

Christ in Prophecy
Prophecy 10: “The Signs of the Times”

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: I'm sure that many times you've heard the statement the signs of the times point to the soon return of Jesus. Well, what are those signs? How many are there? When did they begin? Are they easily recognizable? Are they increasing in number? And where can they be found in the Bible?

Program

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus our blessed hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. This is the sixth in a series of programs on the fundamentals of Bible prophecy. In our first program we took a look at the way Bible prophecy has been ignored and the many ways in which it has been abused. In our second program we examined the importance of prophecy and we concluded that there are many reasons why every Christian should be interested in studying God's prophetic Word. Our third program focused on the variety of Bible prophecy. We took a look at written prophecy, and oral prophecy, acted prophecy and symbolic prophecy. In our fourth program we considered the interpretation of Bible prophecy and we saw that the key to understanding it is to accept its plain sense meaning. Last week we examined four end time viewpoints, showing the different ways that people have interpreted what the Bible says about the Second Coming of Jesus. This week our focus is the signs of the times that point to the Lord's soon return. I pray this program will be a blessing to you and will help you to realize that we truly are living on borrowed time.

My topic for this session is the signs of the times and I'd like to begin with a very crucial question. And that is, can we really know anything about the timing of the Lord's return? The Bible would seem to indicate that there is nothing we can know. For example, take these passages from Matthew 24, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son but the Father alone. Therefore, be on the alert because

you do not know which day your Lord is coming. For this reason you be ready too for the Son of Man is coming in an hour when you do not think He will.” That’s only one of many such passages that can be found in the New Testament that warn us about the fact that no one can know the day or time when the Lord Jesus Christ is coming. And yet, despite these repeated warnings, there have always been date setters and today we are living in the midst of an absolute epidemic of date setting.

Take this man for example, Harold Camping. Harold Camping owns the largest Christian radio network in the United States and he predicted the Second Coming in September of 1994. Well of course he missed it, but people like this never learn. Hardly had he missed it that he published a new book, *Time Has an End*, and now he has set a new date for 2011. I’m sure most of you probably remember this little booklet, *88 Reasons Why the Rapture will be in 1988*, by Edgar Whisenant. I tell you I was on the radio at that time. I got so many of those things I think I was knee-deep in them. I think he sold 4 million copies of this little pamphlet and when the Lord didn’t come you know what Edgar did? He put out a new booklet, *89 Reasons Why Jesus is Coming in 1989*. Some of these guys never learn they just keep setting dates. Satan loves date setters; they discredit Christianity in the eyes of unbelievers. And date setters discredit Bible prophecy in the eyes of Christians, and they subject the Church to ridicule and to mockery.

It leads us to a question and the question is this. What can we know if anything at all about the timing of the Lord’s return? What can we know? Well, the answer depends on what you mean by the Lord’s return. Now this is gonna come as a real surprise to some of you. The answer depends upon what you mean by the Lord’s return. Let me explain. The date of the Second Coming can be precisely calculated. Because the book of Revelation says it will occur exactly 2520 days after the Tribulation begins, the starting point being the signing of a treaty that will ensure peace for Israel and allow them to rebuild their temple. Now since we can know precisely the date of the Second Coming once the Tribulation begins, then the verses that declare that no one can know the date of the Lord’s return must be referring to another event. They must be referring to the Rapture when the Lord will be return for His Church. No one can know that date but we are given signs for the end times and when we see those signs we can be certain that we are at least living in the season of the Rapture even though no one can know the date of the Rapture.

Let's take a look for a moment at the evidence that we really can know the season of the Rapture. You'll find it in three places in particular, first Thessalonians 5, Hebrews 10, and Matthew 24. In first Thessalonians 5 it says, "Now as to the signs and the seasons brethren you have no need of anything to be written to you for you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night." Now when I was growing up that's where we stopped reading. Preacher would read that and say; "Now because of that, we know there's nothing we can know. So there's no reason to worry about it, no reason to study it, no reason to be concerned about it, you might as well forget about it." And we never live in any anticipation of the Coming of the Lord. But one day I read this, notice it's addressed to believers. "Now as to the signs and seasons brethren," this is addressed to believers...I kept reading. I could hardly believe my eyes, look what comes after this, "But you brethren, you believers, are not in darkness that the day should overcome you like a thief. For you are sons of light and sons of day, we are not of night nor of darkness, so then let us not sleep as others do but let us be alert and sober." What's He saying here? Jesus is coming like a thief in the night. That Rapture, that coming for the church is gonna be like a thief in the night. But He says that's not for you brethren, not for believers because why, because you're sons of light. What does that mean? We have the Holy Spirit living within us and through the Holy Spirit we can understand things that the world cannot understand. He's coming like a thief in the night for pagans. He's coming like a thief in the night for unbelievers. He's coming like a thief in the night for a lot of Christians who don't know Bible prophecy and don't know anything about what God's prophetic Word says. They will be surprised. But if you know the Word and you rely upon the Holy Spirit to help you understand God's prophetic Word. There is absolutely no reason why you should be surprised at the return of Jesus because you can know the season.

Here's another evidence Hebrews 10:25, "Do not forsake the assembling together as is the habit of some, but encourage one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near." What day? Well we're told, the day is the Day of Judgment, in verses 27, it says, "As we see that Day of Judgment drawing near be sure you're there at the assembly, be sure you don't miss the meeting of the saints, be sure you're encouraging one another." That means there's something you can see, something you can perceive, something you can point to and say, "You see this? You see that? You see that? Jesus

is coming soon.” There are things we can see and perceive and know that we are in the season of the Lord’s return.

Jesus taught that himself. Look at this, Matthew 24:33, He had just gotten through given a great discourse on the end times, giving all kinds of signs to watch for and then He says, “Even so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door.” What do these verses mean? I think they mean very clearly that there are signs that we can watch for, signs that will point us to the season of the Lord’s return, things that we can perceive with our senses. And when we see them know that we are living in the season of the Lord’s return. In summary, these Scriptures are saying there are signs that we should be living watching for. And I want to emphasize that there are an overwhelming abundance of them, I mean an overwhelming abundance. When I first started these I just got almost discouraged there were so many. I was trying to get a hold on them, a grasp on them I found it was kind of like nailing Jell-O to the wall. I just couldn’t do it. And then one day I got an idea and the idea was to take them and put them into categories, because there are so many of them.

Let me emphasize how many there are, regarding the first coming, we’d have 300 prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the first coming. A little over 300. but concerning the second coming there’s over 500 prophecies in the Old Testament. That’s the Old Testament! But in the New Testament, one out of every 25 verses has to do with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. So there is at least two or three times as much prophecy concerning the Second Coming, as there is concerning the First Coming and that leads us to a question. The question, why are there so many more prophecies concerning the Second Coming then there are about the First Coming? And the answer is really very simple. The answer is that God wants us to know the season of the Lord’s return because Jesus’ Return is going to initiate the Wrath of God. And God does not wish that any should perish. When Jesus appears in the heavens for His Church and takes us out of this world, the Wrath of God is going to begin. And the wrath of God is going to be poured out as it’s never been poured out in all of history. He’s going to pour out His wrath upon those who have rejected the grace, mercy, and love. Not in vengeance, that is never the purpose of God’s wrath. The purpose of God’s wrath is always to bring people to the end of themselves so that they will accept Jesus Christ as

Lord and Savior and will be saved! But there's going to be a great outpouring of wrath and God does not wish that any should perish.

Here's another point, God is obligated to warn us of the impending return of Jesus because God never pours out his wrath without warning. From the beginning of the Bible to the end of the Bible you will never find an example of God pouring out without warning. He warns in many ways. He raises up prophetic voices. And if people don't listen to that He sends disciplinary judgments, but He always warns over and over. He's very patient. But He warns and warns until finally if people will not pay any attention He will move them from judgment to destruction. If God failed to warn us about the Return of Jesus, He would violate His character and God cannot violate His character. Therefore He must warn us that Jesus is returning. And He does that through what we call signs of the times. There are so many, many of these signs as I said signs that point to the soon return of Jesus. And what I did was to put them together into categories and I want to show you some of these categories.

First are the signs of nature, these are the signs that have the least respect because people in the western world just don't believe that God works through signs of nature. And yet the Bible teaches from beginning to end that God has always worked through signs of nature and always will through signs of nature. Then there are the signs of society, there are many, many of these that we'll look at in just a moment. There are spiritual signs, both positive ones and negative ones. There are signs that relate to world politics, I taught that for 20 years, world politics, and so this is an area that I'm particular interested in. And the Bible teaches that there's going to be a certain configuration of world politics in the end times. There are the signs of technology. There are many, many prophecies that have never been understood until now because they were dependent upon modern technology. And then there are the signs of Israel which are really the most important of all.

Now very quickly let's take a look at each one of these categories, first the signs of nature. You find many passages that relate to the signs of nature like Matthew 24:7, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. Luke 21:11, and there will be great earthquakes and in various places plagues and famines, there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. Matthew 24:8 says these will be like birth pangs. You see one

of the things I found early on when I would teach about the signs of nature is people would come up and say, "Oh come on David, there have always been earthquakes, there's always been tornadoes, there's always been tsunamis, what else is new?" But they ignore Matthew 24:8 where Jesus said, "These signs will be like birth pangs." And if you know anything about birth pangs, and I'm sure quite a number of ladies here do know something about them. As you get closer to the time of the birth, the pangs increase in two ways, they increase in frequency and intensity. What this is saying is that in the end times, nature is going to go really wild. It means there's going to be more earthquakes and more intense, more floods and more intense, more tornado swarms and more intense.

That sounds like the news of just the last few days. I mean God is speaking to this nation right now. He is pouring out disciplinary judgments upon this nation, calling this nation to repentance. And you know anybody with spiritual eyes can see it, we're having unprecedented tornadoes, unprecedented floods, over 1,000 fires going in California right now, and what does the world say? "Oh it's global warming." What does God have to do to convince us that He is serious about this? And that's the kind of disbelief that we run into all the time. Well, as I say, there are all kinds of cataclysms going on not only in this country but around the world and they do seem to be increasing in frequency and intensity.

That brings us to the signs of society. The Bible says in Matthew 24, "And because lawlessness increased, most people's love will grow cold for the coming of the Son of Man will be like it was in the days of Noah." It says, in the end time there will be lawlessness, people's love will grow cold. That things will be like they were in the times of Noah. What were they like in the times of Noah? Let's go to Genesis chapter 6. "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth and that every intent the thoughts of his heart, was only evil continually. And the earth was corrupt in the sight of God and the earth was filled with violence." There are two things that are emphasized about the times of Noah and that was lawlessness, violence, and immorality, violence and immorality over and over those are the two things that are emphasized. And that is exactly what we are experiencing in America and around the world today. Violence, growing violence, and growing immorality.

Who would ever believe that we would live to the day where we would see same sex marriage and where we would see churches endorsing same sex marriage. I mean we are living in a pagan and secular age in which we're coming back to what it was like in the days of Noah. In Second Timothy chapter 3 Paul gives a tremendous prophecy about the end time society, what it's gonna be like, he says "in the last days" that's the days we're in "difficult times will come, men will be lovers of self, they will be lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers. Children will be disobedient to their 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." It reads like the evening news, I mean that's what you see on the evening news night after night. And notice what it says people will love – look at what's emphasized in yellow there. They will be lovers of self, lovers of money, and lovers of pleasure. Friends, that's where we are today!

Take a look for example at this summary of the end time society. What is the religion of the world today? It is humanism. It is the belief in man, not the belief in God. But the belief in man, man can accomplish anything. What is the God of the world today of the United States of America and the rest of the world? It is materialism, it is money, and what is the lifestyle? It is hedonism, the pursuit of pleasure. And let me tell you something. This has happened before, it happened in the times of Noah. And anytime you have humanism as your religion, materialism as your God, and hedonism as your lifestyle, there's always a fourth that goes with it because God cannot be mocked. And what goes with it is what the philosophers call Nihilism, Nihilism is the pay off and Nihilism is nothing in the world but a 64-dollar philosophical word for despair, and that's what you read in Second Timothy 3, a society wallowing in despair.

Now, there are spiritual signs of the end times also and these are the most prolific of all. There's so many of them, dozens and dozens of them, I'm only going to mention a few. They are both negative and positive in nature. The negative ones are very negative they are such things as cults and false prophets, heresy, apostasy, demonic deception, persecution. Just take apostasy for example, the apostasy that exists in the Church today is just almost beyond comprehension. I mean, I know of a bishop, of a major denomination in America who has written a book in which he denies the virgin birth,

denies the miracles of Jesus, denies the resurrection of Jesus, and argues that Paul and Timothy were homosexual lovers.

Or consider the poll that's just been recently released that shows what people believe about God, and what they believe about Jesus Christ. And it was incredible that 57% of all Americans who identify themselves as evangelicals, 57% argued there were many paths to God. That Buddhists could be saved and Jews could be saved and Hindus could be saved. It was not necessary to put your faith in Jesus Christ. These are evangelicals, people who claim to be evangelicals. It shows that our evangelical churches need to get back to teaching fundamental doctrine, instead of talking giving fuzzy feel good sermons.

On the positive side though there are some tremendous things. It's prophesied in the end times there's going to be a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit. That there's going to be the preaching of the gospel all over the world, which is taking place through modern technology. And there's going to be the understanding of Bible prophecy. Did you know in the Bible, often the prophets were given prophecies that they did not understand. And they'd say, "Lord I don't understand it." Lord would say, "It's not for you to understand, wait. It'll be understood when the time comes for it to be understood."

Then there are the world political signs. Oh there are so many of these. Matthew 24 says, "And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars for nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes." There is a certain end time configuration that the Bible prophecies that Israel will be reestablished. That it will be surrounded by threatening Arab nations, that it will be menaced by Russia to the north and that the Roman Empire will be revived, one of the greatest miracles of modern times. And number five, that all of this will happen amidst an epidemic of wars and rumors of wars.

Then there are the signs of technology. Oh there are so many of these. The Bible gives many prophecies that no one has ever understood until now because it was dependent upon technology. Daniel 12, "As for me, Daniel says, I heard but I could not understand so I said 'My Lord what will be the outcome of these events?' and he said, 'Go your way Daniel, for these are concealed and sealed up until the end time.'" In other words, the

prophecies will be understood when it comes time for them to be understood. Here's an example. C. I. Scofield wrote the very first study Bible ever printed. Published in 1917 when he got to Ezekiel 38 you know what he said in the footnote? It's in the original Bible. He said, "I don't understand this, and I can't explain it, but the Bible says it, and therefore I believe it. Ezekiel 38 says that in the end times, Russia will invade Israel." That took a lot of faith folks that took a lot of faith. That's 1917! Israel did not exist there was no prospect Israel will ever exist. Russia was a Christian Orthodox nation. He said, "I don't understand it, I can't explain it." But he says, "I know it's gonna happen because the Word says so."

Today we don't stop and think about it. We don't stop and think about the fact that Russia may invade Israel. Or consider this example in Revelation 11 where it says two great witnesses of God are gonna prophecy in Jerusalem for 3 ½ years, calling the world to repentance. And then the Antichrist will be allowed to kill them and their bodies will lie in the streets of Jerusalem and the whole world will look upon them. And then one day as the whole world is looking, they'll stand up and be taken up into heaven and the whole world will be amazed. How could anybody understand that before the 1960's? Nobody could understand that before satellite television. How could the whole world look upon two bodies lying in the streets of Jerusalem? Today all you have to do is point a TV camera, zap it up to a satellite and the whole world can watch two bodies lying in the streets of Jerusalem.

And then there are the signs of Israel, the most important signs of all. And the reason they are the most important is because Israel is God's prophetic time clock. Over and over he'll say, "This is gonna happen in the future and it's gonna happen when this happens to the Jews, so watch the Jews. When that happens, this will happen. When that happens to the Jews, this will happen. When that happens to the Jews, this will happen. He does it over and over. They are God's prophetic time clock. And the four most important prophecies concerning Israel in the end time is first that He's going to regather them in unbelief which He has been doing throughout the 20th century. Isaiah 11, it will happen on that day that the Lord will again recover a second time with His hand, the remnant of His people who will remain and where's He gonna take them from? It says from the islands of the sea. That's a Jewish colloquialism for the whole world. And then He makes it clear, verse 12, He will assemble the banished ones of Israel and

gather the dispersed of Judah. That's all of the Children of Israel, from where? From the four corners of the earth. And we are a privileged generation to see this with our own eyes! In 1900 there were 40,000 Jews in Israel, 1945 800,000, today there's 5.5 million. There will soon be as many Jews in Israel as died in the holocaust in World War II and we are the ones to live to see this great miracle take place.

Second is the reestablishment of the state of Israel. The Bible says in many places it's gonna happen. Ezekiel 37:21, "Thus says the Lord God, behold I'll take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land and I will make them one nation in the land on the mountains of Israel." May 14th 1948, 60 years ago, David Ben-Gurion proclaimed the independence of Israel.

Number three, the reoccupation of the city of Jerusalem. In Zechariah 8, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, old men and old women will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem. And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in the streets. Behold I'm going to save my people. And I will bring them back and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem, praise the Lord!" And it happened on that glorious day, June 7th, 1967 when the Jews reoccupied the city of Jerusalem for the first time in almost 2000 years. And Rabbi Shlomo Goren the chief Rabbi of the Israeli army went up to that wall and he said, "I proclaim to you the beginning of the Messianic age." Because he knows the Old Testament prophecies, that when they're back in the land, back in the city, the Lord is going to come.

Finally, the refocusing on Jerusalem, the refocusing on Jerusalem is the fourth of these prophecies. Zechariah 12, "Behold I'm going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around, and it will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples and all who lift it will be severely injured and all the nations of the earth will be gathered together against it." Well that's where we are right now, all the nations of the world, including the United States of America, are coming together against Israel trying to force Israel to give up all or part of the city of Jerusalem just as prophesied. That's how close we are to the end of all of these events. The fulfillment of these four prophecies clearly indicates that we are living in the season of the Lord's return.

And I want to give you a reminder. One hundred years ago, there was not one single sign pointing to the fact that we were living in the end times, pointing to the fact that Jesus is coming soon. The very first sign to appear on the world's scene came on November 2, 1917 when the Balfour Declaration was issued proclaiming that the British were going to take Palestine and make it a homeland for the Jewish people. That was the first sign that we had moved into the end times. I want you to think about that, think about it, one hundred years ago, no signs whatsoever. Today, signs everywhere. The bottom line I think is very clear, Jesus is returning soon and the crucial question for every one of you is are you ready for the return of Jesus Christ.

Let me conclude with an illustration. This is Mount St. Helens in the winter of 1979, peaceful, beautiful, calm, and serene. But late that year it started shaking, and experts came from all over the world and put their seismographs on it, and they called a press conference and they said, "This baby is gonna blow! And it's gonna blow big!" Everybody got off, everybody got off the mountain but one man, Harry Truman. Crusty old 85 year old kermudgin who ate the bark off the trees, tough guy had 23 cats. Refused to get off. He said, "I don't care what they say, I don't believe it, I don't believe any of those signs, I don't care what those experts say, they don't know what they're talking about, I've lived on this mountain all my life – it'll never blow." He was on the news every night. He'd stand there and the whole thing was shaking. They said, "Harry you gotta get off!" They got his daughter on one night, she cried, she wept, she pleaded with him. He stood there with 23 cats around him and all the cats were shaking and him shaking and he wouldn't move. And then guess what happened? At 8:32 AM on Sunday may 18, 1980 Mount St. Helens erupted with a 24-mega ton explosion that reduced the height of the mountain by 1300 feet, leaving a crater one and a half miles wide and 2000 feet deep. It blackened the sky all the way from Washington state to New York and as far south as Oklahoma. And no one has ever heard of Harry Truman and his 23 cats since that time, he was vaporized, because he simply refused to believe the signs of the times. This is what Mount St. Helens looked like after the eruption.

Now friends, that's where so many people in the world are today. The vast majority even of Christians are in that position concerning the soon returning of Jesus. The signs are all around us because God does not wish that any should perish. Are you paying attention to the signs? Most people are not. I hope you are because we are living on

borrowed time and once again I ask, are you ready? Are you ready for the coming of the Lord? If He came tonight would you be ready? Let me tell you something. I am ready because I put my faith in Jesus Christ as my Lord and my Savior. And for that reason if Jesus appears I can cry out from the depths of my heart, maranatha, maranatha, come quickly Lord Jesus! Hallelujah! Thank you, praise the Lord.

Well folks that's the conclusion of our six week study of the fundamentals of Bible prophecy. I hope it has been a blessing to you. If you are interested in getting into Bible prophecy in greater depth, I would like to encourage you to check out our website at the address you see on the screen. The site contains hundreds of in depth articles about every aspect of Bible prophecy, and there is an on site search engine that can quickly lead you to articles about any topic that you are interested in pursuing. You can also use a form on our website to sign to up receive our free bimonthly magazine. Well, I hope you'll be back with us next week, until then this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb and Lion Ministries saying "Look up! Be watchful! For our redemption is drawing near!"

End of Program