

## Some Events That Will Occur Before Jesus Returns

Jesus said regarding the second temple in Jerusalem, "Truly I tell you, there will not be one stone left here on top of another that will not be thrown down" (Matthew 24:2).

We all know that happened in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and sent the Jewish population scattering around the world. Then the disciples asked three questions, "Tell us, when will these things be? What is the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3). Jesus did not tell the disciples when these things would begin to happen. He did not tell them exactly what the precise sign of His second coming is going to be and He did not reveal when the end of the age would be. The end of the age is not the end of the world. It is the end of the age of grace that will usher in the one thousand years Messianic reign. Jesus could have spoken the truth directly and said, "These things will happen within the next forty years, the sign of My coming is thus and this age will end in about two thousand years," but Jesus did not say that. He spoke in such a way He left the three questions unanswered and open to interpretation, and people have been guessing ever since. Dreadful tragedies have happened many times because people had no idea when the end of this age will occur. For example, terrible tragedies occurred around the year 1,000 AD when the entire world warmed so much, thousands of people starved, entire civilisations were almost wiped out, rivers dried up, thousands of people believed the end of the world was near and many thousands committed suicide. Many pagan religions tried to appease their evil false gods by sacrificing thousands of children and young adults on altars. The Christians at that time believed the world was near its end because of two verses in Revelation 16:8 & 9; 'The sun was given permission to scorch men with fire. People were scorched with great heat'. What Jesus did tell the disciples, were several different events Christians need to watch out for but He did not give a specific time frame. Like all prophesy, Jesus did not make it clear when these things would happen nor how they would come about. We can see how obscure prophecies can be when we consider the prophecies about Jesus' birth placing Him in three different locations, and that caused great confusion among the Jewish people. Only a few wise Godly people could understand and were ready when Jesus was born. Jesus would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1), called out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:15) and would be called a Nazarene (Matthew 2:23), which means Branch (Isaiah 11:1). Prophecies can only be fully understood after the event has happened.

Why does God speak in such a way He keeps people guessing? Firstly, so people will seek the Scriptures for the answers and secondly, so only the people who are learned in the Scriptures and wise in the Lord will understand. 'The wicked will do wickedly and none of the wicked will understand but those who are wise will understand' (Daniel 12:10). Certainly the Bible is for everyone and the Gospel message is easily understood by anyone who wants it but the depths of knowledge in the Bible can only be grasped by personally searching every part of the Scriptures with humility and reverence for our Holy Author. Only when we search the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit reveals hidden truths. Using the Scriptures, we will look at what has yet to occur before Jesus returns.

**False messiahs and false prophets.** Jesus warned them, "Be careful no one leads you astray. Many will come in My name saying, 'I am the Messiah,' and will lead many astray ... Many false prophets will arise and will lead many astray ... If anyone tells you, 'Behold, here is the messiah,' or, 'He is there,' do not believe it. There will arise false messiahs, false prophets and they will show great signs and wonders to lead astray if possible, even the Christians. Behold, I have warned you beforehand. If they tell you, 'Behold, he is in the desert,' do not go out, or 'Behold, he is in a secret room,' do not believe it" (Matthew 24:4 & 5, 11, 23 to 26). Being led astray is being lured away from the Sovereign God of the Jewish people and our Creator. He is the One and only God of the universe and there is no other (Isaiah 45:18). People have been led astray ever since the early church began and is still happening in our time. There are many false prophets, false messiahs and false religions that have already led millions astray – lured them away from the God of our Salvation. Sadly, just as Jesus warned, many Christians have been caught up in false religions and have been led astray. This warning from Jesus was as relevant 2,000 years ago as it is now.

**There will be warfare.** Jesus said, 'You will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not troubled for all this must happen but the end is not yet. Nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines, plagues and earthquakes in various places' (Matthew 24:6 & 7). There have been wars somewhere around the world, on and off, virtually since Noah landed his ark but there has been more violent warfare continually around the globe since 1914. The ancient warriors used spears or knives and maybe a couple of hundred men might be killed. In modern wars they drop bombs, killing or maiming millions of men, women and young children, causing unimaginable suffering. The extreme violence of modern warfare is one sign Jesus is coming soon – but the end is not yet.

**There will be persecution of both Jewish people and Christians. Sin and lawlessness will increase. Christians will fall away from the faith and Christian love will grow cold. A new 'watered down'**

**Gospel will be preached keeping many from the saving knowledge of Jesus.** Jesus warned, 'They will deliver you up to oppression and will kill you. You will be hated by all of the nations for My name's sake' (Matthew 24:9). This warning from Jesus was as relevant 2,000 years ago as it is now. After the temple was destroyed, terrible persecution of Jews and Christians swept the entire Roman Empire. Today, Jewish people are once again suffering from a new wave of evil anti-Semitism that is sweeping the modern world. This verse includes the persecution of Christians in some countries, which will get worse. The consequences of this level of persecution will cause many people to 'stumble', that is to give up on following Jesus. Some weaker Christians will turn on more dedicated Christians and they will begin to hate one another. Jesus said, "Many (believers) will stumble and will betray one another and will hate one another. Because iniquity (extreme sin) will be multiplied, the love of many Christians will grow cold" (Matthew 24:10 to 12). 'The Holy Spirit strongly warns, in later times (that is in our day) some Christians will fall away from the faith, paying attention to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons' (1 Timothy 4:1). 'The mystery of lawlessness is already here (that was 2,000 years ago). There is One (the Holy Spirit) Who restrains for now until He is taken out of the way then the lawless one (the devil – the cause of sin and lawlessness) will be revealed, whom the Lord will kill with the breath of His mouth and destroy by the manifestation of His coming' (2 Thessalonians 2:7 & 8). Most people do not believe the devil actually exists. This verse strongly implies, when Jesus returns, the devil will be revealed to the world's population before being destroyed by the spoken Word of Jesus, then with him out of the way, the terrible lawlessness happening around the world will cease. Before Jesus comes there will be a massive falling away from faith in God, which is happening now. We are in an age of extreme sin, violence, hate crimes, drunkenness and promiscuity. The pressure of those sins are causing weaker Christians to 'water down' their faith and commitment to God to the point where they accept sin as being normal. There are currently a great number of people who have lost interest in church and in serving God. For many who still attend church, there is a great falling away of sound truth, doctrine, morals and ethics. The truth about the blood and cross of Jesus, obedience to God, denying oneself and other Godly principles are being replaced with materialism and selfish doctrine. 'You are so quickly deserting Jesus Who called you in the grace of Himself, to believe a different "Gospel" but there is not another Gospel. There are some who trouble you and want to pervert the Gospel of Jesus. If we, or an angel from heaven should preach to you any "Gospel" other than what we preached to you, let him be cursed. I say again, if anyone preaches to you any "Gospel" other than what you received, let him be cursed' (Galatians 1:6 to 9).

**Eventually, the true Gospel of Jesus will be preached throughout the world.** That does not mean every person in the world will accept the true Gospel but it does mean every person will hear the Gospel message. Jesus said, "This Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world for a testimony to all the nations, then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). The end will not come until the true, powerful Gospel of the blood and cross of Jesus and of the Kingdom of God is preached worldwide. Jesus gave us a very stern and clear Gospel. The Gospel of Jesus was not the weak, watered down Gospel preached in many churches today. It was a Gospel of repentance, power, endurance, healing the sick, casting out demons, loving other people, dealing with sin, denying oneself, obedience to God no matter what He asks us to do and living a life so holy, people notice. It was the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Jesus is our King. A lot of Christians today are so materialistic they waste their wealth on self-indulgence and will not help the poor and needy – completely opposite to what the Bible teaches. Some indulge in sin and greed instead of getting out there and teaching what Jesus taught – preaching what Jesus preached – behaving as Jesus behaved. Christians need to get out into the world, leave behind their worldly lives and preach the Gospel of the Kingdom as Jesus commanded and make disciples of people so they can help increase the Kingdom. Until 'That Gospel of the Kingdom' the Gospel Jesus and the apostles preached is taught worldwide, the suffering on this earth will not come to an end.

**Spiritually dead people will gather together.** Jesus said, "Wherever the carcass is, that is where vultures gather together" (Matthew 24:28). Wherever spiritually dead people are, demons like vultures will gather. One example of demonically inspired spiritually dead people gathering together is a mosque where hatred is taught then some misled and misguided moslems go out and kill innocent people. We can easily discern what god the moslems worship. They do not worship our Creator God. They worship the devil. The difference is stark. The Lord God of the Jewish people wants to restore Israel and the Jewish people to their former glory and He wants to bring Gentiles into the Kingdom of God. The god of moslems wants to destroy the Jewish people, Christians and anyone they consider to be 'infidels'. That is all happening in our day.

**Christians must endure to the end.** Jesus said, "Those who endure to the end, the same will be saved" (Matthew 24:13). 'Only by your endurance will you win your (eternal) lives' (Luke 21:19). Jesus gave us a stern warning here. If people do give up and stop following Him, they will not be saved; they will lose their salvation. Only those people who endure all that suffering to the end will be saved. 'To the end' could mean enduring right to the end of their lives, or to the end of that period of persecution, or literally until the end of this age when Jesus returns. This verse should end all the false 'rapture' teaching about a pre-tribulation or mid-tribulation 'rapture'. Jesus says clearly, only those who endure right to the end will be saved. He did not

say they would be 'raptured' off. The following verses will happen on the LAST DAY of this age. There is NO pre-tribulation 'rapture' nor is there a mid-tribulation 'rapture'. Jesus said, "Immediately AFTER the great oppression (tribulation) of those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from the sky and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, then the SIGN of the Son of Man (Jesus) will appear in the sky. Then all the tribes of the earth will mourn and then they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:29 & 30). Notice the two stages. Firstly, the SIGN of Jesus will appear before He actually comes. We do not know how much time will lapse between the sign of His coming and His actual appearance. We do not know for sure exactly what the 'sign' is. We can only assume it is perhaps blood coloured moons by what Jesus said about watching for signs in the skies. 'There will be terrors and great signs from heaven' (Luke 21:11). What we do know is this, just as God prepared Israel and had most Jewish people living in Israel before Jesus was born and then forerunner John the Baptist was made ready to announce Jesus' ministry before He came the first time, so again, Israel has to be ready and Jesus' many Christian followers have to be prepared for His second coming before He appears. We must prepare ourselves (Revelation 19:7). There are still a few million Jewish people around the world who have to be in Israel before Jesus comes again. The infrastructure in Israel has to be laid down to prepare the land and homes for the millions who have yet to move there. Jesus is going to return to Israel – to Jerusalem. He is not going to return to any other nation so Jewish people have to be in their homeland before He comes, so Israel has to be fully restored before Jesus returns. 'God will send Jesus, Who was ordained for you before (time), Whom heaven must receive until the time of restoration of all things, which God spoke long ago by the mouth of His holy prophets' (Acts 3:20 & 21).

When Jesus was telling His disciples what to watch for, He used every-day events to paint a verbal picture of what we in our day are to watch for. 'Learn this parable from the fig tree. When it sends forth its leaves, you know summer is near. When you see all these things happening, know the end is near ... No one knows of that day and hour, not even the angels of heaven but my Father only. As the evil days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. In those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage up until the day Noah entered into the ark and they did not understand until the flood came and washed them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man' (Matthew 24:32 to 39).

There are more frightening, even terrifying, appalling things that have not yet occurred and Scripturally, Jesus cannot return until these prophecies have been fulfilled. The Bible reveals to us what will occur before Jesus appears. Blood coloured moons and the darkening of the sun; 'The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes' (Joel 2:31). 'The Great Day (Judgement Day) of God is near. It is near and hurries greatly the voice of the Day of the Lord. The mighty man will cry bitterly. That Day is a Day of wrath, a Day of distress and anguish, a Day of trouble and ruin, a Day of darkness and gloom, a Day of clouds and blackness, a Day of the trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high battlements. I will bring distress on mankind so they will walk like blind men because they have sinned against God and their blood will be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. Their silver and their gold will not be able to deliver them in the day of God's wrath, but the whole world will be devoured by the fire of His rage, for He will make an end, yes, a terrible end of all those who dwell on the earth' (Zephaniah 1:14 to 18). That has not happened yet.

The earth has not yet experienced the earthquake and volcanic activity like the one described here where the sun is covered with ash cloud and two massive meteors fall to earth destroying a third of the earth and something like a huge comet hits the sun causing a third of the sun to be destroyed. 'There was a great earthquake. The sun became black and the whole moon became as blood. The stars of the sky fell to the earth like a fig tree dropping its unripe figs when it is shaken by a great wind. The sky was removed like a scroll when it is rolled up. Every mountain and island were moved out of their places' (Revelation 6:12 to 14). 'There followed hail and fire mixed with blood and they were thrown to the earth. One third of the earth was burnt up, one third of the trees were burnt up and all green grass was burnt up ... Something like a great burning mountain was thrown into the sea. One third of the sea became blood and one third of the living creatures in the sea died. One third of the ships were destroyed ... A great star fell from the sky burning like a torch. It fell on one third of the rivers and on the springs of the waters. One third of the waters became poisonous. Many people died from the waters because they were poisoned ... One third of the sun was struck, one third of the moon and one third of the stars so one third of them were darkened and the day would not shine for one third of it, and the night in the same way' (Revelation 8:7 to 12). This has not happened yet but it gets worse ...

'Another star from the sky fell to earth. A holy angel opened the pit of the abyss and smoke went up out of the pit like the smoke from a burning furnace (or volcano). The sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke from the pit. Out of the smoke came forth 'locusts' (evil beings) on the earth and power was given to them as the scorpions of the earth have power (to cause pain and kill). The 'locusts' were told they could not hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree but only those people who do not have

God's seal on their foreheads. (The evil beings cannot hurt Christians.) The 'locusts' were given power not to kill people, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a person. In those days people will seek death but will not find it. They will desire to die but death will flee from them. The shape of the 'locusts' were like horses prepared for war. On their heads were something like golden crowns and their faces were like people's faces. They had long hair and their teeth were like those of lions. They had breastplates like iron. The sound of their wings (engines) was like the sound of chariots or of many horses rushing to war. They have tails like those of scorpions with stings. In their tails they have power to harm people for five months. (These verses describe some kind of war machine, possibly an armoured helicopter.) They have over them as their king, the angel of the abyss (the devil)' (Revelation 9:1 to 12). This has not happened yet but there is worse to come ...

A war takes place with soldiers numbering 200,000,000 riding a different type of war machine, possibly a modern tank. This war targets false religions that still make and worship idols such as in Eastern religions. Any person who has an idol in their home is in danger of coming under the following judgement by God. God allows this war to happen directly because of idolatry. 'The number of the armies of the 'horsemen' was two hundred million ... Those who sat on the 'horses' had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue and sulphur yellow and they had heads like lions. Out of their mouths proceed fire, smoke and sulphur. By these three 'plagues', one third of mankind were killed, by the fire, the smoke and the sulphur, which proceeded out of their mouths. The power of the 'horses' is in their mouths and in their tails. Their tails are like serpents and have heads, and with them they harm. The rest of mankind who were not killed with these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so they would not worship demons, the idols of gold, of silver, of brass, of stone and of wood which cannot see, nor hear, nor walk. They did not repent of their murders, of their sorceries, of their sexual immorality nor of their thefts' (Revelation 9:16 to 21). This judgement has not happened yet.

There is something else that has to happen before Jesus comes back. It is a terrible evil coming to the earth – the mark of a huge evil man the Bible calls, 'the Beast' who is given evil powers by the devil. 'A beast came up out of the sea with ten horns (indicating ten areas of authority) and seven heads (indicating seven rulers). On his horns were ten crowns and on his heads, blasphemous names. The beast was like a leopard. His feet were like those of a bear and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon (the devil) gave him his power, his throne and great authority ... the whole world marvelled at the beast' (Revelation 13:1 to 3). 'All (non-Christians) who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the Book of Life of the Lamb Who was slain. If anyone has an ear, let them hear ... Here is needed the endurance and the faith of the Christians. Another beast came up out of the earth. He had two horns like a ram and he spoke like a dragon. He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. The second beast makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast ... He performs great signs, even making fire come down out of the sky to the earth in the sight of people. He deceives My own people (Jews and Christians) who dwell on the earth because of the signs he was granted to do in front of the second beast, saying to those who dwell on the earth, they should make an image of the first beast ... It was granted to the second beast to give breath to the image of the first beast, so the image of the first beast should speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. The second beast causes all people, the small and the great, the rich and the poor, the free and the slave to be given marks on their right hands or on their foreheads so no one would be able to buy or to sell, unless they have that mark, the name of the first beast or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Those who have understanding, let them calculate the number of the first beast, for it is the number of a MAN. His number is six hundred and sixty-six' (Revelation 13:8 to 18). The Bible does not tell us why people marvelled at the 'beast' but it could be because of his evil powers. His description – big feet like a bear and a big mouth like a lion reveals he could be a very large man. The 'beasts' could be two evil governments led by evil men but the Scriptures make it clear, the actual mark of the beast is the number of a MAN. We do not have the mark of the beast yet nor are we even close to this particular scenario.

Another judgement comes about because people worship the image of the beast. 'A harmful and evil sore broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image ... The sea became putrid blood as of a dead man. Every living thing in the sea died. Rivers and springs of water became like blood ... The sun was given permission to scorch men with fire. People were scorched with great heat and people blasphemed the name of God Who has the power over these plagues. People did not repent and give God glory. The throne of the beast and his kingdom was darkened. People gnawed their tongues because of their pain and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores. They did not repent of their evil works. The Euphrates River water was dried up so the way would be made ready for the kings that come from the sunrise (East). Out of the mouth of the dragon (the devil), out of the mouth of the beast (the evil man) and out of the mouth of the false prophet, came three unclean spirits, something like frogs. They are spirits of demons performing signs, which go forth to the kings of the whole inhabited earth, to gather them together for the war (of Armageddon) of that great day of God, the Almighty'

(Revelation 16:2 to 4; 8 to 14). Notice in verse 8, the sun was able to produce unusual heat. We are in a time of altered worldwide weather patterns but the rest of these prophecies have not happened yet.

Before Jesus comes back, we will have the Battle of Armageddon in Israel. 'The beast gathered people together into the place which is called in Hebrew, Megiddo ... There were numerous flashes of lightning, strange noises, thunder and there was a great earthquake such as was not since there were men on the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty, Jerusalem, the great city was divided into three parts and the cities of the nations fell (financially). Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God to give to her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. Every island fled away and the mountains were not found. Great hailstones about the weight of a talent (about 30 kilograms) came down out of the sky on people. People blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, for this plague is exceedingly severe' (Revelation 16:16 to 21). This has not happened yet.

Before Jesus comes back, entire nations will repent and turn to God. 'Ethiopia will hurry to stretch out her hands to God' (Psalm 68:31). Syria is one country mentioned in the Bible that will repent before Jesus returns, and that repentance will begin with the destruction of Damascus and that is happening right now in our day. 'The burden of Damascus. The Lord says, "Behold, Damascus will cease to be a city. It will be a ruinous heap. The cities of Aroer (around Damascus) are forsaken. They will be for wild sheep, which will be left undisturbed and unafraid. The fortress will cease from Ephraim (fortification from Israel will cease to be needed) and from the kingdom from Damascus and the remnant of Syria. They will be as the glory of the children of Israel ... In that day (in our day), people will look to their Maker and their eyes will have respect for the Holy One of Israel'" (Isaiah 17:1 to 7).

Egypt is another nation that will repent and turn to God, becoming one with Israel. This has not happened yet. 'In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt and a pillar to God at its border. It will be for a sign and for a witness to the Lord God of Heavenly Armies in the land of Egypt for they will cry to God because of oppressors and He will send them a Saviour and a Defender to deliver them. God will be known to Egypt and the Egyptians will know God in that day. Yes, they will worship with sacrifice and offering and will vow a vow to God and will perform it. God will (first) strike Egypt (Perhaps the Arab Spring?), striking and healing. They will return to God. They will entreat Him and He will heal them. In that day there will be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria and the Assyrian will come to Egypt and the Egyptian to Assyria. The Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. In that day, Israel will be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth because the Lord of Heavenly Armies has blessed them saying, "Blessed be Egypt My people, Assyria the work of My hands and Israel My inheritance" (Isaiah 19:19 to 25). The area once called Assyria was from what is now Turkey, south to the Persian Gulf and includes Turkey, Armenia, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Jordan and Kuwait.

As we can see by reading these verses in the Bible, there is a lot that has to yet happen before Jesus returns. If people think He could come back 'any day' they need to study the Scriptures to see why Jesus cannot come just yet. Jesus is delaying His return to give people more time to repent. His timing is perfect. 'Understand this first, in the last days (in our day) mockers will come walking after their own selfish desires saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? ... All things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." ... The Lord is not slow concerning His promise as some consider slowness but He is patient with us, not wishing for anyone to perish but desiring all people should come to repentance' (2 Peter 3:3, 4 & 9). When Jesus does finally arrive, His arrival will be as sudden as a flash of lightning. Jesus said, "As the lightning flashes from the east and is seen in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man ... Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord has set over His household, to give them their food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord finds doing so when He comes. Truly I tell you, He will set the faithful servant over all that He has" (Matthew 24:27; 45 to 47).

In summary; Scripturally, all these things must happen before Jesus comes again; the great falling away from the faith in God and the truth of the Bible, which is happening right now. Increasing lawlessness and sin, which is happening right now. Natural love is growing cold – some women strive to save whales but murder their own unborn babies by abortion, which is happening right now. Persecution will increase of both Jewish people and Christians, which is happening right now. Israel had to become an independent nation which has already happened, and Jewish people are currently returning to Israel by the thousands.

We all must be ready for the day Jesus returns. He will come very suddenly. 'Watch carefully, for you do not know in what hour your Lord will come ... Therefore be ready, for in an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come' (Matthew 24:42 & 44).

Amen and God bless you.

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