

The Second Coming of Jesus

By Pastor Doug Baker, D.Min.

© Copyright 2020 by Doug Baker
All Rights Reserved

Introduction

One of the most important teachings of the Christian Church is the Second Coming of Jesus. Jesus' first coming occurred at His incarnation and resulted in His life, death, and resurrection. Jesus promised that He would return, which is the reason for it being called the Second Coming. Approximately one out of every 25 verses in the New Testament refers to this event. Therefore, it must be a very important topic. There are many differing interpretations of this event, but we will have to cover the most important variation in a later paper. In this paper, we will examine the following aspects of this doctrine: (1) the promise of His return; (2) how Jesus will return; (3) what happens when He returns; and (4) when Jesus will return, that is, the signs of His soon return.

The Promise of Jesus' Return

In John 14:1-3 Jesus promised His apostles that He would return one day:

Let not your heart be troubled; you 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 to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also (John 14:1-3).

Jesus is going to return to take His followers home to heaven to be with Him someday. The Bible calls this Second Coming of Jesus *the blessed hope* (Titus 2:13).

The promise of Jesus' Second Coming is made certain by the events associated with Calvary. Notice how Hebrews 9:26 and 28 connects the two comings of Christ so that His Second Coming is related to, although different from, His death associated with His First Coming:

He [Christ] has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself....To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

How Jesus Will Return

Knowing *how* Jesus will return could be the difference between being saved and being lost. It is not an academic matter because we are warned in Scripture that there will be false christs who will

attempt to deceive the followers of Jesus (Matthew 24:24). To be forewarned is to be forearmed. Notice these warnings from Jesus Himself:

For many will come in My name, saying ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many (Matthew 24:5).

Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as 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; cf. Mark 13:5-6, 21-23, Luke 17:22-23, and Luke 21:8).

The apostle Paul seems to predict one all-out sensational counterfeit Second Coming by the final, ultimate Antichrist himself. After writing about the Second Coming of Jesus in II Thessalonians 2, which he described using the Greek word *parousia* (*coming* in vv. 1 and 8), often used to describe His return, Paul then referred to the *parousia* of the *lawless one* as being *with all power, signs, and lying wonders*. Read the entire text of verse 9:

The coming [*parousia*] of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders (II Thessalonians 2:9).

Although some scholars believe that this lawless one is not Satan because his coming is described as *according to the working of Satan*, the fact that it is Satan’s Method of Operation (MO) can be viewed as evidence that he is indeed the one who will counterfeit the Second Coming. After all, who else would Satan allow to play that climactic counterfeit role? In any case, the text seems to teach that there will be one final spectacular counterfeit Second Coming shortly before the *real* Christ returns.

If we follow a false christ, that is the same as following Satan because he is the mastermind of all spiritual deception. Then when the *real* Jesus returns, it will be too late to change our allegiance.

Fortunately, the Bible is quite clear in its teaching about the manner of Jesus’ return. Thus, no one needs to be deceived. Look at what the Bible says about how He will return:

- *Jesus’ Return Will be Literal and Personal*

One of the modern deceptions in some parts of Christianity is the teaching that Jesus’ return will be spiritual rather than literal in nature. He will come in a *spiritual* way through His followers and thus change the world. But as Jesus returned to heaven after His resurrection (called the

ascension), two angels told His apostles that *This same Jesus...will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven* (Acts 1:11). Therefore, Jesus' return will be personal (*This same Jesus*) and literal—that is, Jesus will come down from heaven in the sky, just the reverse of His apostles watching Him ascend back to heaven in the sky.

Luke 24:36-43 reveals that the resurrected Jesus was recognizable to His disciples, could touch and be touched, and could eat normal food. Thus, the same Jesus who ascended to heaven will return—the same literal and personal Jesus whom the disciples had known for 3 ½ years. This literal and personal return of Jesus contradicts the liberal notion that the Second Coming of Jesus is the coming of Jesus into the hearts of individual believers, a type of spiritual coming. But instead, the Second Coming will be the return of the literal and personal Jesus.

- *Jesus' Return Will be Visible on a Global Scale*

Behold, He [Jesus] is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him....And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him (Revelation 1:7).

For as lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be (Matthew 24:27; cf. Luke 17:24).

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (Matthew 24:30).

And the kings of the earth, .and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?' (Revelation 6:15-17).

[Note that a comparison of Revelation 6:12-14 with Matthew 24:29-30, Mark 13:24-25, and Luke 21:25-26 reveals a parallel with certain signs in the sky. Also, comparing Revelation 6:17 with II Thessalonians 1:7-10 and II Peter 3:4-13 shows that the day of God's wrath is the day of the Second Coming of Jesus. Therefore, Revelation 6:15-17 is describing the reaction of the wicked at Jesus' return.]

There will be nothing secret about the Second Coming of Jesus. The entire world, both righteous and wicked, will see Him coming visibly in the sky. There will be no missing of this great event by anyone because it will be visible on a global scale.

- *Jesus' Return Will be Audible on a Global Scale*

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, ..And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet (Matthew 24:30-31).

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first (I Thessalonians 4:16; cf. I Corinthians 15:52).

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise (II Peter 3:10).

Again, there will be nothing secret about the Second Coming of Jesus. A shout and a trumpet will make sufficient noise that even the righteous dead will hear it and come out of their graves. Because Jesus has had His people scattered over all the earth, it is clear that His return will be audible on a global scale.

- *Jesus' Return Will be Glorious*

For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels (Matthew 16:27; cf. Mark 8:38).

and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (Matthew 24:30; Mark 13:26, and Luke 21:27).

Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13; cf. Colossians 3:4).

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns...His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses (Revelation 19:11-14).

What a glorious splendor is pictured of the Second Coming of Jesus! It will fill the entire sky all around the earth so that everyone living at the time will see Jesus coming in great glory. And they will also hear His voice and the sound of trumpets as Jesus returns literally, personally, visibly, audibly, and gloriously in triumph.

What Happens When Jesus Returns

In addition to knowing *how* Jesus will return, knowing *what* to expect when He returns is also an important way to avoid being deceived by false christs and the counterfeit Second Coming. The Second Coming of Jesus will change everything instantly. Look at what will happen when He returns:

- *The Resurrection of the Righteous Dead*

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first (I Thessalonians 4:16).

For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible (I Corinthians 15:52).

I Corinthians 15:20-23 reveals that the event described in verse 52 above occurs at the Second Coming of Jesus. Verse 23 limits this resurrection only to those who belong to Him. The wicked who had already been dead will remain in their graves.

I Corinthians 15:42-49 adds further witness to the fact that the resurrected saints will come forth glorified with incorruptible bodies, as does Philippians 3:20-21 also. The sick and the maimed in Jesus will not rise from their graves in the same sickly or maimed condition in which they died. Rather, they will come forth with perfect bodies, forever immune from sickness, accident, and death.

- *The Glorification of the Righteous Living*

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality (I Corinthians 15:51-53).

Sleep is a metaphor for death, as a check of I Corinthians 15:20-23 reveals. So the text quoted above is saying that not every faithful follower of Jesus will die before He returns. However, all such persons, whether resurrected from the dead or alive at the time of the Second Coming, will be glorified in the change from corruption and mortality to incorruption and immortality at that time (cf. Philippians 3:20-21).

- *The Rapture of All the Righteous to Heaven*

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout,....And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them [the resurrected believers] in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord (I Thessalonians 4:16-17).

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven...coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Matthew 24:30-31; cf. Mark 13:27 and Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43).

In My Father's house are many mansions...And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also (John 14:2-3).

It is clear from these texts that after the resurrection of the righteous at the Second Coming, all of the righteous will be caught up by heavenly angels *to meet the Lord in the air*. As promised by Jesus Himself, they will be taken by the Lord to His Father's house [heaven] in order to be with Jesus. This also means that Jesus will *not* touch the surface of the earth when He returns. Instead, His saints rise up to meet Him in the air. Therefore, you can be certain that if some being appears on the earth, no matter how majestic or how many genuine miracles he performs, he will not be Jesus. You cannot trust your senses; trust only what the Bible teaches about *how* Jesus will return.

- *The Destruction of the Living Wicked*

For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them....And they shall not escape (I Thessalonians 5:2-3).

And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed (Luke 17:26-30).

He [Messiah] shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath

of His lips He shall slay the wicked (Isaiah 11:4; cf. Revelation 19:15).

In a related passage to the preceding one, II Thessalonians 2:8 declares that *the Lord will consume [the antichrist, or lawless one] with the breath of His mouth and destroy [the antichrist] with the brightness of His coming.*

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 is a parable that includes reference to the Second Coming of Jesus, as a comparison with Matthew 24:30-31 reveals. In this parable fire is pictured as destroying the wicked at the Second Coming.

Revelation 14:14-20 describes the Second Coming of Christ with the metaphor of reaping a harvest. By comparing verses 14-16 with verses 17-20, we know that the first harvest is of the righteous, and the second harvest is of the wicked. This harvest and reaping metaphor echoes Jesus' parable of the wheat and the tares, recorded in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43; verses 39 and 41 also links that parable to Matthew 24:31 with its references to angels gathering people at the Second Coming. Thus, Revelation 14:14-20 is in perfect agreement with earlier examined texts that the saved are gathered up to Jesus, while the wicked are destroyed at His coming.

Revelation 19:11-21 also describes the Second Coming of Jesus because *The Word of God* (v. 13) and the *KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS* (v. 16) is obviously Jesus, and verse 15's reference to treading *the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God* echoes Revelation 14:19-20's reference to *the great winepress of the wrath of God* which is *trampled*. The emphasis in Revelation 19:11-21 is on the destruction of the wicked at Jesus' return.

- *The Destruction of the Earth's Surface*

Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place (Revelation 6:14; cf. Revelation 16:18-20).

And 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 (Luke 21:25-26).

The Greek in Luke 21:25-26 indicates that the stress of nations and their perplexity are caused by catastrophic events happening on the earth as a result of the powers of heaven being shaken. In a parallel with Revelation 6:12-14, which refers in exactly the same order to signs in the sun, moon, and stars, what immediately follows is the verse quoted above (v. 14) about the sky rolling up like a scroll and the mountains and islands being moved out of their places. Therefore, the specific

events of Revelation 6:14 will occur as a result of the powers of the heavens being shaken. These events will leave the earth's surface in a state of destruction.

When Jesus Will Return

In discussing the *time* of His return, Jesus was quite emphatic that *of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only* (Matthew 24:36; cf. Mark 13:32). Therefore, He warned His followers to *Watch and be ready* (Matthew 24:42, 44; cf. Matthew 25:13, Mark 13:33-37, and Luke 21:36).

The element of watching is required because Jesus' coming will occur when people do not expect it. This will be especially true of the wicked. Jesus is quoted in both Matthew 24:37-39 and Luke 17:26-27 as comparing the destruction by the global Flood in the time of Noah to the destruction of the wicked at His Second Coming. Further illustrations of this unexpected coming are provided in Matthew 24:40-41 and Luke 17:28-36. The point is that there will be only two classes of people when Jesus returns—the saved, who will be ready for His coming, and the lost, who will not be ready. This truth is again illustrated by the apostle Paul in one of his letters to Christian believers:

For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober (I Thessalonians 5:2-6).

Although we cannot know the precise time for Jesus' return in glory, those who know the Scriptures can recognize the season of its nearness. Read the following words of Jesus, which He spoke immediately after discussing His Second Coming:

Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—even at the doors! (Matthew 24:32-33; cf. Mark 13:28-29 and Luke 21:29-31).

The following is an outline of general prophecies which have been and are being fulfilled in our day on an ongoing basis:

- *The Second Advent Movement*

Without question, the Old Testament book of Daniel outlines history in a way that places the greatest emphasis on what the prophet called *the time of the end*—a period of time which culminates in the glorious victory of God on behalf of His people. See Daniel 11:40-12:4. Notice the message of Daniel 12:4:

But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.

This was a prediction that Daniel's book of prophecies would not be fully understood until *the time of the end*. Then there would be a flurry of activity in searching out the meaning of the book's prophecies, particularly those which relate to the end-time. In the early nineteenth century, American history records the Second Great Awakening. Unlike the first one about a century earlier, this one culminated in the Second Advent movement in which the book of Daniel was the star attraction. Many thousands of Christians, both in the United States and elsewhere, were drawn to the preaching from that book that Jesus would return in the 1840s. Although the enthusiasm of that movement died out when Jesus did not return by late 1844, evangelical Christianity has never been the same. Today it is more popular than ever for Christians to talk about the Second Coming of Jesus. This fact suggests that we are in Daniel's *time of the end*.

- *The Gospel Proclamation to the Entire World*

Note the words of Jesus regarding what must occur before He returns in glory:

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; cf. Mark 13:10).

Although there are still entire ethnic groups who have never heard the name of Jesus, Christianity exists in more places on earth than it ever has. And through the modern communications revolution, radio, television, satellite, and Internet ministries are capable of proclaiming the gospel and finishing the work. We have seen that during unprecedented tragedies, the entire world can focus its attention on one spot as it has never been able to do before. Perhaps all it will take is some unusual catastrophe to draw the attention of the world to a global spiritual crisis; then the gospel can reach everyone as the remedy for our deep-seated pain. We are truly living in amazing times!

- *Spiritual Sensationalism*

Jesus warned that as the world drew nearer to His Second Coming there would be an increase in

false christs and false prophets:

Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect (Matthew 24:11-12, 24; cf. Mark 13:22).

Revelation 13:11-18, compared with Revelation 16:13 and 19:20, reveals that in the end-time, a false prophet—among other major spiritual forces—will use awesome miraculous signs to deceive the world into receiving the mark of the beast. So as we come closer to the Second Coming, we should expect more *great signs and wonders*. Remember that Jesus' words were specifically aimed at Christian believers. Thus, we should expect that many professed Christians will be caught up in such a movement. Certainly, this is what is going on even now, with an ever increasing emphasis on the supernatural, the miraculous, and the sensational among Christians.

- *Spiritual Decline*

The widespread proclamation of the gospel, and an emphasis on the soon return of Jesus, continues during a period of great spiritual decline among professed Christians.

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. And from such people turn away! (II Timothy 3:1-5).

That text describes much of nominal Christianity today.

- *Rapidly Increasing Wickedness*

As Christianity in general has experienced a spiritual decline, and the love of many has grown cold (Matthew 24:12), the vacuum has been filled by the Satanic theory that if it feels good, do it. Lawlessness indeed is on the rise virtually everywhere in the world. Statistics are cold facts. Until about the 1960s it was generally safe for a person to walk or bicycle to the park without an adult. Many families felt sufficiently safe in most neighborhoods to leave their houses unlocked during the day. But those days are gone for nearly everyone living on the planet today.

The entertainment world, from music, novels, magazines, and Hollywood, glorifies public sexual

expression of all kinds. Sex sells, according to Wall Street advertisers. The sexual revolution, beginning in full force in the 1960s, has come a long way—downhill. It used to be that sexual immorality and perversion was either limited to a small portion of the population or at least not talked about in public. But the sexual revolution changed all that, and it has left us a legacy of frighteningly high divorce rates, so-called “open marriages,” AIDS, and the public flaunting of homosexuality and lesbianism. It seems that no sexual perversion is too gross to flaunt publicly. Certainly, this is a sign of the approaching end, and at least one significant fulfillment of the prediction that in the last days, people would be *lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God* (II Timothy 3:4).

- *Increasingly Destructive Wars*

In Matthew 24:7, Mark 13:8, and Luke 21:10, Jesus warned of increasing wars. And even though He did declare that the end would not occur immediately (because wars have always been fought in human history), nevertheless, the increasing level of warfare and the threat of nuclear annihilation today certainly indicate that the end must be much nearer. In the twentieth century, total warfare has raised war to a new and more dangerous level. In the past, most wars were generally limited to the soldiers on both sides; but modern warfare tends to commonly target civilians. The concept of global war has come into being also, with destruction of both property and lives reaching unprecedented levels. One fact will illustrate this point well: World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1939-1945) resulted in more deaths and suffering than all the previous wars in human history combined.

- *Increasing Natural Disasters*

And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places (Matthew 24:7; cf. Mark 13:8 and Luke 21:11).

When Jesus mentioned wars, rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes, He said that *All these are the beginning of sorrows* (Matthew 24:6-8). The Greek word for sorrows mean birth pangs or labor pains. His point was not that these things of themselves are signs of His soon coming, for we have always experienced these things. But just as a pregnant woman knows that her baby will soon be born because of the increasing frequency and intensity of her labor pains, so the increasing frequency and intensity of manmade and natural disaster tell us that Jesus is about to come.

All of these disasters, as well as floods, tornadoes, and hurricanes, have recently been affecting a much vaster portion of the earth’s population. Millions have been killed in natural disasters and famines. All of these things have been occurring on an unprecedented scale in modern times. All this gives credibility to the testimony of the apostle Paul that *the whole creation groans and labors*

with birth pangs (Romans 8:22).

Specific Events as Signs of Jesus' Soon Return

In Jesus' sermon to His apostles known as the Little Apocalypse (Matthew 24-25; cf. Mark 13; Luke 21), Jesus warned that when the *abomination of desolation* spoken by Daniel was standing in the holy place, His followers should flee to the mountains (Matthew 24:15-16). First, the parallel passage in Luke 21:20-21 plainly refers historically to the Roman armies that surrounded Jerusalem during the A.D. 66-70 time period. Second, Jesus is quoted in Matthew 24:21-22 and Mark 13:19-20 as saying that the tribulation there would be shortened in order to save the elect. But the tribulation over Jerusalem in the first century was aimed at the Jewish nation, not Christians, and it was not shortened. Jerusalem was utterly destroyed in A.D. 70. This is strong evidence that Jesus suddenly telescoped to a future tribulation sometime after the one in first-century Jerusalem.

Third, concerning this future tribulation, the Matthew text mentioned above and Daniel 12:1 both refer to a time of trouble such as never was before that time. Daniel's tribulation is directed against the wicked forces and results in the deliverance of God's people and in a resurrection in the time of the end (Daniel 12:1-3; cf. 11:40). It will not be aimed at the elect, and it must be fairly short in length of time. Therefore, Jesus' tribulation in Matthew 24:21-22 must be a time of trouble such as never before because of its great length of time. Historically, this must refer to the time of great persecution during the Middle Ages, where conservatively 50 million Christians were executed as "heretics" by the Roman Church.

In this very context of the Middle Ages period of persecution, Matthew 24:29 and Mark 13:24-25 mention signs with the sun, moon, and stars in that identical order. Heavenly signs in the Old Testament do sometimes appear to be symbolic of general judgments of God. However, the immediate context in the gospels is the Second Coming of Jesus, a very literal, visible event in the sky. Therefore, these heavenly signs must also be literal events in the sky.

Mark's gospel makes it clear that the heavenly signs would at least begin in those days, after that tribulation (13:24). Jesus' words mean that they would begin in the general time frame but after actual persecution had ended. Revelation 6:12-13 mentions signs with the sun, moon, and stars in the same order but adds a great earthquake just preceding those heavenly signs. All of the parallel chapters (Revelation 6:14-17; Matthew 24:29-30; Mark 13:25-26) suggest that these signs flow immediately into the Second Coming. However, if they did so, that would violate the truth that we cannot predict the time of the Second Coming. So we should probably expect some interval of time between each sign, with at least the great earthquake and the sign of the sun occurring closer to the end of the Middle Ages persecution.

Logically, each sign must meet four criteria: (1) it must be a very significant event that would attract attention to it; (2) it must occur in the exact order the Bible says it will; (3) it must occur in lands where many Christians live and could discern it as a sign of Jesus' soon return; and (4) it must have a spiritual impact, positive in some and negative in others. Finally, none would necessarily have to be supernatural events because earthquakes are natural disasters and God can use natural events as signs.

Given these criteria and looking at history, we can actually identify the four specific events as having already occurred, as follows:

The Lisbon Earthquake

It occurred on November 1, 1755 and was called the Lisbon Earthquake because its epicenter was near Lisbon, Portugal. Even though it was not the most devastating earthquake in history, it is still viewed as one of the most important ones, for its effects were felt as far away as 1,100 miles away. Many devout Christians viewed it as a judgment warning to be ready for Jesus' return. And many religious skeptics scoffed at those who saw it as a judgment warning and were thus confirmed in their skepticism. In general, Europeans moved into a new period of pessimism as a result.

The Dark Day

This event occurred on May 19, 1780 and was a very unusual thick darkness covering an area of about 25,000 square miles in parts of New York, New Jersey, and most of New England in the English colonies. Farm animals behaved as if nightfall had arrived, and people could not see well enough to continue their daily routines. Many went to their churches as thoughts of judgment day were on the minds of large numbers of believers.

Moon Turned to Blood

This occurred on the night of May 19, 1780, following the Dark Day. At first the moon could not be seen at all, despite the fact that it had become a full moon the day before. Then after midnight, the moon appeared, but it was unusually blood red in color until sunrise. More remarkable is the fact that the Greek text of Revelation 6:12 actually reads *the whole moon*, which fits the fact that the moon had become full just the previous evening. It also seemed to reinforce the spiritual significance of the Dark Day earlier in the same day.

Falling of the Stars

This event occurred between midnight and dawn in the early morning hours of November 13, 1833. It was one of the more spectacular meteor showers ever witnessed, and it seemed to cover

most of North America. It was so bright at times that people were awakened from their sleep. In harmony with Revelation 6:13, this meteor shower gave the optical illusion that *stars* were falling in whatever direction a person was standing—just like a fig tree when shaken by a great wind. It was so significant that it gave birth to our modern scientific study of meteor showers. The religious impact was also quite significant, as many believers viewed it as a fulfillment of the Bible’s prediction as a sign of Jesus’ soon return.

How Are These Signs?

Many are skeptical that events that happened so long ago from our own time could be the fulfillment of the signs Jesus and the apostle John foretold in the gospels and in the book of Revelation. First, there is no doubt but they met all four criteria deduced from Scripture. Second, we should remember that God reckons time far differently from the way we do. Nevertheless, in the context of world history, even the last sign in 1833 is relatively close to our day. Third, remember that those signs were linguistically (in Mark) connected more with the end of the great time of persecution of the Middle Ages (*in those days, after that tribulation*) even as they were signs designed to spiritually awaken people to get ready for Jesus’ return.

This means that we are currently living between Revelation 6:13 and 14, and the next great sign is the Second Coming of Jesus itself.

Conclusion

We have learned the following basic facts about the Second Coming of Jesus:

- Jesus promised He would return.
- His return will be literal and personal, not spiritual.
- His return will be visible on a global scale.
- His return will be audible on a global scale.
- His return will be glorious on a global scale.
- When He returns, the righteous dead will be resurrected.
- When He returns, all of the righteous, both resurrected and already living, will be glorified, defined as changed instantaneously into having perfect bodies and having their sinful natures removed.

- When He returns, all of the righteous will go to Heaven to be with Jesus.
- When He returns, the living wicked will be destroyed.
- When He returns, the earth's surface will be destroyed.
- General signs of Jesus' soon return include the Second Great Awakening of the 1830s and 1840s, the increase in the proclamation of the gospel, spiritual sensationalism, spiritual decline, rapidly increasing wickedness, increasingly destructive wars, and increasing natural disasters.
- Specific signs pointing toward the soon return of Jesus, as well as to the general end to the religious persecution of the Middle Ages were the Lisbon Earthquake (1755), the Dark Day (1780), the Moon turned Blood Red (1780), and the Falling of the Stars (1833).

In warning that believers not be caught unawares, Jesus declared that *we take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly* (Luke 21:34). Most Christians who are really seeking the Lord and anxiously awaiting His return are not likely to carouse or become drunkards. However, the everyday cares of this increasingly busy life can often lead even the serious-minded believer to get off the right path. As Jesus said, *Watch...[and] be ready* (Matthew 24:42, 44).