisbon, and produced very much the same sensation as on dry land. Off St. Lucas, the captain of the ship ‘Nancy’ felt his vessel shaken so violently that he thought she had struck the ground, but, on heaving the lead, found a great depth of water. Captain Clark, from Denia, in latitude 36° 24' N., between nine and ten in the morning, had his ship shaken and strained as if she had struck upon a rock. Another ship, forty leagues west of St. Vincent, experienced so violent a concussion that the men were thrown a foot and a half perpendicularly up from the deck. In Antigua and Barbados, as also in Norway, Sweden, Germany, Holland, Corsica, Switzerland, and Italy, tremors and slight oscillations of the ground were felt.”

“The agitation of lakes, rivers, and springs in Great Britain was remarkable. At Loch Lomond, in Scotland, for example, the water, without the least apparent cause, rose against its banks, and then subsided below its usual level. The greatest perpendicular height of this swell was two feet four inches. It is said that the movement of this earthquake was undulatory, and that it traveled at the rate of twenty miles a minute. A great wave swept over the coast of Spain, and is said to have been sixty feet high at Cadiz. At Tangier, in Africa, it rose and fell eighteen times on the coast; at Funchal, in Madeira, it rose full fifteen feet perpendicular above high-water mark, although the tide, which ebbs and flows there seven feet, was then at half ebb. Besides entering the city and committing great havoc, it overflowed other seaports in the island. At Kinsale, in Ireland, a body of water rushed into the harbor, whirled round several vessels, and poured into the marketplace. “It was before stated that the sea first retired at Lisbon; and this retreat of the ocean from the shore at the commencement of an earthquake, and its subsequent return in a violent wave, is a common occurrence. In order to account for the phenomenon, Mitchell imagines a subsidence at the bottom of the sea from the giving way of the roof of some cavity, in consequence of a vacuum produced by the condensation of steam. Such condensation, he observes, might be the first effect of the introduction of a large body of water into fissures and cavities already filled with steam, before there had been sufficient time for the heat of the

incandescent lava to turn so large a supply of water into steam, which, being soon accomplished, causes a greater explosion.” Library of Choice Literature, Vol. VII, pp. 162, 163.

7. The people living upon Earth at the end of time were compared to what other group?
Matt. 24:37-39_____

Note: According to Gen. 6:1-5, the Antediluvians were allowing their minds to be completely controlled by Satan; in fact, every imagination of their hearts was “only evil continually”. We are in a similar state today. Our world is overflowing with violence, immorality, greed and a host of other sins. Just as God pleaded with the lost race in Noah’s time, so today, he is pleading with all flesh; for He wills that none would perish but that all would come to repentance. Yet, the day will come when the door of the ark will be shut, and then it will be too late to get on board.

- In the light of God’s word, I believe that we are living in the last days of this world’s history.

- In the light of God’s word, I want to surrender my life to Jesus and allow Him to prepare me of his soon appearing!

Next Lesson: Can the Bible Be Trusted?