



# Signs of Christ's Soon Return

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Periodically, interest in the possible “end of the world” gains headlines. In late 2012, that interest began to peak once again, primarily due to the date 12/12/12 and the end of the Mayan calendar on 12/21/12. Both of these dates were interpreted by some that the end of the world was near.

Joel Rosenberg, noted author (New York Times bestselling list), international speaker, and consistent blogger addressed the “end of the world” issue in his blog of December 12, 2012, under the title, [12/12/12 & the Mayans: Are these the End of Days? Could the Rapture happen this month?](#) (reprinted below). *The Bible chapters mentioned in his blog – Matthew 24 and Luke 21 – are reprinted in their entirety at the conclusion of this article.*<sup>1</sup>

“To be clear: the Bible says nothing about 12/12/12. Nor does it say anything about the Mayan calendar. The prophecies in Scripture, however, do speak a great deal about the End of Days, known as the ‘last days’ and the ‘latter times.’ In several of my books—including [Implosion: Can America Recover From Its Economic & Spiritual Challenges In Time?](#)—I examine a number of these prophecies and consider their implications for the U.S., Israel, and other nations.

“Short version: the Earth is not literally coming to an end this month. The Bible does say the earth will be destroyed someday, and then He will create a new earth. ‘Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away,’ wrote the Apostle John in a prophecy about the future found in Revelation 21:1. The Apostle Peter wrote, ‘The heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.’ (2 Peter 3:10). But four major prophetic events happen before the literal destruction and recreation of our planet: 1) the Rapture; 2) the Tribulation, a seven year period of God’s judgment; 3) the Second Coming of Christ; and 4) the ‘Millennial Kingdom,’ a thousand year period in which Christ reigns over the entire earth. So at this point, we are at least 1,007 years away from the end of the earth.

## **“Q: What does the Bible teach about the second coming of Jesus and something called ‘the Rapture’?”**

**“A:** The Bible describes two separate and distinct future events, both of which are often described as the Second Coming. The first event is what Bible scholars call the Rapture. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, the apostle Paul writes that ‘the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.’ In this passage, Paul is describing an event in which Jesus Christ will not physically, literally touch down on the earth but will first come ‘in the clouds’ and snatch away His true followers from the earth in an instant of time. Those who have not chosen to follow Christ, those who have not been ‘born again,’ will remain behind on the earth and will have to go through a terrible time of wars, famines, natural disasters, and divine judgments known as the Tribulation.

“The second event occurs at the end of the Tribulation. This is when the Bible teaches that Jesus will physically, literally return to earth, destroy His enemies, and set up His own righteous government based in Jerusalem. He will reign on earth for one thousand years. In Revelation 19:11–20:6, the apostle John writes, ‘I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. . . . He will rule [the nations]. . . . And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and he threw him into the abyss. . . . And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God . . . and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. . . . Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection. . . . They will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.’

**“Q: Are there any signs that will indicate when the return of Jesus Christ is close at hand, and if so, what are they?”**

**“A: One day while Jesus and His disciples were sitting on the Mount of Olives, overlooking the city of Jerusalem, the disciples asked Him this very question. Their query is recounted in Matthew 24:3, ‘Tell us,’ they said, ‘what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?’**

“Jesus could have refused to answer the question. Instead, He answered them at great length and detail. His answers are recorded in Matthew chapter 24 and in Luke chapter 21, and they provide a checklist of signs to watch for. Among them:

- Revolutions (Luke 21:9, NIV)
- The rise of false prophets and false messiahs (Matthew 24:4-5, 11, 23-27)
- Wars and rumors of wars (Matthew 24:6)
- Nations rising against nations (Matthew 24:7)
- Kingdoms rising against kingdoms (Matthew 24:7)
- Famines (Matthew 24:7)
- Plagues (Luke 21:11)
- Earthquakes (Matthew 24:7) and ‘great earthquakes’ (Luke 21:11)
- ‘Terrors’ that lead to ‘men fainting from fear’ (Luke 21:11, 26)
- Persecution of the believers (Matthew 24:9)
- Apostasy and betrayal of one another (Matthew 24:10)
- Increasing lawlessness (Matthew 24:12)
- People’s love for one another growing cold (Matthew 24:12)
- ‘The roaring of the sea and the waves’ (Luke 21:25)

The good news (the gospel) of Christ’s love and forgiveness will be preached ‘in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations’—even Muslim nations, even Radical nations—‘and then the end will come’ (Matthew 24:14)

“Jesus cautioned His followers not to speculate on the exact time of the Rapture or the Second Coming. In Matthew 24:36, He said that ‘of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.’ But ‘day and hour’ is a very narrow slice of time. By giving us at least fifteen other specific signs that would be happening in the last days, Jesus clearly wanted us to know when the time of His return was rapidly approaching.

“Why? He gave the answer in Matthew 24:42, when He said, ‘Therefore, be on the alert.’ He reinforced the point in the next verse, when again He urged His followers to be ‘on the alert.’ In Matthew 24:44, He stressed this critical point for a third time. ‘You also must be ready,’ He insisted, ‘for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.’

“Followers of Jesus Christ who study these signs are coming to the conclusion that they are being fulfilled today and that we are, in fact, living in the last days.”

This conclusion by believers in Christ is saturated with hope, a biblical concept highlighted in the *Days of Praise* daily devotional (11/23/12) that is reprinted below.

## **OUR HOPE**

Paul, in his opening salutation to Timothy, makes it clear that the Christian's hope is not just in Christ, but is Christ!

**1 Timothy 1:1**, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, *who is our hope*

In the New Testament, the term “hope” does not refer to some vague wish, but to a confident expectation of something (or someone) sure to come. It focuses especially on the promised return of Christ to complete His great work of redemption.

It is specifically called the blessed hope: “looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

It is also a living hope, for God the Father “hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3).

Furthermore, since Christ is our hope, it is a saving hope. “For we are saved by hope” (Romans 8:24). It is a glorious and joyful hope. It recognizes the present truth of “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27), so that we “rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:2).

It is not a blind hope but a reasonable hope, one founded on solid evidence, and every believer must “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15, )

Finally, this hope of the imminent coming of Christ, when at last “we shall be like Him,” is a purifying hope, for “every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:2-3). It also is a stabilizing hope, “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast” (Hebrews 6:19). In every way, God “hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace” (2 Thessalonians 2:16).<sup>2</sup>

## CONCLUSION

With hundreds of prophecies and promises in the Bible already fulfilled – along with even more that will be fulfilled—believers in Christ can confidently “lift up their heads because their redemption is drawing near.” (Luke 21:28).

If you have not received Jesus Christ as your Savior, this would be an ideal time for you to consider what He has done for you and how you can respond. Please see [Life’s Most Important Decision](#) or [Heaven ... Are You Going There?](#) . For a quick review of God’s plan for eternal salvation, see [Salvation Explained by the Romans Road](#).

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1. Joel C. Rosenberg’s Blog at <http://flashtrafficblog.wordpress.com/>

2. Days of Praise, November 23, 2012, at <http://www.icr.org/article/7041/>

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## Matthew 24 (New American Standard Version)

<sup>1</sup> Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. <sup>2</sup> And He said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.”

<sup>3</sup> As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things happen, and what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”

<sup>4</sup> And Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that no one misleads you. <sup>5</sup> For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many. <sup>6</sup> You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for *those things* must take place, but *that* is not yet the end. <sup>7</sup> For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. <sup>8</sup> But all these things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs.

<sup>9</sup> “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.

<sup>10</sup> At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. <sup>11</sup> Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. <sup>12</sup> Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. <sup>13</sup> But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. <sup>14</sup> This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

## Perilous Times

<sup>15</sup> “Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), <sup>16</sup> then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. <sup>17</sup> Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. <sup>18</sup> Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. <sup>19</sup> But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! <sup>20</sup> But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. <sup>21</sup> For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. <sup>22</sup> Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been

saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. <sup>23</sup> Then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ,’ or ‘There *He is*,’ do not believe *him*. <sup>24</sup> For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. <sup>25</sup> Behold, I have told you in advance. <sup>26</sup> So if they say to you, ‘Behold, He is in the wilderness,’ do not go out, *or*, ‘Behold, He is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe *them*. <sup>27</sup> For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. <sup>28</sup> Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

### **The Glorious Return**

<sup>29</sup> “But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. <sup>30</sup> And then the sign of the SON of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. <sup>31</sup> And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

### **Parable of the Fig Tree**

<sup>32</sup> “Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; <sup>33</sup> so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, *right* at the door. <sup>34</sup> Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. <sup>35</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

<sup>36</sup> “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. <sup>37</sup> For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. <sup>38</sup> For as in those 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 they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. <sup>40</sup> Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. <sup>41</sup> Two women *will be* grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.

### **Be Ready for His Coming**

<sup>42</sup> “Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. <sup>43</sup> But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. <sup>44</sup> For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think *He will*.

<sup>45</sup> “Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? <sup>46</sup> Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. <sup>47</sup> Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. <sup>48</sup> But if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is not coming for a long time,’ <sup>49</sup> and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; <sup>50</sup> the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect *him* and at an hour which he does not know, <sup>51</sup> and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

### **Luke 21** (New American Standard Version)

<sup>1</sup> And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. <sup>2</sup> And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. <sup>3</sup> And He said, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all *of them*; <sup>4</sup> for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on.”

<sup>5</sup> And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, <sup>6</sup> “*As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down.*”

<sup>7</sup> They questioned Him, saying, “Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what *will be* the sign when these things are about to take place?” <sup>8</sup> And He said, “See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am *He*,’ and, ‘The time is near.’ Do not go after them. <sup>9</sup> When you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end *does not follow* immediately.”

### **Things to Come**

<sup>10</sup> Then He continued by saying to them, “Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, <sup>11</sup> and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.

<sup>12</sup> “But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name’s sake. <sup>13</sup> It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. <sup>14</sup> So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; <sup>15</sup> for I will give you utterance and

wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. <sup>16</sup> But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put *some* of you to death, <sup>17</sup> and you will be hated by all because of My name. <sup>18</sup> Yet not a hair of your head will perish. <sup>19</sup> By your endurance you will gain your lives.

<sup>20</sup> “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. <sup>21</sup> Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; <sup>22</sup> because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled. <sup>23</sup> Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; <sup>24</sup> and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

### **The Return of Christ**

<sup>25</sup> “There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, <sup>26</sup> men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. <sup>27</sup> Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory. <sup>28</sup> But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

<sup>29</sup> Then He told them a parable: “Behold the fig tree and all the trees; <sup>30</sup> as soon as they put forth *leaves*, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. <sup>31</sup> So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. <sup>32</sup> Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place. <sup>33</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

<sup>34</sup> “Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; <sup>35</sup> for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. <sup>36</sup> But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

<sup>37</sup> Now during the day He was teaching in the temple, but at evening He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet. <sup>38</sup> And all the people would get up early in the morning *to come* to Him in the temple to listen to Him.