

## Keys to Prophecy



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## #12 - Global Impact: Surprise in the Skies

Tonight we are going to look into the greatest prophecy yet unfulfilled in human history - The 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus Christ  
This is a topic about which there has probably been even more hype and speculation than about the Anti-Christ.

- Let's start by reviewing the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming in the PROPHECIES OF DANIEL -  
The prophecies we have covered in Daniel have prepared us for this study
- Daniel 2 - We saw God's basic outline of world history  
Head of Gold - Chest and Arms of Silver - Belly and Thighs of Bronze - Legs of Iron - Feet of Iron & Clay -  
Stone cut out without hands - Smashed the image - Ground it to powder - Became a mountain that filled the earth  
Babylon - Medo-Persia - Greece - Rome - Division - Kingdom of God that will last forever  
v.34,35,44 - The 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ fits into the arrival of that Stone that disrupts this world's history
- Daniel 7 - God expanded our understanding of world history with some important additional details  
Lion - Bear - Leopard - 4<sup>th</sup> Beast - 10 Horns - Little horn speaking monstrous words against God - 538-1798  
Judgment and Execution of the Little Horn - **"Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven"**  
Remember that phrase - You will see it again later this evening - relating to Jesus' second coming  
Babylon - Medo-Persia - Greece - Rome - Division - Medieval Christian apostasy - Judgment -  
Christ receives the Eternal Kingdom and gives it to the Saints forever
- Daniel 8 - God further expands the scenario  
Ram - Goat - Little Horn - 2300 evening-morning - End-time - Restoration -  
v.26 - Little Horn will be broken without human hand - The END
- If we were to create a time line - as to where we live in world history - in relation to the return of Christ  
Where would you put us?
- If we were to use a clock to illustrate where we are in world history - What time is it?
- So - if we live - tonight - on the cusp of eternity -  
What can we know about Jesus' return? - What information is available to us in the Bible?  
And how important is it to know the truth about Jesus return?
- GOOD NEWS and BAD NEWS  
I want to begin with some GOOD NEWS and some BAD NEWS - Which do you want first?  
I am going to start with the GOOD - and share with you a promise  
Then I will go to the BAD - and give you a warning
- GOOD NEWS - John 14:1-3 (1052)  
*<sup>1</sup>"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>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.*

When Jesus was with his disciples on the last night before his crucifixion -

He told them he was leaving - And they couldn't come along - They panicked - Jesus gave these words of comfort  
 Don't let my departure bother you - Trust God and trust me  
 I am going to my father's house to prepare a place for you - He has a great big hacienda with many rooms  
 If I go - I will come again - and take you with me to be where I am

- ↑ Notice the basic scenario Jesus lays out - I will go UP and get things ready -
- ↓ Then come back DOWN and get you
- ↑ And take you back UP to the place I prepared - Where I will be - and we will be together forever

It is a love story - The young man goes to prepare the honeymoon suite - Then come for his bride and the wedding  
 And then he takes her there - where they experience the joy of living together

This is the basic promise that the whole teaching of Jesus 2<sup>nd</sup> coming is based on - in Jesus' own words

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- That's the GOOD NEWS - Now for the BAD NEWS -  
 Also in Jesus' own words - also to His disciples - earlier that same week

Turn to Matthew 24 (960) - Jesus major teaching on His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming and the end of the world  
 Given right after He left the temple for the last time - Just prior to His arrest and crucifixion

vs.1-2 *Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, "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."*

- These were shocking words for the disciples - The temple was an incredible fortress  
 The walls included blocks of stone weighing over 100 ton each - Many bigger than our automobiles  
 The disciples seemed to instantly conclude that any event catastrophic enough to destroy the temple  
 Must be the end of the world
- v.3 *Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"*

And notice Jesus first words in response

v.4-5 *<sup>4</sup>And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. <sup>5</sup>For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.*

- The BAD NEWS is - Jesus' return is a subject on which there will be much DECEPTION in our world  
 Now there is a lot we could study in these two chapters - Matthew 24 and 25 - all relating to Jesus return  
 But for now - I want to skip through and focus on Jesus warning against deception

v.11 *<sup>11</sup>Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.*

v.23-27 *<sup>23</sup>"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it.*

- <sup>24</sup>For FALSE CHRISTS and FALSE PROPHETS will rise*
- and show GREAT SIGNS AND WONDERS*
- to DECEIVE, IF POSSIBLE, EVEN THE ELECT. <sup>25</sup>See, I have told you beforehand.*
- <sup>26</sup>"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.*
- <sup>27</sup>For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west,*
- so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*

Jesus warns extensively of major deception on this subject - So it must be really important that we understand it right

The devil's greatest weapon against us is deception  
 Jesus specifically warned us about the devil's attempt to deceive us about this very subject!

What is the fundamental truth of this passage - Not just the warning, but the truth to help us avoid deception?  
**God does not just say look out! - He always gives us something to look at!**

v.27 - *For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*

What does that sound like to you?

Is there anything more startlingly visible than lightening streaking across the sky

You can see the flash with your eyes closed and the curtains drawn

And what follows - A huge clap of thunder - Great noise - And the dogs and children dive under the bed!

Let's read on - starting again in verse 27

v.27-28 *For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west,  
so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*

<sup>28</sup>*For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.*

What is this carcass business? - An idiom which means - "You can't miss it"

Like when you see vultures circling overhead - You KNOW there is a dead carcass on the ground below

v.29-31 <sup>29</sup>*"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. <sup>30</sup>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. <sup>31</sup>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.*

As we look at what the Bible says about Jesus 2<sup>nd</sup> coming -

I want to begin to compile a list of events that will take place - What do we find in these verses?

- v.27 - BRIGHT - Brilliant - Glorious - Like lightning flashing across the sky - You can't miss it
- v.29 - AFTER the TRIBULATION - Right after the tribulation
- COSMIC UPHEAVAL - Sun, moon, stars - heavens shaking - That ought to get our attention
- v.30 - IN THE SKY - Seen in the sky - heaven - high up for all to see
- ALL TRIBES MOURN - Literally: beat their breast - Lament - Wail
  - Is that a sign of happiness or unhappiness? -
  - Even those who are unhappy about Jesus coming will see him and react strongly to it
- VISIBLE - "They will SEE" - Who is "they" - All those unhappy about Jesus' return - The lost
  - Jesus return will be visible to the LOST - Not just the saved
- JESUS IN PERSON - See the Son of Man coming
- CLOUDS - The Son of man coming on the clouds - Does that sound familiar -
  - Daniel 7:13 - Jesus is quoting from Daniel
- POWER AND GREAT GLORY - Back to BRIGHT
- v.31 - ANGELS
- LOUD - TRUMPET blast -
- GATHERING of the elect - The saved - Believers - From the four points of the compass -
  - All over - From everywhere under heaven

If this was all we had - We would have no reason to be deceived about Jesus 2<sup>nd</sup> coming

If you are alive on earth - Saved or lost - You won't be able to miss this event - It will be unmistakable

No one will have to come and tell you it happened - It will be personally experienced

Let's go back a moment to Jesus warning - in vs. 23-26

v.23-26 <sup>23</sup>*"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. <sup>24</sup>For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. <sup>25</sup>See, I have told you beforehand.*

<sup>26</sup>*"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.*

Notice - If "anyone" says to you - The Christ has returned and is over here - or over there

If anyone invites you to come and see the Christ who has returned

DON'T BELIEVE IT - Why?

OR if someone says - Christ has returned and is out in the desert - OR in some room somewhere

Not only "DO NOT BELIEVE IT" - but also - DO NOT GO OUT

What does "DO NOT GO OUT" mean? - Do not go and investigate - Don't even go check it out

Why? - What is wrong with investigation

FIRST - Do you need to investigate in order to know if this is really Jesus returned - or not? - NO

Why? - You didn't see or hear him come - The sun is still shining - The moon and stars are still in the sky  
All tribes of the earth did not mourn - You didn't see it in the sky - or hear the trumpet

There were no angels - No gathering of the saved

Essentially Jesus says - If you don't see it for yourself - it isn't Me!

Jesus may show up as a surprise -

Like the drunk teenagers who drove their mom's Lincoln into my kitchen at 1am - A few years ago

We certainly didn't expect it - But there was no doubt that they had arrived!

Many will be surprised at Jesus' arrival - But none will be in doubt that He came

And you won't have to ask someone else to tell you what happened - You will know personally

That is the whole point of this warning from Jesus - If you didn't see it - It wasn't me!

SECOND - Not only will we not need to check it out - Jesus does more than suggest that we not waste our time

Jesus commands his disciples NOT TO GO OUT - Not to look - Not to check it out

Kind of like Lot's wife - Don't look back! - Period

Why would Jesus prevent us from investigating or satisfying our curiosity?

There is a devil out there trying to deceive - And he is very powerful - Very smart - Very capable

His intellectual capacity outstrips ours on an astronomical level

Jesus warns that Satan's deception will be great enough to - if possible - deceive the elect - the saved

His deceptions were cunning enough to fool our first parents - Adam and Eve

who had perfect minds - and no bent to evil

His deceptions were powerful enough to fool 1/3 of the angels in heaven

Our degenerated earthly intellect doesn't stand a chance against Satan's

Satan has the ability to fool our senses - Jesus says to just stay away - Stay safe

We do not have the perspective or mental capacity to see through his masterful deceptions

Like a magician doing tricks on stage - Try as you may - You can't figure out how he did that!

Notice one more thing - Even if these supposed Christs are performing mighty miracles - Signs and wonders

Healing the sick - Raising the dead - Walking on water - Multiplying food - Saying wonderful things

Still - Don't go - You risk being fooled - You are not as smart as the deceiver

IF you were - Jesus would not need to warn you

Again - if this passage was all we had to go by - We would be in pretty good shape

The positive information - The negative warning - Plenty of details - Right from Jesus himself

Let's look at a few more verses - and see what else we can learn - Let's go to Revelation

Turn to Revelation 1:7 (1174)

*Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.*

Notice our list -

JESUS IN PERSON - HE is coming

CLOUDS

EVERY EYE will see Him - How can everyone on a round world see the same event? - I don't know

Is God capable of making that happen? - YES - He is infinite - all powerful - He is able!

Is Satan powerful enough to make that happen? - I doubt it

Satan is able to do signs and wonders - and thus deceive many - who go and look

But Jesus never warns us against Satan - or any one else - doing a universal appearance

False Christs will only appear in isolated places - Where you have to GO in order to see

I believe this universal visibility is the great sign of the true return of Christ - All will see - personally

ALL TRIBES MOURN - Same as in Matthew 24 - Those who don't like His coming will see it

What about this phrase - "even those who pierced Him" - This leads to some interesting possibilities - And a story...

When Jesus was on trial before the Jewish senate - In the middle of the night before His crucifixion

The Jewish leaders tried hard to trump up some plausible charges on which to condemn Jesus

- ☐ Matthew 26:59-62 (964) <sup>59</sup>Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, <sup>60</sup>but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last two false witnesses came forward <sup>61</sup>and said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.'"  
<sup>62</sup>And the high priest arose and said to Him, "Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?"

Two independent witnesses had to give matching testimony in order to inflict the death penalty  
 So they bribed false witnesses - Told them what to say - And brought them in to testify  
 But no two of those witnesses could agree - Nothing seemed to be working

They even brought up Jesus' words from when He had cleansed the temple three years before  
 Driving out the money changers and animal sellers from the courts of God's house  
 But with a subtle distortion - Jesus had not said "I am able to destroy the temple..."  
 He had said - "YOU destroy this temple and I will raise it up in three days"

Jesus was predicting their actions to kill Him - and His resurrection  
 They tried to make Jesus sound like a potential terrorist who had threatened to blow up the temple  
 Yet even in this - no two witnesses agreed well enough to give them the legal facade they desired

Finally the High Priest made a big show by standing up and saying... "How do you answer all these charges"

- ☐ Matthew 26:63-64 <sup>63</sup>But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I adjure you by the living God that you tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!"

Jesus remained silent - Sometimes it is best not to legitimize foolishness with an answer  
 So with a show of authority - The High Priests demands that Jesus identify Himself  
 Are you the Messiah? - Are you the Son of God?

Jesus would not defend Himself

But He would identify Himself - Even when He knew His answer would secure His condemnation

- v.64 <sup>64</sup>Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

In modern English we use the word "you" as both singular and plural - to refer to one person - or many  
 And as a result - we can miss some subtle and important meanings  
 Watch this

- ☐ <sup>64</sup>Jesus said to him, "It is as you (singular) said. -  
 You, High Priest Caiaphas, spoke the truth - I am the Christ (Messiah), the Son of God!  
 Nevertheless, I say to you-all (plural), hereafter you-all (plural) will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Jesus quotes Daniel 7:13 (865) to them - And tells them they will all personally see it come true  
 They may be condemning Him now as a criminal - But they will personally see His glorious return

Now I can't tell you just how that will happen - or how it works - But Jesus said it  
 And I believe it will happen -

Somehow, those who were most instrumental in His crucifixion will see His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming - in person

Acts 1 records Jesus last conversation with His disciples -  
 They were up on the Mt of Olives - Outside Jerusalem

- ☐ Turn to Acts 1:9-11 (1051)  
<sup>9</sup>Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. <sup>10</sup>And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, <sup>11</sup>who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

- ☐ VISIBLE - While they watched  
 ☐ CLOUDS

- SKY - As they looked toward heaven
  - JESUS IN PERSON - This same Jesus - Not someone else
  - REVERSE OF ASCENSION - Will so come in like manner as you saw Him go
    - If one of the disciples had recorded this on a video camera - We could preview the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming
    - Just play the video backwards - And you have the basic view of the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming!
    - With the addition of a lot of lights and sound
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- Turn to 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 (1137)

*<sup>15</sup>For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. <sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

Some of us will be alive - others will be dead - "asleep" - Both Jesus' and Paul's favorite term for death  
We will look at that in detail in our next study

- JESUS IN PERSON - The Lord Himself
  - SKY - Descend from heaven - The reverse of his ascending in Acts 1
  - SHOUT - Voice of Archangel - Loud
  - TRUMPET - Really Loud
  - RESURRECTION - Dead in Christ will rise first - Something new for our list - A sequence
  - GATHERED - The saved are caught up together
  - CLOUDS
  - IN THE AIR - Meet the Lord in the air  
With Jesus forever from that day on  
John 14:3 - He will take us to be with Him in the place He prepared for us
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- Turn to 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 (1138)

*<sup>6</sup>since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, <sup>7</sup>and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, <sup>8</sup>in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup>These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, <sup>10</sup>when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.*

We will look at this passage in detail - in the topic - The Good News About Hell - This coming Friday evening  
But notice

- JESUS IN PERSON - the Lord Jesus - Himself
- SKY - Revealed from heaven - in the SKY
- ANGELS - With His mighty angels
- BRILLIANCE - In flaming fire
- GLORY of His power - Power and great glory

One other thing - Based on this passage - Who will live through this "Day of the Lord"?

How many will be left alive on earth when it is over?

We have already seen that the saved - will meet the Lord in the air and go off to the heavenly honeymoon

How likely does it sound that there will be any among the lost who survive past this awesome event?

Again - we will look at this in depth when we study Hell and the Millennium - coming up

But we must read on - in chapter 2

- Look at 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 (1138)

vs.1-4 *<sup>1</sup>Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, <sup>2</sup>not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. <sup>3</sup>Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, <sup>4</sup>who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*

- ❑ GATHERING together
  - Already - In Paul's time - Just about 30 years after Jesus lived on earth and spoke of his 2<sup>nd</sup> coming
  - Paul is having to counter false teachings about Jesus' 2<sup>nd</sup> coming
  - Some were saying Jesus had already returned - Paul says NO - And describes the great Christian apostasy
  - The man of sin - Sitting as God - in God's temple - Claiming to be God
  - This is none other than the Antichrist we studied about several nights ago - The little horn of Daniel 7 & 8
  - Paul understood his prophecies - Understood certain things had to happen BEFORE Jesus returned again
- ❑ The 2<sup>nd</sup> coming comes AFTER the Antichrist tribulation - Not before - As we saw in Matthew 24
  - There are many today who teach that Jesus comes before the tribulation
  - It is very popular in Christianity - Became popular about 50 years ago - A relatively new teaching
  - It came out of the Plymouth Brethren in England in the 1830s and 40s
  - Made popular by Hal Lindsey in "The Late Great Planet Earth" in the 1960s
  - The idea of a secret - pre-tribulation rapture of the Saints

I vowed a long time ago that I would not spend time preaching on what was wrong with what others teach  
 I just want to show you what is in the Bible - Let the truth speak for itself  
 But Jesus warned us of deception - And I want to at least do the same  
 I want you to be aware that there are serious Biblical problems with the pre-tribulation rapture view

vs.5-8 <sup>5</sup>Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? <sup>6</sup>And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. <sup>7</sup>For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. <sup>8</sup>And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

Notice - The evil will accelerate - more and more - Until Jesus personally destroys it at His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming  
 God has always restrained evil - Or the world would have melted down a long time ago  
 But as we near the end of time - God removes His restraining hand - And lets evil have a field day  
 And things are going to get really rough - tough - bad  
 Life is not going to be pretty for anyone just before Jesus comes  
 In fact - Jesus' coming appears to be a rescue mission -  
 To extract the saved just before the whole thing blows up  
 To rescue us out of the great tribulation that is coming upon this world

vs.9-12 <sup>9</sup>The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, <sup>10</sup>and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. <sup>11</sup>And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, <sup>12</sup>that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Remember Matthew 24 - False Christs and false prophets doing signs and wonders -  
 to deceive - if possible - the elect of God  
 But if we follow the advice and command of Jesus -  
 To not try to decipher the deception with our own investigation  
 We will be protected from deception - By the truth - and by our LOVE of the TRUTH  
 Those who fail to love the truth - that's an interesting term, isn't it - "Love the truth"  
 That makes the most sense when you realize truth is a person - Jesus is the truth  
 Those who do not love truth - But prefer unrighteousness - their own ideas -  
 Will end up believing the lie - To their eternal loss

Are you a truth-lover tonight? - Are you a truth-seeker? How much is the truth worth to you?  
 Truth has seldom been the majority opinion - Truth usually means going up stream - against the flow  
 Truth often means standing alone - In the minority  
 And truth can get you into big trouble with a truth hating society  
 Standing for truth can get you condemned as a bigot - accused of discrimination - of being a trouble maker  
 But in the long run - Though truth may make you unpopular in this world  
 It is the truth that will set you free - while others are deceived and lost  
 Truth goes for the long haul - not the short term gains -  
 Truth alone can see you through tribulation to eternity

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Turn to 1 Corinthians 15:51-55 (1110)

<sup>51</sup>Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—<sup>52</sup>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. <sup>53</sup>For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup>So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

- Notice: Some will be alive to see Jesus come - Some of the saved will be asleep in the graves
- CHANGED - One thing will happen to all the saved - both dead and alive - at Jesus 2<sup>nd</sup> coming  
We will all be changed - In a moment - in the blink of an eye
- TRUMPET - At the last Trumpet - That loud trumpet blast
- RESURRECTION - The dead will be raised - Incorruptible - And we will be changed - to be incorruptible  
We will all put on immortality - No longer subject to death  
Death will be triumphed over - What a joyous day that will be
- 

Turn to 2 Peter 3:10-13 (1167)

<sup>10</sup>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, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. <sup>11</sup>Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, <sup>12</sup>looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? <sup>13</sup>Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

- THIEF IN THE NIGHT - There is a lot of talk about the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming being like a THIEF IN THE NIGHT  
As if the thief comes in silently - grabs a few things - and leaves silently  
But that is seldom how thieves operate - And definitely not how God operates - at least not in this verse  
Here God arrives as the thief in the night - His arrival is unexpected - But the results are catastrophic  
This is no sneaking in and out -  
This is more like discovering a bomb that you didn't know was in your basement - by its explosion
- GREAT NOISE
- ELEMENTS MELT - Heavens (sky or atmosphere) on fire - God is going to melt this old place down
- 

Here is the other “thief in the night” text

Turn to 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 (1137)

<sup>1</sup>But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. <sup>2</sup>For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. <sup>5</sup>You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. <sup>6</sup>Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.

- THIEF IN THE NIGHT - To whom will the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming be as a thief in the night? - To the saved? - NO
- To the Lost - Not to the saved - Not to those who are watching and ready  
So - If we are in Christ - will it be a devastating surprise - or a glorious serendipity?  
This is the key  
However - no matter how you slice it - This is going to be one awesome event
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Turn to Revelation 6:12-17 (1178)

<sup>12</sup>I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. <sup>15</sup>And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, <sup>16</sup>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! <sup>17</sup>For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

Many things in this passage parallel the first passage we looked at - Matthew 24

- Great EARTHQUAKE
- COSMIC UPHEAVAL - Sun, moon and stars
  - This is a metaphor used several times in the Old Testament writings
  - Kind of like when you shine your mini-mag light in the dark - It is bright
  - Until someone drives up behind you and turns on their brights -
  - Your little mag light goes out - apparently - even though it is shining as bright as ever
- EVERY MOUNTAIN AND ISLAND MOVED - I used to live near San Francisco -
  - With the famous Alcatraz island prison in the middle of the bay
  - When we had an earthquake people would ask - was that the BIG ONE
  - I would say - NO, Alcatraz is still in the same place
  - My Bible says when the BIG ONE hits - Every mountain and island will be moved - That's HUGE
- EVERYONE - Great and small - Regardless of wealth - power - position - All are running for cover
  - Is this talking about the saved or the lost? - Those who don't want to see Jesus
  - Elsewhere called those "tribes of the earth who mourn"
- HIDE us from the FACE of Him - Jesus in person - Clearly visible - The lost see Him and long to be hidden
- Look at v.17 - *"For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"*
- The word wrath is "orge" - Do you need a translation to understand that word?
  - In the Greek language it means passion - letting the passion out unrestricted
  - What is God passionate about - Killing wicked people? - Look at this verse...
- Ezekiel - 33:11 (837) *"Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'"*

So is this orgy of God a glorious killing spree where He finally flays and smashes His enemies?

Or is this orgy of God His passion to be with his Bride who is being held hostage by the enemy?

To rescue her - as she is being abused and threatened by people sold out to evil?

People Jesus died to save - But who have refused that salvation - And are now tormenting His beloved?

The day of God's passion is when he comes to be reunited with his saints

And those who will not let him save them - He finally will not let them stand in His way

Sin is the decision to try to live independent of God - God finally let's that choice take full effect

He comes to bring the agony to an end - and bring in everlasting joy and peace

But those who would prevent good from ever winning - will finally lose

As when light puts out the dark - Light is always lethal to the dark - But Light does not hate the dark

- Continuing in v.17 - the final phrase - And who will be able to stand?
  - Is that a relevant question? - If we live on the cusp of eternity - And Jesus could come in our lifetime
  - The question becomes very personal -
  - When all heaven breaks loose on this earth - so to speak
  - When sun, moon and stars go berserk - And every mountain and island is moved
  - When the glory of the Father and Son - and all the holy angels is let loose into the darkness of earth
  - When the trumpet sounds - and Archangel shouts
  - When the elements of this earth melt with intense heat
  - Will you be able to stand? - Without that question answered - all this is simply academic!

Let's review my favorite verse on this subject...

- 1 John 5:11-13 (1171) *"And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.<sup>12</sup> He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.<sup>13</sup> These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.*

Here are the facts - First hand from one who personally walked and talked with Jesus

- ❑ 1. God has already given us eternal life -  
We don't wait till the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming to get it - It begins the moment we believe  
We just continue in person when Jesus returns what we started long distance here and now  
Based on what He did for us 2000 years ago
- ❑ 2. This life is in His Son - He who has the Son has life - Eternal life comes packaged in a person  
How do you have a person?  
I have a car. And I have a wife - But "have" means very different things in those two sentences  
I have a car by OWNERSHIP - I have my wife by RELATIONSHIP  
So how do you have Jesus? - By relationship  
If you have a relationship with Jesus - then you are IN - You have eternal life
- ❑ 3. I have written to you who believe... - What is the basis of all relationships? - Even more basic than LOVE is Trust  
So believers are trusters - Trust is the deepest basis of relationships -  
If you have a relationship with Jesus you have LIFE
- ❑ 4. That you may KNOW you have eternal life -  
Do you need to wonder if you will be able to stand when Jesus comes?  
When all heaven breaks loose on earth? NO  
If you are already IN Jesus - He will be coming for you - And He won't let anything stand in His way  
You can KNOW you will be able to stand - And shout with the redeemed...
- ❑ Isaiah 25:9 (677) *And it will be said in that day:  
"Behold, this is our God;  
We have waited for Him, and He will save us.  
This is the LORD;  
We have waited for Him;  
We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."*

The symbolic picture of Jesus 2<sup>nd</sup> coming in Revelation is...

- ❑ Turn to Revelation 19:11-16 (1187)  
*<sup>11</sup>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. <sup>12</sup>His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. <sup>13</sup>He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. <sup>14</sup>And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. <sup>15</sup>Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. <sup>16</sup>And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

According to the prophecies we have seen in Daniel - We live not far from that awesome event

Whether it is in our life-time or not - is not ours to know

But we do know it is the next great event on planet earth - And an ultimately climactic one

It will change everything - forever

It will be lethal to all who are not ready

It will be glorious to all who are - We will be transformed - immortalized -

And move in with Jesus - forever

And though it will be awesome beyond our wildest imagination - We need not fear

All that power is on our side - All that glory has come to receive us - All of eternity is ours to enjoy

In relationship with God - and with each other

- ❑ Turn to Matthew 24 (961)  
vs.32-33 *<sup>32</sup>"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. <sup>33</sup>So you also, when you see all these things, know that it [He] is near—at the doors!*

Prophecy makes it clear - It is near - He is near

The tree of prophecy is in full leaf - We live in the End Time - Jesus is coming soon

vs.34-35 <sup>34</sup>Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.  
<sup>35</sup>Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

This verse is a bit troublesome - Clearly Jesus did not come while the disciples were still alive

I believe Jesus must be referring to the “generation” of the gospel - after the cross

Between the cross and the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming there will not be any other age-shifting events

The “generation” before the cross taught the gospel through sanctuary types and symbols

The cross is the pivotal, age-shifting event in the history of earth - The perspective shifts

And this perspective - of Jesus who came, lived, died, rose and ascended

And is now at the right hand of the Father in heaven ministering on our behalf

This will be the message of the generation from the cross to the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming

vs.36-39 <sup>36</sup>“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. <sup>37</sup>But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. <sup>38</sup>For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup>and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

There is nothing wrong with eating and drinking - or marrying and giving in marriage

But sometimes life, as usual, can be distracting in times of crisis

No one was drowned outside Noah’s ark who had not been warned of the flood to come - and invited in to safety  
 And it will be the same with Jesus’ second coming -

God has devised a way to warn everyone - Invite everyone in

That is the overriding message of the book of Revelation

No one need be lost - Though some will choose to be - They did not choose to get ready

vs.40-44 <sup>40</sup>Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. <sup>41</sup>Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. <sup>42</sup>Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. <sup>43</sup>But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. <sup>44</sup>Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

These are popular verses that many believe must refer to the rapture

One person taken in the rapture - disappearing - with the other one “left behind” wondering what happened

1. Many major evangelical Bible scholars who believe in the rapture - do not use these verses to support it
2. These verses alone are not enough to base an entire Bible doctrine on  
 If the rest of Scripture does not teach a secret rapture - then these verses are not enough to support it
3. People interpret these verses based on what they already believe about the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ  
 If you believe in the pre-tribulation secret rapture - Then these verses seems to say that...  
 One person will suddenly disappears - with the other left behind wondering what happened

If you believe in the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming as I have presented it tonight

A one-time - global - ear splitting - eye popping - “lightning across the sky - “every eye will see Him”

- both saved and lost - all tribes of the earth mourning - every mountain and island moved

- sun, moon and stars going crazy - earth ending event

Then these verses clearly mean that...

At the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming - The righteous will rise to meet the Lord in the air - And be taken to heaven

And the lost will be left behind - but in what condition? - Dead on the earth

They call to be covered by the rocks and mountains - They are destroyed by the brightness

And this fits the context - Which is a warning to watch and be ready

Two people - living and working side by side - One will be ready - The other will be lost

We do not know what day or hour Jesus will come - Though we know we live in the End Time

It will be a surprise like a thief - But for those watching and ready it will be a good surprise

So here is Jesus’ punch line as he completes His point about His awesome 2<sup>nd</sup> return

- Matthew 24:44 (961) - *Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*

NOTICE - BE ready - Live in a ready condition - Day and night - Always - For whenever He might come

And how do you get yourself into that "ready" condition?

You get ready by receiving Jesus into your life - When you have Jesus you have life

You won't come into crisis - You have already passed from death into life

When the Kingdom of God rules your heart - You are already part of the Kingdom to come

So when it comes - You are welcomed home - Forever to be with the Lord

And that coming will be a pleasant surprise

I want to invite you to consider your own condition tonight - Right now - Right here

ARE you ready? - If Jesus were to come right now -

No time for last minute confessions or any spree of good works

Just the way you are - Right now - Are you ready?

I have shown you how you can know for sure - by entering into a relationship with Jesus Christ

All heaven is reaching out in relationship to you - But all heaven will not violate your free choice

- Get ready NOW - By reaching up - in prayer - from your heart - And asking to have Jesus  
 Be ready THEN - In Jesus you ARE - Just stick with Jesus - in relationship - Day by day

Look at this promise

- Philippians 1:6 (1129) *Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.*

If you give yourself to Jesus tonight - He guarantees He will have you ready when He returns in glory!

Your job is to accept what Jesus has already done for you - Receive the salvation He has already given

And let Jesus become the king of your life - Free to work His transforming miracle within

Jesus' job - Is to prepare you for eternity - And He guaranteed He will finish what He starts

- ARE YOU READY?

If you would like to leave here tonight knowing you ARE ready for whenever Jesus comes...

If you would like to leave here tonight INSIDE a saving relationship with Jesus Christ...

Repeat this prayer silently with me - right now...

Heavenly Father - I am a sinner. I confess my sin. I thank you for forgiving ALL my sin!

I accept you as my Savior. Please give me the gift of Eternal Life. Thank you for that gift!

I accept you as my Lord. I give you the right to be in charge of my life from this day forward.

I choose to trust you each minute of each day with every aspect of my life.

Teach me how to walk with you in this saving relationship.

Thank you for the gift and the assurance of eternal life in Jesus - that I have received right now!

In Jesus name I pray, Amen!