

The Second Coming of Christ

Throughout history, God's people have been longing for the Second Coming of Jesus. It represents the end of all sin and sorrow and the establishment of eternal peace. Even in our secular age, the theme of the Second Coming is still found in society. Many Second Coming scenarios are portrayed in popular media, almost always including times of trouble and tribulation.

But what does the Bible actually teach about the Second Coming of Christ? Will it be in secret? What are the signs of His coming? Can we know for certain whether that time is near?

Signs in the Bible

Much of the Bible is dedicated to the theme of the Second Coming. There are over 1500 prophecies of Jesus' Second Coming recorded in the Bible. For every prophecy of His first coming mentioned in the Old Testament, there are eight predicting His Second Coming. Christ's return is also mentioned once in every five verses in the New Testament.

Many Old Testament prophets were given visions and instructions concerning this period, often called "the time of the end." Daniel was told that his writings were for the time of the end (Daniel 12:9). John's book of Revelation is also full of prophecies concerning the Second Coming and the period just before it.

The Bible warns us of a period of great trouble and tribulation just before the Second Coming. As well, the Coming itself is not necessarily good news for all people, as the Bible warns that those that have rejected Christ will run from Him at His appearing.

The Scriptures tell us that there will be signs in the earth, distress of nations, and turmoil in the social structure of societies. In Matthew 24, Jesus discusses the events prior to His Second Coming. He intermingles His warnings about the destruction of Jerusalem with the destruction of the world at the end of time using the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem as a dual application. This discourse is also presented in Mark 13 and Luke 21.

Jesus Discusses the Signs of His Return

Sign of His Coming	Matthew	Mark	Luke
War and distress of nations	24:7	13:8	21:9-11
Earthquakes	24:7	13:8	21:11
As in the days of Noah	24:37-39	—	—
Gospel to be preached worldwide	24:14	13:10	—
Tribulation	24:21	13:19	21:12
False christs	24:4-5, 23-24	13:21-22	21:8
Signs in the sun, moon, and stars	24:29	13:24-25	21:25

It can be argued that many of the events portrayed in the Bible have always existed on the earth, but never has there been a time when all these events were evident in so many diverse places and in such frequency.

Signs in History

The Bible speaks of signs that will show us when the end times are near. Some of these events have already occurred in history. Luke 21:25-26 tells us this:

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear.

This passage in Luke refers to the Dark Day of 1780 and the meteor showers of 1833 that ushered in the great Advent movement. After the 1260 years of papal suppression of the truth, New England experienced the famous Dark Day on May 19, 1780, followed by signs in the moon as well.

On November 12, 1833, a great meteor shower occurred. Nearly 200,000 meteors fell per hour. These signs were seen across the United States. Many believe that these signs are a fulfillment of the Biblical signs of Christ's Coming.

The parallel text can be found in Revelation:

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind (Revelation 6:12-13).

History records these memorable events as follows:

The dark day of New England, so familiar to old and young, came May 19, 1780...Near eleven o'clock, it began to grow dark, as if night were coming. Men ceased their work; the lowing cattle came to the barns, the bleating sheep huddled by the fences, the wild birds screamed and flew to their nests, the fowls went to their roosts...At night it was so inky dark that a person could not see his hand when held up, nor even a white sheet of paper.ⁱ

During the whole time, a sickly melancholy gloom overcast the face of nature...Nor was the darkness of the night less uncommon and terrifying than that of the day; notwithstanding there was almost a full moon, no object was discernible, but the help of some artificial light, which, when seen from the neighboring houses and other places at a distance, appeared thro' a kind of Egyptian darkness, which seemed impervious to the rays.ⁱⁱ

Herschel, the great astronomer, frankly admits, “the Dark Day, May 19, 1780, is one of those wonderful phenomena of nature which will always be read with interest but which philosophy is at a loss to explain.”

What do these events signify?

These events fulfilled some of the prophecies that must occur before Christ returns. Even though it seemed like the world was ending on the Dark Day and during the meteor shower, these events do not mean that Christ should have returned in the 1800s or that He will return now. Rather, they were an announcement that the Biblical “time of the end” had begun. This does not diminish the validity of these events as signs of Christ’s soon return.

The books of Daniel and Revelation tell us many things that must happen before the Second Coming of Christ. The 1260-year tribulation came to an end in 1798. It was then that God began the final chapter of human history in which we now live.

Signs Today

The Scripture gives many signs that will tell us when the return of Christ is near. These signs are prevalent in our world today:

- An increase in knowledge (Daniel 12:4).
- An increase in demonic activity (Revelation 16:13-14, 1 Timothy 4:1-7)
- An increase in lawlessness (2 Timothy 3:1-7)
- Departure from the faith (2 Timothy 4:3-4)
- Rise of false teachings such as evolution (2 Peter 3:3-7)
- Rise of false christs (Matthew 24:4-24)
- Increase in traffic and modern transportation (Nahum 2:4)
- Poverty and economic instability (James 5:3-4)

Violence

Jesus also predicted that tension between nations would increase prior to the Second Coming.

And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold (Matthew 24:12 NKJV).

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places (Matthew 24:7).

The Greek word for “nation” used here is *ethnos*, from which we get the word ethnic. Sadly, there may be talk of peace today, but ethnic violence is rife.

Moral Decay

During the time just before Christ’s Coming, moral corruption and intemperance will abound.

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 (2 Timothy 3:1-5 NKJV).

The Bible also tells us that before Christ’s Second Coming, many will be indifferent to these warnings:

But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 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, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be (Matthew 24:37-39 NKJV).

Fear

...men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth... (Luke 21:26 NKJV).

There will be a growing fear amongst people on Earth, as they contemplate the future of the planet and their own way of life.

The escalation of fear in our society is marked. This includes not only fear from the peril of increased violence, but also terrorism, globalism, governmental control, economic failure, and disaster. A strange mixture of indifference and fear characterizes our time.

Be Alert

Of all these signs, the one with the greatest finality is this:

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come (Matthew 24:14).

We are admonished to study the signs and to pay attention (Matthew 24:32-35). However, no one knows the time or the hour of Christ's return (Matthew 24:36, 25:13). The Bible does state that this event will take place at midnight, but this could simply mean the final moment. However, legislative decrees of governments also come into effect at midnight and universal decrees are legislated according to midnight at specific longitudes.

Since we cannot determine a specific time for Christ's coming, all this tells us is that God will destroy sin at the final moment. We can see this through types and examples in the Bible:

And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt (Exodus 12:29).

In a moment shall they die, and the people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away: and the mighty shall be taken away without hand (Job 34:20).

And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him (Matthew 25:6).

Strange as it may seem, few mainline Christian churches teach the Biblical Coming of Christ today. Most churches, if they preach about the Second Coming at all, preach a coming of Christ that will bring peace to the nations, but the Bible teaches a destruction of nations. They preach conversion of sinners at the coming of Christ when the Bible teaches that Christ will come to destroy sin and sinners. Let us carefully examine the evidence.

How Christ will Return

Christ returning in glory is the hope of the Church. Jesus said, "I will come again" (John 14:3). This promise will be fulfilled. The return of Christ is the event that will finally release the people who love God and seek to honor Him from Satan's earthly rule:

To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation (Hebrews 9:28 NKJV).

Although Jesus did not tell us every detail about His Second Coming, His Word does give us some clues about how He will return. When Jesus left to go back to heaven after His resurrection, two angels stood by the disciples and gave them important information about Christ's Second Coming:

*...while [the disciples] beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they look stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so **come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven** (Acts 1:9-11 emphasis added).*

We can glean three vital pieces of information from the Scriptures:

1. Christ will come in the clouds with His angels.

Jesus was taken up into heaven by a cloud, and He will return in the clouds. The clouds symbolize the angels of God that surround Him, as can be seen in Hebrew parallelism:

The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as is Sinai, in the holy place (Psalm 68:17).

...who maketh the clouds his chariots; who walketh upon the wings of the wind (Psalm 104:3).

Jesus Himself promised that He would return with the clouds:

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

The glory of Christ's coming surpasses anything we can imagine. He will return in the glory of His angels, and the Godhead, "when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26).

For further information see Matthew 25:31 and 26:64; Mark 13:26 and 14:62; Revelation 1:7; and 2 Thessalonians 1:7.

2. The Second Coming will be audible and universally visible.

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Matthew 24:31).

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him (Revelation 1:7).

When Christ returns, every person in every nation will see Him. In fact, Christ warned against false comings of Christ that would not be universally visible:

Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be (Matthew 24:26-27).

3. Jesus will not come down to Earth, but will await the redeemed in the sky.

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other (Matthew 24:31 NIV).

At the Second Coming, Christ calls forth the dead and sends forth His angels to gather the elect, and together they meet Him in the air. Christ Himself does not come down to the earth—His feet do not touch the earth. He commands His angels, “Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice” (Psalm 50:5).

What will Happen to the Righteous?

Christ is coming to retrieve His righteous followers, both living and dead:

The Dead Righteous will be Raised

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Only the righteous who have given their lives to Jesus and submitted to His authority are resurrected at the Second Coming.

And I saw thrones, and they sat up on them, and judgment was given unto them...But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6).

In John 5:28-29, Christ tells us that all shall hear His voice. He talks of two resurrections: “the resurrection of life,” and “the resurrection of damnation.” These two events are separated by a thousand years. The righteous are raised at the first resurrection, or “the resurrection of life.” The unrighteous are not raised until the thousand years are finished, at the second resurrection or “the resurrection of damnation.”

The Living Righteous will be Translated

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

The living righteous, “we which are alive,” will be gathered together with the resurrected righteous to meet the Lord in the air. The righteous living will not taste death, but will be translated as Enoch and Elijah were (Genesis 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11).

Behold, I tell you a mystery: 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 corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 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” (1 Corinthians 15:51-54 NKJV).

The living righteous are changed at the last trumpet. Our bodies will be changed into the likeness of His glorious body. For more information, see Philippians 3:20-21, 1 John 3:2-3, and Isaiah 25:8-9.

What will Happen to the Wicked?

When Christ returns, the wicked will be slain and the nations will be destroyed.

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, 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" (Revelation 6:15-17 NKJV).

The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads of many countries (Psalm 110:5-6).

There is no peace or joy at the Second Coming of Christ for those who have ignored the mercy of Christ and sought to destroy His saints. These people will be destroyed by the brightness of His coming. The Lord is not a respecter of earthly positions. Even the rulers of nations will have to give an account for their actions. Then the wicked one, the man of sin, will be revealed for what he is.

And then shall the Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground (Jeremiah 25:33).

These people cannot be gathered, lamented, or buried because no living being will remain on Earth. The righteous will have been taken to heaven and the unrighteous will be dead.

I beheld the earth, and indeed it was without form, and void; And the heavens, they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and indeed they trembled, And all the hills moved back and forth. I beheld, and indeed there was no man, And all the birds of the heavens had fled. I beheld, and indeed the fruitful land was a wilderness, and all its cities were broken down at the presence of the LORD, By His fierce anger. For thus says the LORD: "The whole land shall be desolate; Yet I will not make a full end. For this shall the earth mourn, And the heavens above be black, Because I have spoken. I have purposed and will not relent, Nor will I turn back from it (Jeremiah 4:23-28 NKJV).

"I will utterly consume everything From the face of the land," Says the LORD; "I will consume man and beast; I will consume the birds of the heavens, The fish of the sea, And the stumbling blocks along with the wicked. I will cut off man from the face of the land," Says the LORD (Zephaniah 1:2-3 NKJV).

For more information about the destruction of all things, see Psalm 21:10, 37:10, 110:5-6; Isaiah 24:1-3; and Hebrews 10:26-27.

The Dispensationalists' Rapture

In stark contrast to this article is the doctrine of the secret rapture. This doctrine is a dispensational view, proposing that the people of God will be secretly taken to heaven while everyone else remains on the earth to receive a second chance. The secret rapture doctrine is false, and gives a false hope. It does not encourage people to change their lives and make themselves right with God.

This is what Scripture has to say about getting right with God:

Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon (Isaiah 55:7).

"But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live. Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" says the Lord GOD (Ezekiel 18:21-23 NKJV).

There is a clear "if" in these verses. Salvation is conditional to obedience. When the judgment comes we will be held accountable for our deeds, and won't have another chance.

The people of God will experience the tribulation and feel the wrath of the Antichrist. Their only hope will be the return of Christ. Just as the blood of the lamb was to be painted on the doorposts of the Israelite dwellings during the night of the final plague in Egypt (Exodus 12:7-13), so the blood of Christ the Lamb must be painted on the doorpost of the heart to alert the destroying angel that we have been purchased by God's sacrifice.

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 (Isaiah 25:9 NKJV).

The Secret Rapture and the Word of God

The following passage is often quoted to support the secret rapture:

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, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming (Matthew 24:38-42 NKJV).

This text does not prove a secret rapture. It merely points out that at the return of Christ, some will be saved and others will be lost.

The dispensationalist view that the Antichrist will arise after the secret rapture is also not in line with the teaching of Scripture. The Bible clearly teaches that this power will arise from the Church, not after the Church:

Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us (1 John 2:18-19 NKJV).

Literal versus Spiritual Israel

Typology Regarding the Rapture

Dispensationalists do not believe in Spiritual Israel, which is the Church, but believe that the promises of Scripture are for literal Israel only. They thus separate the Church from Israel, but the Bible makes no such distinction:

Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16 NIV).

Dispensationalists say that the relief for the righteous and the consequences for the wicked will occur seven years apart. They say that the rapture of the righteous will come first, followed by the destruction of the Antichrist at the Second Coming. During this supposed seven-year period, the Jewish people will go through the tribulation and will come to accept Christ.

Typology in the Bible always points to something greater. The symbolic lamb points to Christ—the latter being so much greater than the former. Literal Babylon points to end-time Babylon, comprising all the forces that reject God. Literal Jerusalem is a type of end-time spiritual Jerusalem, comprising the redeemed of all the ages. Despite this, dispensationalists await a literal reconstruction of Babylon and Israel, which would be the same as awaiting the return of a literal lamb.

According to the dispensationalist view, the end-time tribulation is for literal Israel only. This is not a Biblical teaching. The trials and tribulations are rather designed to purge and cleanse God's faithful people around the world (1 Thessalonians 3:3).

And one of the elders answered, saying to me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said to him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:13-14).

All will Experience the Tribulation

God's people, those who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, have to go through the tribulation. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matthew 16:27).

God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels (2 Thessalonians 1:6-7 NIV).

According to these texts, relief for the righteous and recompense for the wicked take place at the same time—at the return of Christ.

This is what Jesus told His disciples about the end-time tribulation:

The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matthew 13:41-43 NKJV).

Just like the wheat and the tares Jesus describes in Matthew 13, the wicked and the just will stay together until the return of Christ. When Old Testament Israel was delivered from the bondage of Egypt, the plagues did not fall when the Israelites were already gone. They were present and witnessed the events, being subjected to the first three plagues themselves (Exodus 8-12).

God divinely protected the Israelites from the effects of the last seven plagues in Egypt, just as He will divinely protect His people from the effects of the last seven plagues at the end of time (Revelation 3:10-13). God's people are urged to hold on until He comes. They are not taken to heaven before these events.

The glory of Christ's Second Coming leaves no hint of secrecy, and the judgment of the wicked and the righteous will happen at the same time. The return of Christ is the blessed hope of the people of God: Jesus is to be revealed (1 Corinthians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:7,13; 4:13).

The Seven Last Plagues

In ancient times, God's people the Israelites were slaves in Egypt. God wanted to take them out but Pharaoh hardened his heart. When Egypt's pharaoh refused to let God's people go and instead took away their right to a Sabbath rest, God struck Egypt with plagues (Exodus 5). These events symbolize what will happen in the final days. The circumstances will be similar, and the application will be universal.

Because Moses re-established the Israelites' Sabbath, Pharaoh increased their workload, making it impossible for the Israelites to keep the Sabbath. When this law was enacted and God's people could no longer worship according to their

consciences, God intervened. The plagues came and Israel was freed from slavery and taken to the Promised Land.

In Revelation, John describes the seven last plagues that fall at the end of the world's probation. This close of probation, just like in Egypt, comes after the mark of the Beast is enforced, depriving God's people of their freedom to worship Him according to the dictates of their conscience. In the end times, the Sabbath will once again be the issue.

I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God (Revelation 15:1).

In Revelation, John sees the heavenly temple fill with smoke. The heavenly temple service ends and probation is closed: "And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled" (Revelation 15:8).

Let's have a look at the symbolism found in the seven plagues of Revelation 16. Once these plagues start falling, there will be those who will attempt to explain away each of these plagues as a coincidence or as something man-made rather than from God. But the wise will understand.

The First Plague

And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image (Revelation 16:1-2).

The first plague falls only on those who have the mark of the Beast; God's people are divinely protected. In Egypt, God separated the Egyptians and the Israelites so that His people were not affected by the last seven plagues.

Later, before Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, God warned His people about the coming destruction. He pointed them to the prophecies of Daniel and urged them to study and understand them. Those who listened to His counsel escaped with their lives, but those who did not perished. They suffered the consequences of their choice. God had pleaded long and it was only with aching heart that He gave them up.

Just as Pharaoh did not relent when the plagues fell, so the unrepentant will not cease in their endeavors to destroy God's people. The crisis will escalate until it climaxes in the death decree against those who refuse to honor the Antichrist. The promises of God are, however, sure:

Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it

will not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plagues come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways (Psalms 91:5-11).

What a comforting thought—angels will protect those who have the seal of God.

The Second Plague

And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea (Revelation 16:3).

If we look closely at our planet today, we can see a foretaste of what this plague will be like. All around us, we can see the consequences of the toxic waste we have dumped into the delicate marine and fresh water systems of the world. Dangerous algal blooms in oceans and river systems are becoming more and more common. These blooms produce effects that are very similar to the second plague in Revelation.

Blood-red blooms of algae and microorganisms cause the death of millions of aquatic creatures by depriving them of the oxygen they need to survive. The algae and dead organisms then rot to form a blood-like sludge.

However, even though humanity is producing enough pollution to duplicate this plague, when the second angel pours out his vial, it will be much worse than anything that humanity has managed to achieve.

The Third Plague

And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments (Revelation 16:4-7).

While those who turned against God continue in their determination to shed the blood of the saints, the waters turn to blood. But the promise for the people of God is that “bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure” (Isaiah 33:16).

The prophet Elijah serves as a type of the end time people of God. Elijah did not see death, but was translated and taken to heaven. Similarly, those that receive the seal of God will also be translated without seeing death.

Just as Elijah was persecuted by the church-state alliance of his day, so God's people suffer a similar persecution at the end of time. God provided Elijah's needs, and God will also provide the needs of the faithful at the end of this great drama of rebellion against His government.

The Fourth Plague

And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory (Revelation 16:8-9).

During the fourth plague, the sun's radiation will not only scorch the earth, but will also scorch people. As in the case of the aquatic disasters produced by the previous plagues, we also have present-day indicators of how this plague will affect humanity. With the destruction of the ozone layer, ultraviolet radiation has increased dramatically and some countries have introduced dress codes for school children to avoid exposure.

Weather patterns have changed dramatically over the last decades. Changing weather patterns have resulted in unprecedented droughts in some areas and massive floods in others. The droughts, often associated with the *Él Niño* phenomenon, have caused raging fires that have swallowed up millions of acres of forests and grazing.

What is being witnessed today is merely a foretaste of worse things to come. The prophet Joel foresaw this plague and had this to say:

How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate. O LORD, to thee will I cry: for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and flames hath burned all the trees of the field (Joel 1:18-19).

In the same way that God protected the Israelites from the plagues that smote the Egyptians (Exodus 11:4-8), God's people will be protected from this plague. As the Psalmist says, "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night" (Psalm 121:6).

God protected the Israelites from the heat of the day by being a pillar of cloud for them, and protected them from the cold of the night by being a pillar of fire (Exodus 13:21). He will also protect His people when this fourth plague comes to fruition.

The Fifth Plague

And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, And blasphemed the God of heaven (Revelation 16:10-11).

This plague strikes at the throne of the Beast in particular. The Papacy has kept the people of the world in darkness, and so darkness will be their portion. With their tongues they deceived the nations, and they will gnaw their tongues in agony.

This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5).

Light emanates from God, and in Him there is no darkness. The Papacy replaces Jesus, the Light of the world, with its own systems. Papal Rome slights Christ's role as Mediator and crucifies Him again and again in the mass. Instead of the Word, Rome feeds the people on liturgies and earthly commandments.

The Word of God, which had been withheld and distorted by the Papacy, could have cured Rome's malady, had it been willing to listen. "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Psalm 119:130).

But instead of heeding God's Word, Rome tampered with God's law and changed His ordinances:

The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant (Isaiah 24:5).

If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever (Jeremiah 31:36).

God does not change. Rather, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

The fifth plague brings about a turning point. The inhabitants of the earth, already reeling under the effects of the previous plagues, witness the agony of the Beast (the papal system) and begin to doubt its credentials. Just as Egypt's support for Pharaoh waned when the plagues hit (Exodus 10:7), so support for the papal system begins to wane, opening the way for the sixth plague.

The Sixth Plague

The sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and its water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared (Revelation 16:12).

Two issues are brought forward in this passage: the Euphrates river dries up and this prepares the way for the kings of the East. The Euphrates was the river that fed into Babylon. This verse reminds us of this city's ancient fall when the river dried up to prepare the way for the conquerors to enter the city. One hundred fifty years before Cyrus, the conqueror of Babylon, was born, the prophet Isaiah mentioned his name:

Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron (Isaiah 45:1-2).

This is an amazing prophecy. Cyrus is here a type of Christ who will one day come and rescue His children from mystic Babylon and take them to the heavenly Jerusalem.

That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid (Isaiah 44:27-28).

Isaiah 44:27 says that God Himself will dry up the waters of the Euphrates and this will cause Babylon's fall by opening the way for Cyrus to enter the city. History reveals that Cyrus the Great conquered Babylon in 539 BC because the waters of the Euphrates stopped flowing. Cyrus is called a shepherd, and in Isaiah 45:1 he was called the Lord's anointed. Just as Cyrus set Israel free without price, Jesus will set His people free without price.

Just as the waters of literal Babylon dried up, so the waters of spiritual Babylon must dry up. The waters, according to Revelation 17, are the nations that support Rome. This support begins to crumble.

And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues (Revelation 17:15).

Cyrus and his father-in-law Darius, a type of father and son, were the kings of the East who conquered Babylon in 539 BC when the waters of the Euphrates dried up. Who are the kings that will come to our rescue once the anti-typical Euphrates dries up? If Cyrus was a type of Christ, then the anti-typical kings of the East must be Christ and His Father. The prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel speak about Christ's Second Coming:

Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? he gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow (Isaiah 41:2).

Afterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east: And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory (Ezekiel 43:1-2).

Jesus will come in His glory, His Father's glory, and the glory of all the holy angels:

Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels (Mark 8:38).

The Seventh Plague

And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.

And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great (Revelation 16:17-21).

The final plague of hail destroys the nations of the earth. Babylon disintegrates and falls apart into its three components. The greatest earthquake in history destroys the last life on earth. Huge blocks of hail weighing over 100 pounds end the rebellion. No one is left. In the midst of this confusion, Christ's people are taken away.

In Job 38:22-23, we have a reference to this war of hail:

Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, Which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war?

Christ is the victor in this conflict:

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS (Revelation 19:11-16).

The redeemed will shout for joy when their conflict ends, because they will be taken to the heavenly Canaan.

And it shall be said in that day, Lo, 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 (Isaiah 25:9).

Misinterpreting the Plagues

The last plagues fall after [probation has closed](#). This is important to know because the last plagues could be misinterpreted. Probation closes after Jesus completes [judging every soul](#), dead or alive.

As soon as Christ is done this great work, He throws down His censer and says, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still" (Revelation 22:11). Then the seven last plagues begin to fall, and Jesus

begins preparations to go get His people.

There will no longer be any need for delay. All those that have chosen God have made their decision and been sealed ([Ezekiel 9:4-6](#)). All those who have chosen Satan have made their decision. No matter how much time they would be given, they would not change their minds. They have become joined to what they have chosen—for some it is God's ways, and for others it is sin and Satan's way.

There is no more hope of change, and therefore, no more need for God's people to live in this world full of sin and sorrow any longer.

During the [sixth plague](#) there is silence in heaven, while Jesus and his entourage of angels comes to redeem the saints from the earth. But prior to this plague, the first five plagues will be falling on earth, and many will be tempted to misinterpret what is happening. Satan is aware of the prophecies of the Scriptures, and knows that God will eventually overthrow his counterfeit system.

Satan knows that the last plagues are intended to punish his system, but the plagues will be a golden opportunity for him to heap the blame upon those that have resisted his system. He will have to devise a prophetic interpretation to explain why these plagues are falling.

Through miracles and signs, the world is already being led to believe that the Roman Catholic Church truly is the [representative of God on the earth](#). Even Jews and Muslims are capitulating. More signs and wonders will be used to bring the world to its knees believing that God is with the Papacy. The global disasters that will increase as we near the final moments of Earth's history will be blamed on those who refuse to bow before the Papal power.

The disasters will be considered a result of the moral decline and departure from the teachings of the Church, and this will lead the world leaders to cooperate even more with the Church to restore "peace."

Legislation to control the consciences of people will be easily passed when disasters are mounting, and the Papal power is calling for moral revival. Supposedly, the chastisements are meant to cleanse the world of wrong influences so that the way will be prepared for the coming of the Christ. But in reality, the plagues are a punishment upon those that have aligned themselves with Satan's government in deceiving the world.

Because the close of probation is such a serious event, now is the time to turn to God and align our lives with His will, if we want to be among the ones redeemed when He comes to take His people home (2 Corinthians 6:2).

This article is adapted from the book *Truth Matters* by Dr. Walter Veith.

i "History of Weare, New Hampshire, 1735-1888" (Boston Public Library).

ii *The Independent Chronicle* (Boston, June 8, 1780): 4.