



DISCOVER

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

10

How Soon Will
Jesus Return?



RAJ AND KURT drove 90 miles south from Delhi, India, to view the famous Taj Mahal on the outskirts of Agra. At last it appeared, looking like a white cloud on the horizon—the beautiful dream of Shah Jahan: a memorial to his beloved wife, the beautiful Mumtaz Mahal, who died in childbirth. This tribute, anchored forever in white marble, is truly exquisite, even to the casual observer. Its beauty is reminiscent of a story found in the Bible—the story of another beautiful building.

Jesus and His disciples were walking out of the temple in Jerusalem when the disciples, in admiration, commented on its beauty. They were shocked to hear Jesus say that the temple would be demolished, the city destroyed, and its people scattered.

“Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Matthew 24:2).

Jesus’ prediction came true in AD 70 when the Roman armies, led by Vespasian and his son Titus, surrounded Jerusalem and captured it after a terrible five-month siege. The temple was burned to the ground, contrary to Titus’ orders. Flavius Josephus, in his book *The Jewish War*, described how Roman soldiers, carrying torches into the temple, caused the dry wood of the building to light up like kindling. Josephus wrote:

“The city and the temple were then leveled to the ground by the command of Caesar. Only the highest towers and part of the western wall remained to show all mankind how the Romans overpowered such a strong fortress.”

The disciples, troubled by Jesus’ words, came to Him privately and asked:

“Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3).

This question has gripped Christians down through the ages: When will Jesus return to this earth? It seems like we’ve waited so long, but Jesus doesn’t want us to lack hope as we wait for His coming.

He answered the disciples’ questions, and in doing so He answers our questions as well. In Matthew 24 and Luke 21, Jesus gave several “signs,” or evidences, by which we can know when His coming is near. Other Bible prophecies help fill in the picture, detailing world conditions just before Jesus returns. Let’s look at the signs Jesus gave us to show when His coming is near.

1 | Signs That Christ Will Return in Our Day

The signs Jesus gave are being fulfilled before our very eyes; they indicate that His return to earth is almost here!

SIGN #1 Signs in the Religious World

“Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many” (Matthew 24:4, 5).

Jesus was telling the disciples that false prophets would arise, and that they would tell the Jewish people that their city and temple would not be destroyed, as He had predicted. This warning was also given to those of us living in the last days of earth’s history.

False, deceptive teachings abound today. Many claim to speak for Jesus, but we can’t always trust what they say. That is why we need to study the Bible for ourselves and understand the truth of God’s Word—as found in the Bible. In fact, Jesus warns us that we need to be doubly aware of deception down here at the end of earth’s history:

“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe it” (Matthew 24:23-26).

Jesus explains very clearly that false teachers of the Scriptures will change His words and perform miracles to prove they are representatives of God. Some will even say, “Jesus has come and is

speaking and performing miracles in town or in a retreat center outside of the city.”

When this happens, Jesus says that you should not listen to them. “It is not Me,” He warns, “because when I return to the earth, everyone will know it! In fact, My return to the earth will be like lightning flashing across the sky; everyone will see it” (see Matthew 24:27).

Over the years, numerous false prophets have arisen. In the 1960s, Charles Manson told his small group of followers that he was Christ. Jim Jones, in Georgetown, Guyana, convinced his followers that he spoke for Jesus and that they should drink a cyanide-laced flavored drink.

Hundreds died, as shown in graphic newspaper and television photos. There was also David Koresh. He and many of his followers tragically lost their lives in the destruction of their compound in Waco, Texas.



In recent years, we’ve seen Apollo Quiboloy, founder and leader of the Philippines-based

“Kingdom of Jesus Christ, The Name Above Every Name, Inc.” and Alan John (A. J.) Miller, leader of the Divine Truth movement headquartered in Australia. Quiboloy claims to be the “appointed Son of God.” He has an estimated 6 million followers worldwide. Miller is a former computer systems engineer who says that he is Jesus of Nazareth “through incarnation.” However, according to Scripture, when Jesus returns to this earth, He will come in the clouds of heaven and every eye will see Him (Revelation 1:7).

In addition to individuals pretending to be Jesus, false teachings can appear in other ways. Superstition, spiritualism, and

the occult continue to flourish, although many have long predicted that reason and the scientific method would make belief in these things unbelievable, if not obsolete.

In the 21st century, people still cling to their horoscopes and tarot cards. Educated, scientific, progressive human beings are as superstitious as ever. Spiritualism hasn't shriveled away; it's advertising in broad daylight. Paganism is simply an alternative lifestyle. Witches and warlocks appear on talk shows. New Age practitioners and others are everywhere, selling magical crystals and channeling departed spirits. Counterfeit signs and wonders are booming. All this makes it even more clear that history is moving toward a climax. Just as Jesus predicted, we are living in the time of "the coming of the Son of Man" (Matthew 24:27).

How can we identify truth amid such confusion? God answers that question in these words:

"To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

By studying God's Word through these *Discover Bible Guides*, you are following the counsel of Jesus as you learn about Him.

SIGN #2 Peace Plans and War Preparations

Jesus said of the last days just before His coming:

"You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (Matthew 24:6, 7).

Before the 20th century, war had never been waged on a truly worldwide scale; but in that century, nearly every significant nation on earth joined in two great global conflicts. A study

conducted by Cornell University in the early 2000s, titled *Deaths from Wars and Conflicts in the 20th Century*, estimates that 231 million people died in these conflicts. It's a number so big that it's hard to comprehend!

Since World War II, we've lived with the knowledge that one push of a button could turn our world into a heap of radioactive rubble. No wonder the Bible speaks of God destroying "those who destroy the earth" (Revelation 11:18).

We live in a strange world. Everyone agrees that we should give peace a chance, yet we keep engaging in armed conflicts. Old hostilities flare into open conflict. Terrorism has placed the world on what appears to be a permanent war footing. The prophets Micah and Joel predicted that at the very time the nations are talking about their desire for peace (Micah 4:1-3), distrust for their neighbors compels them to prepare for war (Joel 3:9-13).

Long ago, the Bible pictured this current state of perpetual warfare and declared that permanent peace will reign on earth only when Jesus returns.



SIGN #3 World Calamities

How do natural disasters fit into last-day events?

“There will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven. . . . When you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near” (Luke 21:11, 31).

Skeptics say, “So what? There have always been famines and earthquakes.” That’s true, but is the situation getting better or

worse? Is the physical earth becoming more livable or wearing out? Isn't it amazing to think that a world that has invented self driving cars, rockets, space stations, and the Internet still can't feed all of its people? Why do we still keep seeing those images of starving kids with distended bellies when so many countries grow more food than they consume?

Jesus knew that famines would persist and that selfish human nature, corrupt governments, and armed conflicts would grow

worse toward the end of time.

These factors are what have made recent famines so devastating.

What about earthquakes?

Data from the *World Almanac* illustrates a striking increase in earthquakes since the 18th century. It's clear that earthquakes are claiming more and more lives as earthquake zones

become more densely populated. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, hundreds of thousands of people have died in earthquakes around the world since the year 2000. Just as Jesus predicted, earthquake activity is becoming more problematic as we get closer to His return.



SIGN #4 Economic and Civil Unrest

The Bible predicts that the days just before Jesus returns will be marked by economic unrest and unbridled greed.

“In the last days perilous times will come: for men will be . . . lovers of money” (2 Timothy 3:1, 2).

The Bible does not condemn wealth. In fact, God's blessings include material well-being as well as spiritual blessings; but

the Bible does point out the dangers associated with wealth (Matthew 19:23).

Money can easily turn our hearts from God. That's why the Bible says, "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). That's why Jesus urges us, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth. . . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:19, 20).

As long as money is gained honestly and used properly, wealth can be a great force for good. The problem arises when a person becomes greedy or relies on his riches rather than on God. Or a person exploits others in order to increase his or her own wealth. That's what the Bible says will be happening in the last days before Jesus comes.

"Come now, you rich [people], weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you. . . . You have heaped up treasure in the last days" (James 5:1-3).

Around the world today, we see economic unrest increasing as a few people amass huge amounts of wealth while everyone else struggles to stay afloat financially. This economic turmoil often leads to civil unrest and rising tensions between the "haves" and the "have-nots." All this, the Bible tells us, is another sign that "the coming of the Lord is at hand" (James 5:8).

SIGN #5 Anguish! Terror! Perplexity!

Almost 2,000 years ago, Jesus gave a prophetic description of contemporary life that sounds as if it could have been taken from the evening news:

"There will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those

things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near” (Luke 21:25-28).

No more accurate description of today’s world could be penned than “men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth.” A generation exists today that has grown up entirely in the shadow of stockpiled weapons capable of destroying the entire planet. Today’s apprehensions make yesterday’s seem pretty small. What if some terrorist acquires a nuclear warhead?

Thankfully, Jesus gives us a basis for hope. The current crisis of global insecurity—“distress” and “perplexity”—only reinforces the truth that Christ’s coming really is drawing near.

People today often moan in frustration, “Look what the world has come to!” However, the student of Bible prophecy can exclaim with a hopeful voice, “Look WHO is coming to our world!”

What specific signs did Jesus say would take place to usher in the last days before His coming?

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken” (Matthew 24:29).

Revelation describes the events like this:

“There was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind” (Revelation 6:12, 13).

These predictions were fulfilled in the late 18th and early 19th centuries—just when there was a renewed focus among Bible students around the world on the prophecies regarding the Second Coming of Jesus. One of the most deadly earthquakes ever recorded occurred on November 1, 1755, in Lisbon, Portugal. It destroyed 85 percent of the buildings in Lisbon and killed as much as 20 percent of the city’s population. Shockwaves from the earthquake were felt throughout Europe.

On May 19, 1780, an unprecedented darkening of the daytime sky was observed across the northeastern United States and portions of Canada. This darkness was so complete that people had to light candles at noon and chickens went to their roosts to sleep. That night, when the moon rose, contemporary accounts recorded that it “had the appearance of blood.”

A few decades later, on November 13, 1833, “the stars of heaven fell” in one of the largest and most impressive meteor showers ever known. For a period of over nine hours, more than 100,000 meteors fell per hour.

These events are part of Bible prophecy, indicating that the world has moved into the “time of the end,” the period of earth’s history that will usher in Jesus’ return.



SIGN #6 Moral Decay

Why does the moral fiber of society seem to be unraveling?

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 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. . . . evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:1-5, 13).

Could anyone think of a more accurate description of our world? The stories and images that fill our social media feeds make this verse come to life on a daily basis. We see photos of people who have made careers out of arrogant materialism, stories of heartbreaking child abuse, live streams of the horrific results of terror attacks, and videos of people who try to make self-indulgence and deviant behavior appear healthy and normal. Our obsession with uninhibited freedom has indeed brought “perilous times” in the last days. All these things form a gallery of pictures loudly proclaiming that Jesus’ coming is very near.

SIGN #7 The Gospel to All the World

Jesus predicted that just before His coming, the gospel would reach the whole world:

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).

We’ve had great Christian missionary movements throughout history, but the spread of the gospel in recent times is unprecedented. Doors that had been closed to the gospel are opening around the world. The gospel message is flourishing as never before—even in areas of the world such as Asia, where, historically, the Christian faith has had a limited impact. It’s now possible, using current technology, to share a Christian message with almost

every person in every nation on earth. We are living in the very day Jesus spoke of when He declared: “This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world . . . and then the end will come.”

2 | How Soon Will Jesus Come?

Our generation has witnessed and is witnessing these great signposts of prophecy fulfilled before our very eyes. After describing the events that were to characterize the time just preceding His Second Coming, Jesus concluded His remarks by saying:

“Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place” (Matthew 24:34).

The conclusion is obvious—these signposts of prophecy directly point to Jesus’ return to earth the second time. It won’t be long until Jesus will come to sweep away sin and suffering and establish His everlasting kingdom.

What did Jesus say about the exact time of His coming?

“Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only” (Matthew 24:36).

What important caution has Christ given to us?

“Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matthew 24:44).

3 | Jesus, the World’s Only Hope

People today—leaders in all areas of society and government—are aware that our world is heading toward a crisis. Some are

desperately looking for a way to prevent it, but all our technological advances, economic theories, and international organizations are overwhelmed by global problems. Voices of reason and goodwill are drowned out by the fierce shouts of ethnic rivalry, political factions, and sectarian zealots. Above all this clamor, however, Jesus declares, “I am the way!” (John 14:6); He promises, “I will come again” (John 14:3).

Christ is the last, best hope for our world, because only He can deal with the very thing that is destroying it—sin. Jesus died on Calvary to defeat sin and deliver everyone who responds to His offer of salvation.

“He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).

By sacrificing Himself, our Savior made a way to escape this crumbling world. Someday soon, He will cure all of the world’s ills and destroy sin. And He offers, right now, to erase the guilt of sin from *your* life. You don’t have to wait for the Second Coming to find release from guilt, anxiety, and destructive behavior. Jesus is willing to give you His peace at this very moment.

Janice attended church one week on a sudden impulse. Her life hadn’t been going very well lately. She had been looking for peace and happiness in the wrong places. She felt she had hit rock bottom with nowhere to turn. That morning in church, Janice felt strangely moved as the preacher talked about Jesus—His love, and the salvation He offers. She saw that Jesus was the answer to the problems in her life.

Later, while talking with the pastor, Janice poured out the story of her broken, bitter life. As she heard the story of a soon-coming Savior, all the pieces began to fit into place. This

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WordSearch

If you want to go deeper into this study topic, complete this section.

1. What will Satan be doing in the last days as Jesus' coming draws near? (1 Peter 5:8)

2. What should Christians be doing as they see the signs of Jesus' soon return? (Mark 13:32-37)

3. How would you answer someone who says that because we can't know the day or hour Jesus will return, we have no way of knowing if His coming is near? (Matthew 24:32, 33)

4. What objection do skeptics raise to the idea that Jesus is coming soon? How does the Apostle Peter answer their objection? (2 Peter 3:3-7)

5. What does the Apostle Paul say about the nearness of Jesus' coming? (Romans 13:11-14)



made sense. Jesus was speaking to her heart, and she decided to respond. She invited Jesus Christ to come into her life as her Savior and Lord; she fastened her hope on His soon return, and Jesus transformed her life!

This same Jesus graciously offers to do the same for you. He offers you salvation, complete pardon for your sins, and peace of mind. He is the answer to any problem you are facing in your life, and He is coming back to earth again soon to take you home with Him.

My Decision

- I believe that Jesus is coming soon. I want to be ready every day to meet Him and to live with Him in heaven.
- Please pray for me as I continue to study the Bible and God's will for my life.

My Prayer

Dear Father in heaven, thank You for the hope that Jesus will come again very soon. The great longing of my heart is to live for You and to be ready to meet Jesus when He comes. I need Your guidance in my daily life. I pray this in the name of Jesus, Amen.



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