

Seven Signs of Christ's Second Coming

It is common for Christians to think we have entered the last days and the second coming of Jesus Christ is very near. As a result, we look for the signs of His coming. Many wonder if we are in the last days. The truth is Scripture tells us God took on human flesh in the little city of Bethlehem in the last days (Hebrews 1:2). God the Father waited to execute His plan of salvation until what He considered to be the right time or the fullness of time (Romans 5:6; Galatians 4:4). The length of time called the last days is still continuing and we are waiting for Jesus' coming. We are looking for signs that reveal His second coming is much closer than it has been before. As we wait, 2 Timothy 3:1 warns us that the last days will be more difficult than ever before. Verses 2-5 state,

For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; avoid such men as these. 2 Timothy 3:2-5 (NASB)

Here we learn the days will be more difficult as we experience the increasing evil. People will become more evil. 2 Peter 2:7 tells us that Lot was oppressed by the sinful behavior of the men in Sodom. Also, 2 Peter 3:3-4 warns that people will mock the second coming of Christ in the last days. Today, believers are seeing all of the same evil behaviors too!

Therefore, you should not be surprised that in our study most of the seven signs Jesus gave His twelve disciples about His second coming are negative. You will discover that some of the signs are already visible. Our study is from Luke 17:22-37.

BACKGROUND. In our last study, "The Kingdom of God is in Your Midst," we learned the Pharisees had asked Jesus to give

them signs about the coming of the kingdom of God. They did not understand the kingdom they were asking about was a spiritual kingdom and it already existed. They did not understand that believers everywhere were already part of that kingdom.

The Pharisees did not understand the millennial kingdom was the visible form of the invisible spiritual kingdom, which

would eventually become the eternal heaven. They did not understand that they could not enter this spiritual kingdom

unless they were believers in Jesus. They thought they were guaranteed entrance into the millennial kingdom because they were Jews.

In our last study, we learned that the Pharisees had asked Jesus about the kingdom. When Jesus answered,



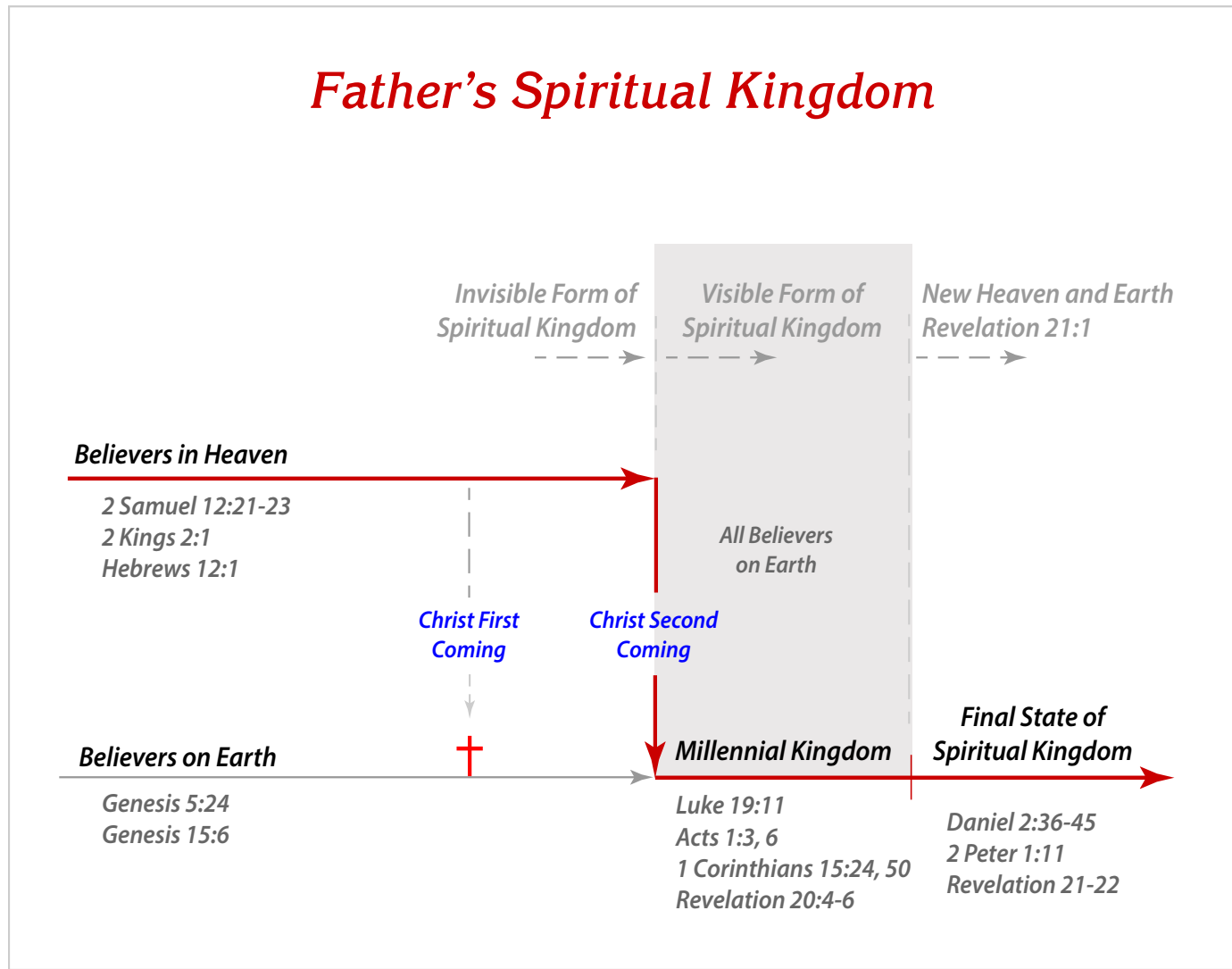
tual kingdom. The truth was they would never enter the spiritual kingdom because they would never be admitted. They were not believers. When they died, they would go to hell.

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT HIS SECOND COMING. Our study begins with Luke 17:22 which tells us that Jesus began to teach His disciples about His second coming. Apparently, Jesus had walked away from wherever He had been talking with the Pharisees (v. 20-21). In verse 22 we are told He began to teach the disciples about five future signs of His second coming. The first sign was occurring already in their lifetime and the last one would occur just before the millennial kingdom. The last sign is found in verse 37. These signs are also given in Matthew 24 and in the writings of the apostles. So, let's begin and learn about these signs of the second coming of Christ.

SECOND COMING - NOT IN THE APOSTLES' LIFETIME. The first sign of the second coming that Jesus gave the disciples was in verse 22.

And He said to the disciples, "The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it." Luke 17:22 (NASB)

Notice that Jesus told them they would *long to see* the "days of the Son of Man," that is, the days of the second coming of Jesus! The Greek word "long" is *epithymeo*. The word means much more than to long or to desire. It has the sense of great passion. It is sometimes translated as "lust," such as to lust after a woman (Matthew 5:28), or for a beggar to crave for food (Luke 16:21). That is, the disciples would greatly desire the



second coming to occur in their lifetime, but it would never happen.

Jesus' message was simple. The disciples would not see the millennial kingdom or the visible form of the spiritual kingdom in their lifetime. After death they would die and go to heaven, or the invis-

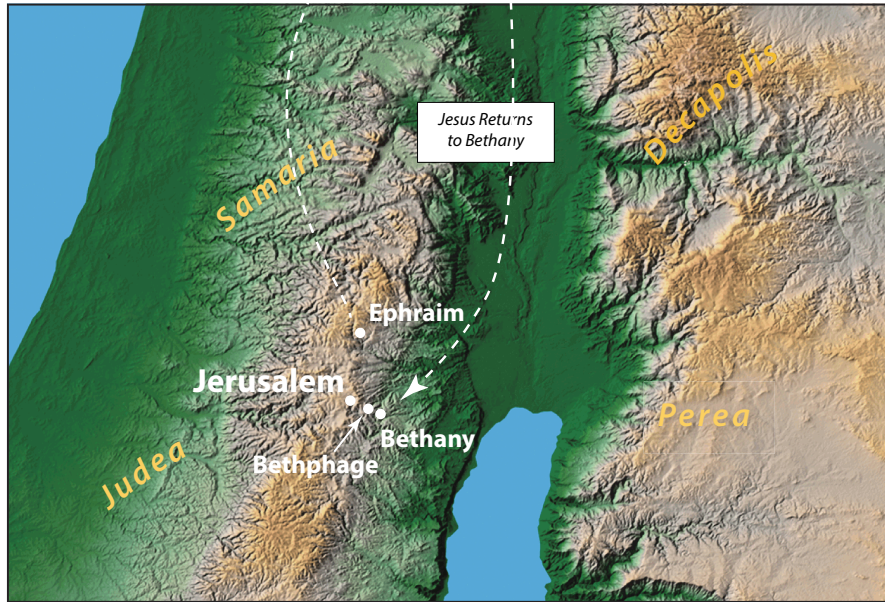
ible spiritual kingdom, and then at some future time enter the millennial kingdom. One would think they would have understood His statement. But later in Luke 19:11 and in Acts 1:6, we are told the disciples were thinking the kingdom would appear soon. This means they did not fully understand Jesus' teaching about the second coming of Christ. The same is true of many believers today. The confusion is increased since information about the future is scattered throughout the pages of Scripture. So we must not be quick to condemn them for they had Jesus as a teacher and still did not completely understand. They became His apostles.

Jesus' comment in verse 22 is very helpful for at least three reasons. First, this means the second coming did not occur during the lifetime of the disciples. It never occurred in the first century.

The second reason Jesus' teaching is helpful is that some hold to Preterist doctrine or theology. It claims the second coming of Jesus occurred in A.D. 70 when the Romans conquered the city of Jerusalem. But since Jesus clearly said the disciples would long to see the second coming and would not see it, this means Preterist theology is wrong.

Another reason to reject Preterist teaching is that the apostle Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:3-9 (A.D. 67-68) that the second coming had not yet occurred and encouraged all believers to be patient because God is patient, "not wishing for any to perish."

An even stronger and convincing fact that refutes Preterist



theology, is that the apostle John wrote in the book of Revelation in A. D. 95 that the second coming of Jesus and the kingdom were future events. Sadly, those who hold to this teaching argue that Revelation was written before A.D. 70, in order to argue for their viewpoint, but the early church

gave us proof that this is not true. Additionally, the apostle John lived until after he wrote Revelation in A.D. 95, which is fifteen years after A.D. 70. So, Jesus' point is clear. The second coming would *not* occur until after the time of the apostles.

The third reason Jesus' teaching is encouraging to us is that as Christians read New Testament, passages that seem to suggest the second coming would occur during the lifetime of the apostles (Philippians 4:5; James 5:9; Revelation 3:11), we must remember that Scripture does not contradict Scripture. This helps us understand that the apostles were not telling Christians that Jesus would appear during their lifetime. A careful study of Philippians 4:5; James 5:9 and Revelation 3:11 reveals the Greek language solves the apparent conflict.

SECOND COMING - VISIBLE TO EVERYONE. So, the first sign of Christ's coming was that it would not occur during the lifetime of the apostles. It would be delayed. The second sign of the second coming of Jesus is given in verses 23-24.

They will say to you, "Look there! Look here!" Do not go away, and do not run after them. For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day. Luke 17:23-24 (NASB)

Jesus' words are simple. Another sign of His coming is that people will claim that Jesus is already here or there. His warning was to not follow their advice or believe their words. For

Life and Heart of Jesus

Ministry In Perea - Winter of A.D. 33

	Ten Lepers Healed	Second Coming Prophesied	Parables On Prayer	Jesus On Divorce	Children In The Kingdom	Riches and The Kingdom	Owner & Laborers	3rd Prophecy Death & Resurrection	Pride of Disciples	Blind Man Healed
Matthew				19:1-12	19:13-15	19:16-30	20:1-16	20:17-19	20:20-28	20:29-34
Mark				10:1-12	10:13-16	10:17-31		10:32-34	10:35-45	10:46-52
Luke	17:11-19	17:20-37	18:1-14		18:15-17	18:18-30		18:31-34		18:35-43
John										

when Jesus does appear, everyone will see Him. When He does appear, His coming will be obvious to everyone. For Jesus said, “Just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky . . .” Anyone who has stood outside at night and watched the lightning strike in the dark sky knows that the lightning lights up the sky. Just as everyone can see the illuminated sky over a wide area, Jesus’ point was that everyone will see His coming when He comes. That is why we will not have to shout, “Look there! Look here!” He will be visible to everyone.

Other passages of Scripture reveal that when He arrives, the entire world will see Him. Matthew 24:27 states that when Jesus was talking to His disciples about the signs of His coming, He said this,

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. Matthew 24:27 (NASB)

Then two verses later Jesus added this,

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. 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. Matthew 24:29-30 (NASB)

Notice that Jesus said that all the tribes of the earth will see the Son of Man when He comes on the clouds of the sky. That is when everyone will see Him come! So, if someone tells you that Jesus has arrived, and they urge you to come and see Him, then you will know they are not telling you the truth.

Now how will He accomplish this? In the day of the Internet and instant video coverage around the world, it is not difficult to understand that surely our all powerful and all-wise God can arrange it so that everyone will see His coming at once. Our God does not need the Internet.

Later, when Jesus was on trial before the Sanhedrin Council, He said this to them,

You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.
Matthew 26:64 (NASB)

Notice that Jesus did not say that people would see Him if they were in Jerusalem, in Judea, or had some type of wireless connection. Jesus made an absolute statement. Wherever people are in the world, they will see Him when He comes (Revelation 1:7; 19:11-14). People will see Him even where wireless service does not exist. Even the people on the highest mountain, Mount Everest in Nepal, or in China will see Him. In summary, the second sign of the coming of Christ was that everyone will see Him when He comes.

SECOND COMING - WILL COME AFTER JESUS DIES.
Then Jesus gave the disciples the third sign that would occur before His second coming. He has just explained that the disciples would not see His second coming. Yet, everyone would see Him when He did come. Now He begins to give us a chronological sequence of events starting with His death. He said,

But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. Luke 17:25 (NASB)

He said, “But first . . .” The beginning of the timeline to the second coming of Christ started with His death on the cross and His rejection by those to whom He ministered. His death occurred on April 1, A.D. 33.

While the Jewish religious leaders were eager to murder Jesus when He came the first time, Zechariah 12:10-12 describes the response of the Jews in Jerusalem when they will see Jesus return in the future during the battle of Armageddon. The prophecy in Zechariah states that when Israel sees Jesus at His second coming, they will realize their great error and mourn. It says,

I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly

over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. Zechariah 12:10 (NASB)

Then Zechariah 14 prophesies His second coming at the battle of Armageddon and the establishment of the millennial kingdom. So, the third sign has already occurred. Now we are waiting for His second coming with all the holy ones at the battle of Armageddon.

SECOND COMING - PEOPLE EAGERLY SEEK PLEASURE.
The fourth sign of the second coming of Jesus is described in verses 26-30. After telling the disciples that He must die first, Jesus prophesied about the moral decline of the world that would occur just before He returns. He started by describing what it was like in the days of Noah.

But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Luke 17:26-27 (NASB)

It is important to know that the verb tenses of “eating,” “drinking,” “marrying,” and “giving in marriage” are in the imperfect tense. This implies repetitive activity. Genesis 6:5 describes the evil condition of the world at the time of Noah. It says,

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Genesis 6:5 (NASB)

Verse 11 adds,

Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. Genesis 6:11 (NASB)

In these two verses, we are told that the wickedness of man in Noah’s time was great, and the intent of their hearts was evil continually. Those are the facts. But notice the last word in verse 5 is “continually.” These two verses help us understand Jesus’ statement that in the last days just before His return,

people will be given to pleasure. When Jesus said “marrying” and “being given in marriage,” He seems to be referring to a preoccupation with sex.

Then in Luke 17:28-29, He gave another illustration from the city of Sodom.

It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Luke 17:28-29 (NASB)

Again, Jesus paints the picture of a pleasure seeking world. Once again, He uses the imperfect tense for “eating,” “drinking,” buying,” “planting,” and “building” to describe repetitive activity. Then He said the city was destroyed by fire and brimstone from heaven. While Jesus does not mention the sexual sin of homosexuality, the disciples knew that sin was the primary reason the city was destroyed.

But what was Jesus’ application? He tells us in verse 30.

It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. Luke 17:30 (NASB)

What is the message? The Greek word for “revealed” is *apokalypso*. From this word, we get the English word apocalypse. We know that Revelation is called the apocalypse of Christ. Therefore, Jesus was referring to His second coming, and when He comes the entire world will be given to pleasure.

The world will be constantly seeking pleasure. Now Jesus is not trying to teach us that eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, and building are sinful, because there is nothing evil about them by themselves. In fact, Jesus told the disciples that He would eat with them in the kingdom (Luke 22:15-16, 28-30). What Jesus meant was that the world *will be indulging* in those activities. The world will be given to pursuing every type of pleasure. The world will be preoccupied with food, drinking alcoholic beverages, selling, buying and sex. It is a picture of a world that wants to party every day. They will be selling to become wealthy and possessing much. Marrying and being given in marriage communicates the idea of a world pre-

occupied with sexual activities just before Jesus’ return. Jesus painted a hedonistic world given to the ultimate pursuit of pleasure. Pleasure will be more important than God. Prayer, confession of sin, and weekend recreational activities will be more important than church and Bible studies. People will choose pleasure rather than God. But true believers will be preoccupied with God rather than with pleasure!

If we are honest, Jesus just described the world as it is today. How about you? What are you pursuing? Is pleasure more important to you than obeying God? Frankly, Jesus does not rate very high in the lives of some people who claim to be Christians. They would rather stay at home on Sunday than go to church. Then they can have a leisurely morning, drink tea or coffee, maybe have sex on Sunday morning and then turn on a religious program on television. They “attend church” that way. Church becomes easy. Little effort is required. They can even talk during the online or television sermon, and express an opinion to whoever else is watching about a point with which they disagree. They can even listen to the church while doing some ironing or cooking. They can even eat breakfast while listening. I think you understand the point. They “kill two birds with one stone.” Such “so-called” Christians are more interested in pleasure than in God and ministering to other believers!

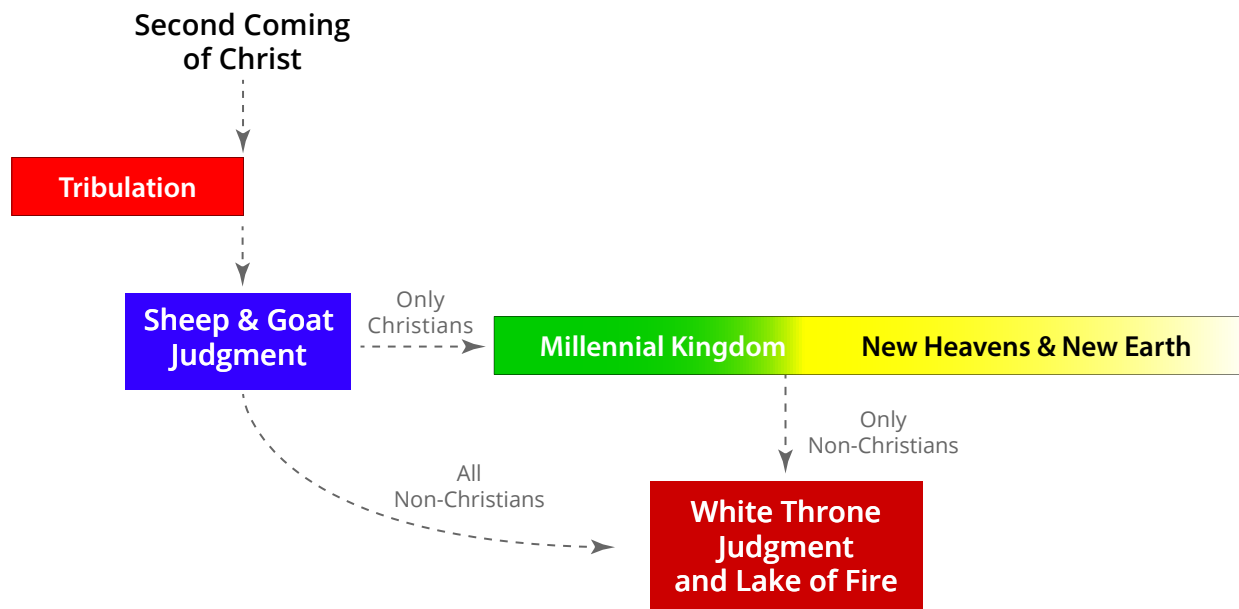
Rita Mae Brown once wrote,

I finally figured out the only reason to be alive is to enjoy it.

Frankly, it is sad to see people who call themselves Christians select a church because the music is great, even though the pastor’s preaching is shallow and never teaches anything new Sunday after Sunday. I knew a pastor who would give a review about a book he had read during the week. Do you know a pastor who never teaches anything new? The truth is a pastor who is not growing spiritually will never teach anything new! But with some professing believers that seems to be okay, as long as the music is great.

Some pastors will quote a few verses, and then never revisit the biblical text. The verses were only a springboard to talk about something else. He is not interested in explaining what God said because in-depth, verse-by-verse teaching is harder!

Goat and Sheep Judgment and White Throne Judgment Timeline



Such pastors have given into their own pleasure and not what would honor God. God wants what He said clearly explained and taught.

In summary, at the second coming of Jesus the world will be given to pleasure—eagerly pursuing it! This will be true from the pulpit to the pew. Why? Because those inside the church also live in the world and are influenced by the culture that surrounds them. In the last days, churches will be filled with unbelievers because the church appeals to them. But a true Christian will look more like Jesus.

Are you more controlled by your passions or by Christ? Jesus' message in verses 26-30 is that the world will be given to pleasing their passions! It will be the proof that most of the world and the churches will be populated with unbelievers. If Jesus were to read your mind, what would He say you are pursuing?

SECOND COMING - PEOPLE EAGERLY SEEK POSSESSIONS. The fifth sign of the second coming of Jesus is described in verses 31-33.

On that day, the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out; and likewise the one who is in the field must not turn back. Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. Luke 17:31-33 (NASB)

This is an important passage. It is clear in Jesus's first example that someone is more interested in his or her possessions. The same principle is true in the second example. Someone is out in the field and they return to some place, most likely their home. But what is Jesus' message? The key to the answer is remembering that Lot's wife was more interested in what the city of Sodom had to offer than in escaping from the evil city. This means that Jesus' message is that when He comes many people will be more interested in their possessions than leaving it all behind and meeting Him.

Just imagine that Christ and all of the holy ones (Zechariah 14:6; Matthew 24:29-31; Revelation 19:14-16), the holy angels and believers since the cross, descend to earth. The world will see the sky brilliantly illuminated as Jesus comes. But rather

than run to Him, some will run after their possessions. Many will be seekers after worldly possessions in addition to their own pleasures. This sign is not a sign that the coming of Christ is near. Instead, it reveals how men and women will respond when they see Christ. This illustrates that God will not be important to people. Sadly, this is already true today.

JESUS DECIDES WHO ENTERS THE KINGDOM. The sixth sign of Jesus' coming is described in Luke 17:34-35. It is not a sign that He is near, but a sign that He has *already* arrived.

I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other will be left. There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken and the other will be left. [Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left.] Luke 17:34-35 (NASB)

This passage is similar to Matthew 24:38-41. Many Christians think this describes the rapture, but that is not true. In Matthew 24 this event occurs after the second coming of Christ. Remember the rapture occurs before the tribulation and the second coming of Christ occurs at the end of the tribulation. That means Matthew 24:38-41 occurs after the rapture.

To be specific, Matthew 24:38-41 refers to the separation of unbelievers from believers. It refers to the Sheep and Goat Judgment which is described in greater detail in Matthew 25:31-46. At the Sheep and Goat Judgment, Christ will separate the sheep, which symbolize believers, from the goats, which symbolize unbelievers after Christ's victory at the battle of Armageddon. (Zechariah 14:1-7; Revelation 19:11-21). Then Christ will send the unbelievers to hades, where they will wait for the White Throne Judgment described in Revelation 20:11-15. But the believers will enter the millennial kingdom and live there for one thousand years.

Here in Luke 17, Jesus' illustration follows the second coming of Christ also. That is, this is not about the rapture. It is about an event that follows the second coming of Christ. Therefore, Jesus tells us in Luke 17:31-36 that two women will be grinding but *only* one of them will remain. The one who disappears is an unbeliever who is sent to hades to wait final judgment. The one who is left will enter the millennial king-

dom which takes place on planet earth.

It should be noted that verse 36 does not appear in any significant manuscript. Therefore, it should not be included in our Bibles.¹

JESUS DECIDES WHO GOES TO HELL. The seventh sign of Jesus' coming is described in the last verses of Luke 17.

And answering they said to Him, "Where, Lord?" And He said to them, "Where the body is, there also the vultures will be gathered." Luke 17:37 (NASB)

The disciples' question, "Where, Lord?" is confusing, because it is not clear why they asked the question. It is also important to notice that it appears Jesus ignored their question. They may have wondered where the events Jesus described would take place. They may have wondered where the one woman who was "taken" was going to be taken. Whatever they wanted to know, it appears that Jesus described the result of His judgment on the world as the battle of Armageddon, for He said the vultures would be gathered there.

In Matthew 24:27-28, Jesus refers to His second coming and then,

Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. Matthew 24:28 (NASB)

Also in Revelation 19:17-18, we are told the birds of the air will eat the flesh of the armies defeated at the second coming of Christ. Jesus' point is that the Sheep and Goat judgment will occur immediately after His second coming. Therefore, the seventh sign of His coming is that unbelievers will be judged. Their mortal bodies will be killed, eaten, and their spirits will go to hell to wait for final judgment.

CONCLUSION. This has been a long study, but an important one. It reveals that the second coming has not yet occurred. But all of the signs that will occur just before His coming are already visible. So, have you evaluated what is important to you? Are you like those Jesus described? Are you seeking

1. Bruce M. Metzger states, "In view of the weighty manuscript authority supporting the shorter text . . . it is more probable that copyists assimilated the passage to Mt 24:40." Bruce M Metzger. A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament. United Bible Societies. 1994. p. 143.

pleasure? Would you rather have wealth and possessions than Jesus? There is a song titled, "I'd Rather Have Jesus." Here is the first part of the song. I trust these lyrics are true of you as we wait for Jesus' coming!

I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold;
I'd rather be His than have riches untold.
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or land;
I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand.

Than to be the king of a vast domain or be held in sins dread sway
I'd rather have Jesus than anything
This world affords today.²

Lord, Jesus, come quickly!

2. Rhea Miller wrote the English lyrics. Swedish sources credit Prince Oscar Bernadotte (15 November 1850 - 4 October 1953) with the original words.