

## What Are the Signs of Jesus' Return?

**Matthew 24:3:** *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?*



As Christians, we all draw great comfort from the promise of Jesus' return. Just as in his first advent, his presence in his second advent proclaims that God's plan is not only underway but unbreakable as well. The challenge comes when we, as Christians, try to comprehend the mechanics and timing of his return. There are many prophecies, many hints and many seemingly confusing statements about his return. So, what are we supposed to do with all of this? In this episode, we are suggesting we look at an overview of several aspects of his return and then settle on one aspect that describes a specific sign of his return that is plain and simple, and yet somewhat hidden from many who search.

**Let's begin by laying out the basic context of Jesus' own prophecy of his return:**

**Matthew 24:1-2:** *1 Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when his disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to him. 2 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.*

Jesus spoke about this shocking and horrific coming event.

**Sometime later, his disciples asked for clarity:**

**Matthew 24:3:** *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?*

It's interesting that Jesus told the disciples *not one stone here* (describing the Temple) *will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.* But then he said nothing more.

The answers to these three important questions were complicated and only given to his disciples. Unlike many of his other teachings, they were not spoken to the public.

The questions asked by the disciples were:

1. When will these things (the Temple's destruction) happen?
2. What will be the sign (indication) of your coming (Jesus' presence)?
3. What will be the sign (indication) of the end of the age?



**Key observation:** Jesus had set the disciples up to be able to ask these questions.

As we know through history, the destruction of the Temple in AD 70 would be the literal fulfillment of Jesus' own proclamation to the Pharisees about their "house being desolate" (**Matthew 23:38**). This very desolation (the dispersion of Israel, the desolation of no

longer being a nation) would begin the process by which his disciples, far in the future, would be able to comprehend Jesus' return.

One more key introduction point regarding the often-misunderstood word for *coming*:

**Matthew 24:3:** ...*what will be the sign of your coming <3952>, and of the end of the age?*

**Coming:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3952 *parousia*;  
from the present participle of #3918; a being near, i.e. advent (often, return; specially, of Christ to punish Jerusalem, or finally the wicked); (by implication) physically, aspect:—coming, presence

The King James Version translates as "coming," "presence"  
Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: presence

**Come:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3918 *pareimi*; to be near, i.e. at hand

The King James Version translates as come,  
have (a rendering that results from an idiom peculiar to the Greek or Hebrew),  
be here, + lack, (be here) present

The King James Version often translates the same word or group of words with different English terms depending on the context, even adding explanatory phrases (like the "+ lack" or "(be here)") to convey the full nuance of the original Hebrew or Greek.

The word for coming means to be near, at hand or present, not "on the way," but rather "already in the room."

**Here are two examples of how *parousia* is translated into English:**

**2 Corinthians 10:10:** (KJV) *For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence <3952> is weak, and his speech contemptible.*

**Philippians 2:12:** (KJV) *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence <3952> only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

These two scriptures help us understand that this word is used in the context of being there, NOT arriving sometime in the future or being on the way. When we look at **Matthew 24:3** again, *When will these things happen, and what will be the sign of your coming?*—It really means, *What will be the sign of your presence? What confirmation will we have to show you have returned?* This is a big difference!



It means that as we consider the time and manner of Jesus' return, we should be looking for verification of his current presence—evidence he is here—rather than attempting to identify events that will bring it about in the future.

HOW does Jesus return? Here are just a few scriptural perspectives as an overview:



**Jesus returns with power and glory:**

**Luke 21:27:** (KJV) *And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.*

Clouds are generally symbolic of trouble. Some Christians expect Jesus to publicly appear in literal clouds. However, it's important to understand prophetic symbols to help us understand the bigger picture.



**Jesus returns with a shout and a trumpet:**

**1 Thessalonians 4:16:** *For 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.*

This is clearly a big event. Again, we might think this is a literal shout, a literal voice, but often prophecy involves symbolic meanings.



**Jesus returns with his mighty angels:**

**2 Thessalonians 1:7:** *and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels...*

We believe Jesus' faithful footstep followers will be in heaven with him immediately following his return, represented as *his mighty angels*. The word for angel is "messenger." They are with Jesus in setting up God's kingdom.



**Jesus returns as a thief:**

**2 Peter 3:10:** *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which 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.*

Again, we have to recognize that prophecy's language is often symbolic. We are assured earth will not be burned up (*it remains forever, Ecclesiastes 1:4*). **2 Peter 3:10** shows the destruction of earth's current ruling powers and political structures (*heavens and elements*). *The Lord will come like a thief—covertly—to begin that process.*

**Another reference to "thief":**

**1 Thessalonians 5:1-2:** *1 Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.*

How do all these descriptions of the manifestations of Jesus' return work together?

- With power and great glory
- With a shout
- With the trumpet of God
- With his mighty angels

And yet, *like a thief*. How is that possible?

**Because it happens as a process, not simultaneously.**

The return of Jesus is not instantaneous—*I'm here!*—and everything changes immediately. **It is a process** introduced by the *thief in the night* approach, and then all those other descriptions happen.





**REASONING THROUGH THE REALITY OF JESUS' RETURN:**

As we begin to observe one of the greatest prophetic events of all time, let us take our time and absorb the small details that sometimes get overlooked. These details hold vital keys to unlocking the mysteries of Jesus' second advent.

Instead of trying to fit the details into a predetermined viewpoint, let's allow them to speak to us, placing themselves in the puzzle where they belong. With just a few details in place, we already have begun to understand the care needed to comprehend the magnitude of Jesus coming back.

**So far, we see many differing aspects of how Jesus' return is revealed.  
Next, we need to grasp the "why" of his return.**

Several scriptural statements give us several reasons for Jesus' return. While we won't go through all the details of all the reasons, we will lay out four broad-based objectives, but not necessarily in order of accomplishment, which we will get to soon. By laying these out, we will begin to learn what the signs of his return are, and which signs might be most easily identified.

\* Why does Jesus return, and will anyone immediately understand this particular sign?

\* **The sign—Jesus returns to gather his true followers to him:**

**John 14:1-3:** *1 Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also.*

That is a beautiful, powerful promise, and Jesus made it to his disciples the night before his crucifixion. He is saying, *I will come back and bring you to where I am.*

**We have Jesus' promise, and next we have a limited explanation:**

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-14:** *13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.*

*Those who have fallen asleep in Jesus—those faithful followers of Jesus who died will be raised from the dead at Jesus' return, but this event will be unseen by human eyes. This confirms what we read in 2 Thessalonians 1:7 that Jesus and his "angels," his faithful ones, will be with him. Even though there would be no outward sign of this, its truth brings us great comfort that the end (death) is not the end!*

Q But don't some Christians believe a "rapture" is one of those outward signs?



Yes, and the concept of a rapture comes from the next verses of **1 Thessalonians 4**. However, it is not doctrinally correct, and the word "rapture" does not appear in Scripture. For a scriptural walkthrough on this topic, please listen to our three-part series titled, "[Do I Suffer From Rapture Anxiety?](#)"

\* Why does Jesus return, and will anyone immediately understand this particular sign?

\* **The sign—Jesus returns to bring the kingdoms of this world to an end:**  
**Matthew 24:21–22:** *21 For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. 22 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.*

Was this *great tribulation* (trouble) already fulfilled by some worldwide event, like World War I or II? To determine this, we have to look at what the trouble brings.

**This trouble, this removal of Satan's governments and false religions, is necessary to make room for God's rightful kingdom to take over:**

**Daniel 2:44:** *In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.*

The crushing of these kingdoms is part of the worldwide troubles at Jesus' return. Remember, we are looking for signs of his presence, not his "coming." He has to be present *to crush and put an end to all these kingdoms*.

If we only read the destruction part of the text it would be scary, but the destruction is a necessary process to replace the old sinful ways with the new and perfect way. God's perfect kingdom can't be established while man's corrupt systems rule.

While the outward signs of the destruction of these kingdoms may seem obvious, which specific "trouble" is THE trouble referred to? It's difficult to determine.

\* Why does Jesus return, and will anyone immediately understand this particular sign?

\* **The sign—Jesus returns to restore the perfect harmony to humanity that was lost in Eden:**

**Acts 3:20–21:** *20 and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, 21 whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.*

God sends Jesus, but Jesus does not return UNTIL *the period of restoration of all things*, which we have just seen begins with great trouble! The process of restoration always begins with pulling things apart, dismantling what exists. Things can't be restored to their original state until the broken parts are fixed and the missing parts are put back.

## Rick's Personal Story

I used to make and repair furniture. Many times, I would fix chairs that would rock when they weren't supposed to or be loose. The way to fix a chair like that is not just to try to shoot some glue into those joints. I would pull the whole thing apart, sand it down, and rebuild it so it was solid as a rock. I would take it apart before I could put it back together.

**This restoration time was clearly prophesied and is longed for by humanity:**

**Romans 8:18–19:** *18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.*

Other signs we could look for are described in **Daniel 12:4:** (KJV) *...even to the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge will increase.* We certainly see that today with travel and advanced technology. Again, we are looking for signs of his presence, not “coming.”

The signs of restoration can be seen as the destruction of our world order progresses. Clearly our world today is different than any other time in history.

\* Why does Jesus return, and will anyone immediately understand this particular sign?

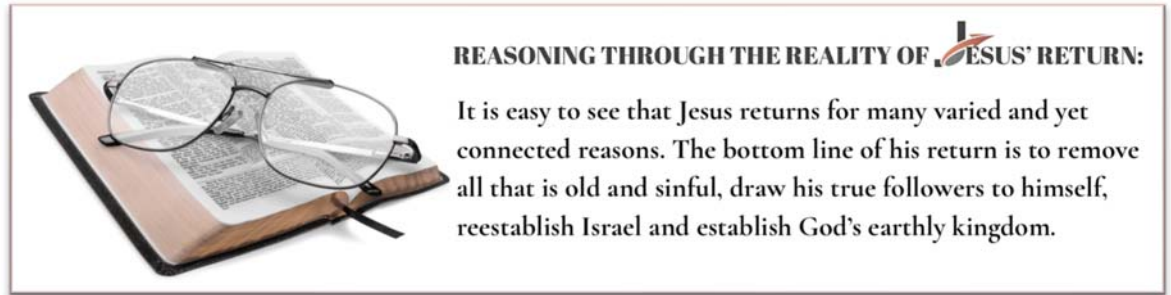
We left this one for last for a very specific reason—we see it as an irrefutable sign unfolding before our eyes.

\* **The sign**—Jesus returns to regather Israel as a nation, as they were about to be cast off in his first advent:

**Matthew 24:32–33:** *32 Now learn the parable from the fig tree (referring to Israel): when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; 33 so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that he (Jesus) is near, right at the door.*

As we referred to previously in **Matthew 23:38**, Jesus told the Pharisees *your house (referring to Israel) is being left to you desolate.* This statement predicted the destruction of the Temple and the scattering of the people in AD 70. In in this parable, Jesus reveals the rebirth of Israel represented by a fig tree putting forth leaves, connecting it with his return and presence. More on this soon.





Jesus' return will accomplish many different things. This process unfolds in God's time through Jesus' powerful removal of Satan and putting the world back in order.

When we put all these pieces together, it becomes evident that Jesus' return is a long process that reshapes everything!

**Of the several signs that we have observed, the regathering of Israel seems to jump out as the easiest to pinpoint. What can we learn from this sign?**

As we are about to see, Jesus left us many teachings to alert us to follow Israel's history and their regathering. As we unfold this, his message will become clear. If we pay attention to and understand Israel's regathering, we will trace a significant portion of the quietly laid-out evidence of the beginning of his return as *a thief in the night*.

Jesus taught us much regarding Israel. Old Testament prophecy predicted the rejection of Jesus by the nation of Israel despite his teachings, miracles and exemplary life.

**During his ministry, Jesus illustrated this sad truth by picturing them as a fig tree in the following parable:**

**Luke 13:6-9:** *6 And he began telling this parable: A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any. 7 And he said to the vineyard-keeper, Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground? 8 And he answered and said to him, Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; 9 and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down.*

In this parable, a fig tree is in the vineyard. It is taking up space and valuable soil, but it is not producing fruit, so the parable says the tree is going to be cut down.

During the time of Jesus' three-and-a-half-year ministry, he had been looking for spiritual fruitage from the nation of Israel. But we know that in the end, the "crop" was just a few individuals. The tree in the parable has three years to produce fruit and then was given a little more time, representing that Jesus' ministry was the testing period for Israel.

Where was the fig tree? *Planted in his vineyard*. From the Parable of the Vine and Branches Jesus gave at the end of his ministry in **John 15:1-8**, we understand this to be in God's "vineyard."

Back to the fig tree parable, there were only a few who followed Jesus, and the nation as a whole rejected him. The vineyard is a picture of the spiritual call. The fig tree, representing Israel, would be cut down because there was no fruitage. Jesus warned Israel during his ministry and again accentuated this warning at the end of his ministry.

**Jesus triumphantly entered Jerusalem in Matthew 21:1–17, then the cursing of a fig tree followed:**

**Matthew 21:18–19:** *18 Now in the morning, when he was returning to the city, he became hungry. 19 Seeing a lone fig tree by the road, he came to it and found nothing on it except leaves only; and he said to it, No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you. And at once the fig tree withered.*

We have established that Israel was represented by a fig tree, with Jesus acknowledging their rejection of him. However, it's important to note that the day before he cursed the fig tree, he rode into Jerusalem and was proclaimed their king and Messiah. How could such a contradiction exist?

While some individuals sincerely followed him, the nation as a whole rejected him. Jesus was seen as a threat to the Pharisees, chief priests and scribes, and they plotted against him, even after Jesus warned them several times.

**A few days later, Jesus formally cast Israel off as he called out the scribes and Pharisees—Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!**

**Matthew 23:37–39:** *37 Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. 38 Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! (a powerful rejection) 39 For I say to you, from now on you will not see me until you say, BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD! (a powerful promise for the future)*

Jesus was quoting from **Psalm 118:26**. Amazingly, this is the same prophecy the people had just shouted to him as he rode into Jerusalem in **Matthew 21:9**: *BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST!*

Jesus was showing and telling them he was going to return, but they weren't listening.

**Psalm 118:22–26:** *22 The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone.*

This undeniably refers to Jesus. He who was rejected in the prophecy becomes the centerpiece.

*23 This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.*

Once rejected, he now returns and saves in the name of God.

*24 This is the day which the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. 25 O LORD, do save, we beseech You; O LORD, we beseech You, do send prosperity! 26 Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD; we have blessed you from the house of the LORD.*

In verse 24, we see that the period of Israel's disfavor—their casting off—ends with the promise of Jesus' return to redeem them. Even his enemies will shout, *Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD.*

The crowd shouted this at Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Then Jesus reminded those who were rejecting him that they themselves would shout this in the future because the word of God could not be held silent. He predicts that they will understand and see things differently at his return.

Days later, Jesus was crucified, and he spoke the beginning words of **Psalm 22**—*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*

**Psalms 22:7–8:** *7 All who see me sneer at me; they separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying, 8 Commit yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver him; let Him rescue him, because He delights in him.*

The chief priests, scribes and elders mocked Jesus by quoting this same Psalm! What was said in mockery would be fulfilled in prophecy in a glorious way.

<b>Psalm 22:8 (Prophecy)</b>	<b>Matthew 27:43 (Fulfillment)</b>
<i>Commit yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver him; let Him rescue him, because He delights in him.</i>	<i>He trusts in God; let God rescue Him now, if He delights in Him; for he said, I am the Son of God.</i>

The mockers at the cross weren't just cruel. In quoting **Psalm 22**, they were unknowingly affirming that Jesus was fulfilling messianic prophecy in real time!

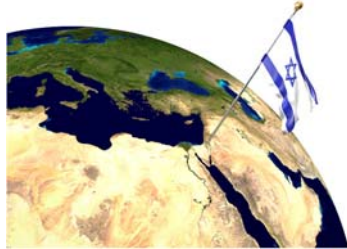
**Several verses later in that same Psalm, the restitution work of Jesus' return was foreshadowed:**

**Psalms 22:22–24:** *22 I will tell of Your name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise You. 23 You who fear the LORD, praise Him; all you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, and stand in awe of Him, all you descendants of Israel. 24 For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; nor has He hidden His face from him; but when he cried to Him for help, He heard.*

In these verses, a restored Israel is shown to be back in God's favor. Remember Jesus declared (**Matthew 23:38,39**), *Your house is being left unto you desolate! For I say to you, from now on you will not see me until you say, BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!*

Then, in **Psalm 22**, he was mocked by those quoting these verses, and yet a few verses later, it shows Israel restored. *Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD.*

*All you descendants of Jacob and all you descendants of Israel*—this is a poetic way to refer to all the Israelites. (Jacob was renamed “Israel” after wrestling with God in **Genesis 32:28**, so his descendants are called both children of Jacob and children of Israel.)



So, what will be the signs of his presence? One sign is that Jesus comes to restore Israel. This has been partially fulfilled in the last few decades. The Jewish people have returned to their homeland. While restoration is not complete, it is prophecy being fulfilled in our day.

The beginning of **Psalm 22** is heartbreaking because it describes Jesus' last moments on the cross.

**But the end of Psalm 22 builds our faith and encourages our hearts when it explains the reason for the cross for all mankind:**

**Psalms 22:27–28:** *27 All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will worship before You. 28 For the kingdom is the LORD's and He rules over the nations.*

*All the families of the nations*—this is why the cross was necessary! All the nations of the world are shown here to be in favor! *Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD (Psalm 118:26)*. Blessed is he, Jesus, because he blesses ALL.

Jesus provided the Pharisees with clear prophetic proof of what would happen to them and their nation, regardless of their actions. They chose to take the sanctity of the truth and used it to mock him.

He told them about his return, but they did not listen. Are we listening to how Jesus warned Israel so that we don't make the mistake of not accepting his presence? Are we recognizing the prophecies being fulfilled before our eyes as signs of his presence? Or we are still looking for a future coming?

When we consider the “thief in the night” aspect, not realized by most, it makes so much sense in the process of undoing the present-day structures of government and false religion—the tearing down so God's kingdom can be put in its place.



**REASONING THROUGH THE REALITY OF JESUS' RETURN:**

Jesus was clear regarding his mission and did everything in his power to show those of God's chosen people what was in store for them. While he did not speak out plainly about his return to those who hated him, he left them scriptural clues from their own sacred writings.

We need to look at those clues and take advantage of what we have been given. We are living at a time when we can put those things together.

The depth and wisdom behind Jesus dealing with those who stood against him is truly breathtaking. He gave them every opportunity to see on every occasion.

**The connection between Jesus' return and Israel's reestablishment is undeniable. What other evidence is there?**

Our next scriptural observations combine Jesus' pre-crucifixion statements with some of what is written by John in Revelation. The connection we will see is simple and remarkable, and it will help to truly confirm the reality of Jesus' return. He has returned as a thief in the night, and this phase of his return has been relatively invisible up to this point unless we are willing to make the scriptural connections.

**Back to the Parable of the Fig Tree:**

**Matthew 24:32-33:** *32 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; 33 so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that he is near, right at the door.*



We can look back historically to see when the Jewish people began returning to their land. In the year 1878, they were legally allowed to purchase land in Israel. The first Jewish settlement was called in Hebrew, *Petah Tikva*, meaning “door of hope,” a thriving town today. Isn't it beautiful how verse 33 ends with Jesus being *right at the door*?

The tree is described as being *tender and puts forth its leaves*. The leaves represent something bigger than the tiny, tender beginning.

**The Luke rendering of this prophecy adds another detail to these leaves:**

**Luke 21:29-30:** *29 Then he told them a parable: Behold the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near.*

The tree here is established. At the tender beginning of *Petah Tikva* in 1878, the Jews were not yet a nation. They were just allowed to buy land and cultivate it for the first time.

Israel, represented by the fig tree, was finally declared a nation on May 14, 1948. But what about *all the trees*?

These represent other nations being established. Something remarkable has happened in history regarding nations since World War I:

(Source: Wikipedia) Since World War I, approximately 195 sovereign states have come into existence. This number includes countries that gained independence from colonial powers, empires, and other nations, as well as new states formed during the post-war period.

Israel, though, was removed from its land in AD 70 with the destruction of the Temple and Rome scattering the Jews to the corners of the known world. More than 1,800 years later, the Jewish people returned to that same land and became a sovereign nation. Never in history has any other nation “sprouted leaves” in this way!



Back to the Parable of the Fig Tree and Jesus *right at the door*: The return of Jesus was not only promised many times over, but it was also shown in the progression of the history of the true church in Revelation. Revelation chapters 2 and 3 list seven churches, which we believe represent seven stages of history leading up to our present time.

Let’s take a quick look at the last four stages to watch the process unfold.

The 4<sup>th</sup> stage

**Revelation 2:18,25:** *18 And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write:...25 Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come.*

The point is: *Hang on, you don’t have a lot. Hold fast until I return.*

The 5<sup>th</sup> stage

**Revelation 3:1,3:** *1 To the angel of the church in Sardis write:... 3 ...Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.*

In other words: *Wake up and focus because I’m coming, but it will be quietly and secretly like a thief.* The world in general will not at first recognize Jesus’ second presence.

The 6<sup>th</sup> stage

**Revelation 3:7,11:** *7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:... 11 I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.*

*I’m almost there. I’m on my way. I’m getting closer.*

There is a difference here. *It’s not long now; the time is near.* The prolonged wait of the previous states of the church is almost over.

The 7<sup>th</sup> and final stage

**Revelation 3:14,20:** *14 To the angel of the church in Laodicea write... 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with me.*

*I have arrived!*

In **Matthew 24**, Jesus assured us that when we see Israel showing signs of life, he will be *right at the door*; he will be here! In Revelation, he tells us that in the last stage of the church, he will be at the door knocking; he is here!

The signs of Israel's reestablishment are absolutely key to identifying the time frame of his return. His secret, thief-like presence is revealed only to those who are watching. In the 5<sup>th</sup> stage, he specifically warned those who were "sleeping" they would miss this beginning phase of his return. For those not watching, he would be like a thief.

The initial stage of his return was basically imperceptible, covered in darkness, developing under the cover of dark clouds of trouble in 1878 with the establishment of *Petah Tikvah*.

Seventy years later, Israel was proclaimed a recognized nation. Coincidentally, 70 years after that, in 2018, Jerusalem was recognized as the capital of Israel. These things are no mistake. This shows us the unfolding of God's prophecies and the return of Jesus.

Jesus said to the Pharisees, *Blessing them, you will say Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD*. By his actions we can see his return, even though it is still invisible to most of the world.

God's kingdom is not yet set up, as there is foundational work to be put in place before this world gets better. But we are assured through prophecy that God's plan continues to unfold.




We are not looking forward and predicting; we are students of prophecy, looking back and seeing what happened according to Scripture. We can put together concrete evidence of historical facts with scriptural truth, and the results come together in ways we never expected.

**Back to Jesus' own words about his return:**

**Matthew 24:36-39:** *36 But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the son, but the Father alone. 37 For the coming <3952> of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. 38 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, 39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming <3952> of the Son of Man be.*

What about the glory? It's coming. What about reigning as king in an obvious way? It's coming. What about the resurrection? It's coming. Let's take the value of these prophecies and recognize that God's plan is glorious. It is unfolding even if we can't physically see it all yet.



**REASONING THROUGH THE REALITY OF JESUS' RETURN:**

Jesus specifically told us about several signs of his return because his return would not be obvious. As we connect scriptures and themes, we can see how, by using Israel's reestablishment, we are given enough to grasp what part of God's plan we are living in. Let us find comfort and inspiration in this knowledge as we see God's plan continuing to unfold.

*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth.*

Think about the amazing pieces of Scripture and history we have put together just by looking at what has been laid out before us just by studying and understanding Jesus' words.

In our personal preparations, we were struck by two realizations:

1. In the prophecies to the Pharisees, Jesus told them so clearly what would happen from that same prophecy the people were crying out to proclaim him as king.
2. *Standing at the door*—he is at the door when the fig tree is growing, showing signs of life, and then putting forth leaves. At the same time, he is standing and knocking at the door for the true church. *I stand at the door and knock.*

The question is, will we open the door to him and let his presence bless us at this end of this age?

**So, what are the signs of Jesus' return?  
For Rick, Jonathan, Julie and Christian Questions...  
...Think about it!**

*All scriptures cited are from the NASB1995 translation unless otherwise noted.*



**Next episode**  
Episode 1397: What Does It Mean to Have Faith As A Mustard Seed?



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## Bonus Material and Study Questions

### Recommended additional study:

**Ep. 1259, 1260, 1262: Do I Suffer From Rapture Anxiety?**

*Questioning the rapture in the light of careful scriptural analysis*

<https://christianquestions.com/category/series/rapture-anxiety/>

**Ep. 1194: Could Jesus Return Without You Knowing?**

*Revealing the three scripturally-progressing phases of Jesus' return*

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1194-return-of-jesus/>



For children, parents and Bible class teachers, continue your studies on this topic with these short, animated videos for kids at ChristianQuestions.com/YouTube:

- When will God's kingdom be here?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWTh5Bg4kXE>

- What will God's kingdom be like?

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUqK3p\\_uHxk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUqK3p_uHxk)

- What did Jesus teach?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NDqMGU5B0AM>

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### Here are a few other observations regarding the return of Jesus:

First, another proof that the word for *coming* in Matthew does mean “presence.”

#### Comparing to Noah's day, life went on until sudden destruction:

**Matthew 24:37:** (NRSV) *For as the days of Noah were, so will be the **coming** <3952> (presence) of the Son of Man.*

#### The following parallel text proves the thought of “presence” rather than *coming*:

**Luke 17:26:** (NRSV) *Just as it was in the days of Noah, so too it will be in the days of the Son of Man.*

#### Second, a deeper study of how Jesus' return being like lightning does not mean what many interpret it to mean:

**Matthew 24:27:** *For just as the **lightning** <796> comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the **coming** <3952> of the Son of Man be.*

Using “presence” verifies that Jesus was talking about conditions occurring AFTER his return.

We believe this verse is describing Jesus' second presence using the analogy of the sun rising in the east and traveling through the sky. How can this be the sun? Doesn't it say *lightning*?

#### Let's look at Luke's rendering of the same verse, as it will verify two critical points:

**Luke 17:24:** (KJV) *For as the lightning <796>, that lighteneth <797> out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of Man be in his day.*

First, “presence” MUST be the definition in Matthew for it to agree with Luke.

Second, both Matthew and Luke appear to describe the sun’s movement.

**Lightning:** Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #796 *astrape*;  
from #797; lightning; by analogy, glare

Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon: 1) lightning 1a) of the gleam of a lamp

**Two other examples of this word in the New Testament:**

**Luke 11:36:** (KJV) *If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining <796> of a candle doth give thee light.*

**Revelation 8:5:** (KJV) *And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings <796>, and an earthquake.*

Because it is translated to be both a brightness and lightning, how can we be sure for its meaning here? The answer is in the second word in the Luke text: *lighteneth <797>*

Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon: #797: 1) to lighten 1a) of dazzling objects

The only other use of #797: **Luke 24:4:** (KJV) *And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining <797> garments.*

The answer: Lightning flashes; sunlight shines!

**The symbolic language of Malachi verifies this understanding:**

**Malachi 4:1-2:** (KJV) *1 For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. 2 But unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.*

We see these verses as displaying a scripturally verifiable process for Jesus’ return.

**Like the sun, Jesus’ second presence is:**

1. Faint and imperceptible at first
2. Then growing to a point of being obviously manifest
3. Then rising to the full revelation of its power

**For this first stage, no one would even know he had returned unless they were specifically looking:**

**Acts 1:9-11:** *9 And after he had said these things, he was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And as they were gazing intently into the sky*

while he was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. <sup>11</sup> They also said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched him go into heaven.

How did he go? In the clouds. What do clouds represent? Trouble! (**Joel 2:2**)

In the first advent, Jesus came to PAY the ransom for Adam's sin.

**This first text is a plain statement of purpose:**

**Hebrews 2:9:** *But we do see him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.*

God's plan provided an answer to the dilemma of sin and death.

With the ransom payment having been made in full at Jesus' first advent, one of the purposes for his second advent can now become clear:

**In the second advent, Jesus returns to APPLY the ransom for Adam's sin:**

**John 5:25-29:** *25 Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. 26 For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the son also to have life in himself; 27 and He gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. 28 Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice, 29 and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.*

Applying the ransom means those who were "bought" are brought to a position of individual accountability.

Here are a few more thoughts and scriptures regarding the reestablishment of Israel:

**This restoration is biblically demonstrated in various ways. We have Old Testament prophecy:**

**Ezekiel 37:4-6:** *4 Again he said to me, Prophesy over these bones and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. 5 Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life. 6 I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the LORD.*

**This prophecy is unmistakable as to its meaning as it is basically interpreted for us:**

**Ezekiel 37:11-12:** *11 Then He said to me, Son of Man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off. 12 Therefore prophesy and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel.*

Come up out of your graves—doesn't this remind us of what Jesus said about applying the ransom?

**The Apostle Paul reasons through the importance of the casting off and regathering of Israel:**

**Romans 11:25–29:** *25 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; 26 and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB. 27 THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS. 28 From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; 29 for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.*

**All of this remains in line with the original promise given to Abraham to be the father of a blesser nation:**

**Genesis 22:15–18:** *15 Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, 16 and said, By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.*

# Study QUESTIONS

## Ep.1396: What Are the Signs of Jesus' Return?

<https://christianquestions.com/current-events/1396-signs-of-jesus-return/>

See:  CQ.Rewind  
SHOW NOTES

1. Explain the meaning of the word “parousia” generally translated as “coming” in Matthew 24:3. Why is translating as “presence” correct, and why is this important?
2. How do these scriptures say Jesus returns? How is it possible he can return in all these ways?
  - a. Luke 21:27
  - b. 1 Thessalonians 4:16
  - c. 2 Thessalonians 1:7
  - d. 2 Peter 3:10 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2
3. Describe each of the four main objectives as to WHY Jesus returns.
  - 1) **Jesus returns to gather his true followers to him**  
Will this be a visible (outward) sign of Jesus' return to the world? (John 14:1-3, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, 2 Thessalonians 1:7) Who does this sign affect the most?
  - 2) **Jesus returns to bring the kingdoms of this world to an end**  
Is this an outward sign? Who or what does it affect? (Matthew 24:21-22, Daniel 2:44) Why is this a necessary step in the setting up of God's kingdom?
  - 3) **Jesus returns to restore the perfect harmony to humanity that was lost in Eden**  
Who or what does this sign effect? Is this an outward sign? (Acts 3:20-21, Romans 8:18-19, Daniel 12:4) Do you feel the need to be restored to a relationship with the Father?
  - 4) **Jesus returns to regather Israel as a nation**  
Contrast “Your house is being left to you desolate” with the leafing fig tree. (Matthew 24:32-33, Matthew 23:38) Who does this effect? Is this an outward sign?
4. Explain the Parable of the Fig Tree. How did Jesus use this parable to illustrate the lack of spiritual fruitage in Israel? (Luke 13:6-9, Matthew 21:18-19)
5. How do Matthew 23:37-39 and Psalms 118:22-26 show the condemnation of Israel as well as the compassion of our Lord in the restoring of Israel? How does Psalm 22 illustrate the same concepts?
6. Consider the following questions about Israel as the Fig Tree: (Matthew 24:32-33, Luke 13:6-9, 21:29-30)
  - a. What does the tender budding of the tree represent historically?
  - b. What stage was Israel in when it symbolically “put forth leaves”?
  - c. Who are “all the trees”?
  - d. Where is Jesus during this process?
  - e. How do Revelation 2 and 3 echo the development of Israel with the development of the true church?
7. Where is Jesus in Revelation 3:20? How will you “open the door” to your heart and let his presence bless you?