

Christ in Prophecy

Signs 7: Jesus is Returning Soon, Part 1

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: The Bible teaches that no one can know the date of the Lord's return. But did you know the Bible also teaches that we can know the season of the Lord's return? And did you know that we are living in that season? Stay tuned.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope! I'm Dave Reagan founder and director of Lamb & Lion Ministries. And I want to welcome you to this special study of the signs of the times that point to the soon return of Jesus.

The message I am about to share with you is the basic message of Lamb & Lion Ministries. It's the message that God placed in my heart in the late 1970's, and it began to churn inside of me until I could contain it no longer. That's when I decided to leave my career in higher education and step out in faith to proclaim this message to as many people as possible, as quickly as possible.

My feeling in those days was exactly like what the prophet Jeremiah experienced when he wrote that the message God had given him had made his heart like a burning fire shut up in his bones, and that he was so weary of holding it inside of him that he could no longer endure it.

Regarding the return of Jesus, we find these words in Titus chapter 2: "The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus."

In response to that scripture, let me ask you: Are you living looking for the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus? That's what this verse tell us that we're to do. We're to live with an expectation, live with a yearning, live with a hope that Jesus may appear any moment. I know from experience that most Christians do not have that hope in their hearts. I know that most Christians are rather apathetic about the return of Jesus.

I suppose one of the major reasons for that apathy is the fact that people have heard about it for so long that they have come to take it for granted. Oh yes, they believe Jesus is coming back, but they think it's an event that will occur at some point in the distant future. The Lord's return is not an imminent reality to them. Rather, it's sort of pie in the sky, a dream, and hope.

They think, "Well, maybe He will return a 1,000 years from now, or maybe 2,000 from now, but certainly not now." Others are just absolutely convinced that there is not anything that we can know about the coming of the Lord, and therefore there is no reason to even think about it. No reason to worry about it. No reason even to talk about it.

My personal church experience is a good example of what I'm talking about. I grew up going to church. Folks, I went to church as far back as I can remember every time the door was open I was there. But we were not a church that studied Bible prophecy. And therefore, about the only prophetic scripture that we knew was one that said, "Jesus is coming like a thief in the night." And so, every time somebody would go off to a Bible conference and hear some thrilling message about the return of Jesus, and they would come back all excited and start talking about how the Lord may return at any time, and how we need to get ready, they would immediately be put down with the statement, "Jesus is coming like a thief in the night."

We used that verse like a stab of a sword to a person's heart to put them down, to cut them off, to in effect say, "Shut up, there is not anything we can know about the Lord's return. He's going to sneak up on us. So, you might as well shut up about it, and not talk about it, and just go on about your life and not even think about it, because He's going to come when we least expect it."

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: Let's talk for a moment about the timing of the Lord's return. Is there anything we can know about the return of the Lord Jesus Christ? Can we know, for example, when Jesus is going to return? If you had asked me that question about 45 years ago, I would have said, "No, absolutely not! There is not anything that you can ever know about the Second Coming of Jesus." But after 45 years of intensive study of Bible prophecy, I've come to a different conclusion. When people ask me now, "Can you know when Jesus will return?" My answer is, "Yes and no." No, we cannot know the date. Yes, we can definitely know the season.

Now folks, when I say we cannot know the date that Jesus will return, I mean that with all my heart. I believe that the Bible makes it crystal clear that we cannot know the date. In Matthew 24 Jesus Himself said, "Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone."

Folks, I don't know how the Scriptures could be clearer about this point. We cannot know the date. And yet, there are a lot of sincere people who are setting dates. I do not doubt their sincerity, but they are sincerely deceived. And the closer we get to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ the more of these people there are going to be, because Satan is going to motivate people to set dates. You see, Satan loves date setters because they bring discredit to Bible prophecy. You know how it works. Somebody sets a date. People get their hopes focused on that date rather than on their Savior. They become obsessed with the date, and they run around all over the place talking incessantly about the date. The press picks up on the story and focuses in on the date. And then, the date comes and passes, and the press heaps ridicule on both the Bible and those who believed in the date.

The individuals who put their faith in that date are embarrassed, and they become embittered. They say to themselves, "Well, I'll tell you one thing, I'll never do that again!" And then, when a responsible prophecy teacher comes along and says, "I don't know the date, but I do know Jesus is coming soon." They say, "Oh, sure, I've heard that nonsense before," and they refuse to listen. They turn off their ears to God's prophetic Word. And Satan loves it. The closer we get to the return of Jesus, the more of these date setters Satan is going to raise up. The effect will be like the person who constantly yells, "The wolf is coming, the wolf is coming, the wolf is

coming!” And he continues to yell it until guess what? Everyone decides to ignore him. And then the wolf comes.

Well, my friends, Jesus is coming soon. We need to be aware of that. And we need to keep in mind that although no one can know the date that Jesus will return, we can know the season, and it is my contention that we are currently in that season.

Part 3

Dr. Reagan: I want to prove to you with Scripture that we can know the season of the Lord’s return. Let’s begin with the letters that Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church, and let’s start with 1 Thessalonians, chapter 5, verse 1, and I want to show you proof positive that we can know the season of the Lord’s return. The passage reads as follows: “Now as to the times and 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.” There’s that statement I talked about at the beginning. He’s coming “like a thief in the night!” Verse 3 says it will occur while people are saying, “Peace and safety!” At that time, Paul says, “Destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.”

Now, the fundamental point I’m leading up to is found in verse 4. Underline it in your Bible. Don’t ever forget it. This is the crucial verse. The verse proves beyond a doubt that you and I can know the season of the Lord’s return. The verse, First Thessalonians 5:4, says “But you brethren, believers, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake 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.”

Now, what is that saying? Paul is saying Jesus is coming like a thief in the night. But not for the brethren, not for Christians. He’s coming like a thief in the night for the world. He’s coming like a thief in the night for pagans. He’s coming like a thief in the night for those professing Christians who do not have any personal relationship with Him, and who have never really been born again, and who refuse to believe the Word of God and study the Word of God.

But He’s saying, “Let me tell you, if you have been born again, if you’re truly a child of God, if you read the Word and believe the Word, there is no reason in the world why Jesus should come as a thief in the night.” Look again at verse 4 it says, “But you brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake 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.”

What do you think he means when he says, “We are sons of light and not of darkness”? I think what He’s referring to is the fact that if you are truly a born again child of God, you have the Holy Spirit residing inside of you. The Holy Spirit is the one who wrote the Bible. And if you will lean on the Holy Spirit, the Spirit will illuminate your mind and illuminate your heart and open your eyes to understand the mysteries of God’s Word, including the season of the Lord’s return. And so it is that the Bible says point blank, Jesus is not coming as a “thief in the night” for those who know Him and love Him.

There’s a similar passage in Hebrews chapter 10. It says, “Do not forsake our 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 is he speaking of? Well, we are told in verse 27 that he is speaking of the day of judgement, the day when the Lord will return. It is the day referred to in verse 31 where we are warned that it is a “terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” Note again verse 25 where it says that we are to encourage one another “as we see the day drawing near.” Folks, that means we can tell something about the season in which we’re living. It means we don’t have to be totally ignorant about the time when the Lord is going to return.

Jesus Himself also indicated that we could know the season of His return. He did so in the Olivet Discourse, as is recorded over in the book of Luke. He delivered this discourse on the Mount of Olives to His disciples during the last week of His life. He listed many end time signs that we were to watch for, and then He said: “But when these things begin, begin to take place, straighten up, lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Part 4

Dr. Reagan: Now, there are two reasons why we can know the season of the Lord’s return. Two reasons. The first is God wants us to know the season of His Son’s return. Let me say it again, God wants us to know the season of His Son’s return.

Now, you are probably thinking, “Come on, Dave, how do you know that?” Well, let me put it together to you in another way. Listen to this carefully. Did you know that God would violate His character if He sent Jesus Christ back by surprise? And since God cannot violate His character, because He is a God of perfect integrity, then God must warn us about the return of Jesus.

Now, stop and think for a moment. Why would it violate God’s character to send Jesus back by surprise? The reason is that the Bible reveals that never once in all the history of mankind has God ever poured out His wrath without warning. That is the nature of the lovingkindness, grace and mercy of God. Yes, God is a God of justice and righteousness and holiness. But He is also a God of tender, loving, mercy and kindness, and because He is, He always warns before He pours out His wrath. Why does He do that? Because in 2 Peter 3 verse 9 it says, “God does not wish that any should perish but that all should be brought to repentance.”

The God who is the Creator of the universe is not some Cosmic Sadist who is hiding behind the clouds, peeking down at us, waiting for an opportunity to zap us with the greatest number of sinful people on planet earth with the return of His Son. God is wanting us to accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior. He is wanting us to accept His gift of love to the world. God is longsuffering and patient. Again, He does not wish that any should perish but that all should be brought to repentance. And, again, God never pours out His wrath, never, without warning in advance.

Take Noah for example. God told Noah to go forth and preach to the people that they were living in the season of the pouring out of the Lord’s wrath. Noah preached that message for 120 years. He told people repeatedly, “You are living in the season of the Lord’s pouring out of His wrath.” And the people responded by laughing at him, scoffing at him, and ridiculing him. Some laughed until they could not tread water anymore!

Likewise, the Lord told Abraham to go into the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and warn them of impending destruction. Abraham warned, but the people of Sodom and Gomorrah didn’t believe, and they perished in the destruction of the cities.

God does not destroy nations He has blessed without warning. He is warning the United States of America today. He is raising up prophetic voices within our nation and all over the world, calling the nations to repentance. God never, never pours out His wrath without warning, and the point is, my friends, Jesus Christ is returning in incredible wrath. He is coming to pour out the wrath of God upon those who have rejected the grace, mercy and love of God.

The fact that Jesus is returning in wrath is one of the best kept secrets in the universe. Satan doesn't want anyone to know about it. The average Christian does not know that Jesus is coming in wrath. But the Bible makes it plain. Take Revelation 19 for example. That chapter tells about the Second Coming of Jesus. In Revelation 19, the Apostle John says, "I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it was called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war."

Folks, Jesus is coming to judge and wage war! He's coming to pour out the wrath of God. It says in Revelation 6 that on the day Jesus returns, the presidents, and prime ministers, and kings of this world will fall down on their hands and knees and crawl into holes in the ground and pray for the rocks and the mountains to fall upon them, so great will be the wrath of the Lamb of God. God is going to deal with sin. And He deals with sin in one of two ways grace or wrath. You are under either the grace of God or the wrath of God. To be under the grace of God is a glorious thing; it means you have the promise that one day soon Jesus will appear and take you out of this world in an event called the Rapture.

But if you are under the wrath you're going to be left behind when Jesus appears in the Rapture for His Church, and you're going to experience a wrath unlike anything that you can even imagine. This will happen during what the Bible calls the Tribulation, a seven year period of time during which the wrath of man, the wrath of Satan, and the wrath God will be let loose upon this earth.

My friends, God is no Cosmic Teddy Bear. Most people tend to think of Him in that way, they therefore believe that when they stand before Him, God will reach out and He'll put His big warm furry arm around them and He'll say, "Well, you I know you never did live a very good life. I know you boozed it up all the time. I know you chased women. I know you never accepted my Son as your Lord and Savior. But, you lived so much better than that old reprobate down the street from you. And since I grade on the curve, you just come on into my Kingdom."

Well, folks, no such God exists. The God of grace, mercy and love is also the God of justice, and righteousness and holiness, and He must deal with sin. The Bible says that God deals with sin in one of two ways. Either grace or wrath. Everybody knows John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish."

But it's amazing that very few people seem to be familiar with John 3:36 which contains some ominous words spoken by John the Baptist. Here's what John 3:36 says: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, the wrath of God abides on him."

Part 5

Dr. Reagan: Let me summarize the points that I've made thus far. First, you are either under grace or you are under wrath. Second, Jesus is returning in wrath. Third, God never pours out His wrath without warning. Fourth, God is obligated by His character to warn. And finally, therefore, God is obligated to let us know the season of the Lord's return.

Now, how can we know the season? God wants us to know it, but how does He reveal it? Well, He reveals it through signs, through signs that we are to watch for. The same principle applied to the First Coming of Jesus.

You will find the principle in Matthew 16 in verse 1. There we find Jesus teaching when He is suddenly confronted by the Sadducees and Pharisees. And they demand that He show them a sign from heaven. Now, what they wanted was a miracle. But Jesus played with the word, sign. He responded by saying, "When it's evening, you will say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' And in the morning, 'There will be storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times?"

Do you get the point Jesus was making? Here are the religious leaders of Israel demanding a sign to prove that Jesus is the Messiah. They want Him to perform a miracle. He says, "I don't understand you guys. You can look at the sky and you can tell what the weather is going to be, and you can't look at me and discern the signs of the times? What miracle do you need? What sign do you need besides what I'm doing?"

What's Jesus referring to? He's referring to the fact that the Hebrew Scriptures, which these men had been studying all their lives, contain over 300 prophecies about the First Coming of the Messiah. Many of those prophecies are repetitious. So, if you boil them all down you'll come out with about 109 separate and distinct prophecies about the First Coming of Jesus. These prophecies foretold everything about His life: where He would be born, how He would be born, that He would go into Egypt, that He would live in Galilee, that He would heal people, and love people, and die for the sins of Mankind. All aspects of His ministry were prophesied in detail.

Take His lineage for example. It was prophesied that He would be descended from Abraham, thru Isaac, and Jacob, and David. With incredible detail, the last days and hours of His life were prophesied. The prophets said He would be betrayed, by a friend, for 30 pieces of silver, that He would be lifted up, that He would be pierced in the side and hands and feet. Every aspect of His death was prophesied.

Now, Jesus was fulfilling all those prophecies before the very eyes of the Scribes and Pharisees. And yet, they were demanding a sign! So Jesus replies, "How blind can you be? I'm fulfilling the signs of the times."

Now folks, here's the point: There are 300 prophecies about the First Coming of Jesus in the Old Testament, but there are 500 in the Old Testament about His Second Coming. And in the New Testament, 1 out of every 25 verses has to do with the Second Coming of Jesus. In other words, there are many, many, many more prophecies about the Second Coming of Jesus than His First Coming. Probably twice as many.

Why so many? Because Jesus is returning in wrath. The first time He came, He came as a compassionate Savior with His eyes full of tears. But when He returns, He is returning as a conquering warrior with eyes like white hot flames because He is returning to judge and make war against the enemies of God. And so, since God does not wish that any should perish, He has given us sign, after sign, after sign, to watch for.

As I said before, I've spent the last 45 years studying those signs. And I tell you, folks, there are so many they just simply overwhelm you, they literally overwhelm you. What I've done is to try to put them together into categories, into groupings. That's the best way I know of to get a

handle on them. And as you begin to study those categories, these groupings of signs, I want to tell you something my friends, you just get overwhelmed by the fact that Jesus is returning soon. You begin to have spiritual eyes, and you start seeing the signs of the times that point to the soon return of Jesus. Everywhere you look it's as if God has a neon sign in the sky that is flashing on and off saying, "Jesus is coming soon! Jesus is coming soon! Jesus is coming soon!"

Part 6

Dr. Reagan: What are the signs of the Lord's soon return? Let me present them to you in categories. First are the signs of nature. And let me just tell you right up front, right up front, that the signs of nature are the least respected signs in all the various categories of signs. When you mention signs of nature, people say, "What do you mean by that?" I respond by saying, "What I'm talking about is earthquakes, and volcanos, and famines, and pestilence, and mysterious things in the heavens," and they start laughing. They start laughing! Usually for one or two reasons.

They either first of all say, "Well those things have always been with us. There have always been famines, and always earthquakes, and always tornadoes, so what else is new, Dave, come on, get serious." Or, they just laugh. They laugh at you because they think you're a stupid idiot to believe that God would speak through a sign of nature. They put you on the level of some ignorant and superstitious native in some primitive land who thinks that because his volcano goes off his god is mad at him.

Well, folks, I've got news for you. The signs of nature are for real. They are for real! The Bible teaches from beginning to end that God has always spoken through nature and that He continues to do so today.

We here in the United States live in one of the most rationalistic societies on the face of the earth. We worship at the altar of rationalism. The average American no more believes in the supernatural than he believes in the man in the moon. This is true also of the average Christian. We are so rationalistic we believe that if you can't see it, if you can't touch it, if you can't smell it, if you can't taste it, if you can't weigh it then it doesn't exist.

But the Bible teaches that there is a whole realm of reality that is normally beyond the perception of the senses. I'm speaking of the realm of the angelic, the realm of the demonic, the realm of supernatural spiritual warfare. And an aspect of it is the way God speaks through signs of nature. He always has, and He always will.

When people sneer at these signs and say, "Well, you know, there have always been signs like these," they ignore what Jesus said in Matthew 24. Listen to what He says as he describes these signs. In Matthew 24:8 Jesus said the signs of nature will be like birth pangs.

Now, I've never had birth pangs. So when I first started studying Bible prophecy and I ran across this, I went to my wife and I said, "What is going on here? What does this mean?" And she said, "Listen, you dummy, any mother knows what that means." She explained that the closer a pregnant woman gets to the delivery of her baby, the birth pangs increase in two ways. They increase in frequency and intensity.

And folks, that is exactly what Jesus meant here. The closer we get to His return, the more earthquakes there will be and the more intense; the more volcanic eruptions, and the more intense; the more plagues, and the more intense; the more famine, and the more intense. Does that sound like the evening news? That's exactly what began happening in the 20th Century.

Get a World Almanac. Look up the statistics in it, and you'll see that ever since the 20th Century began, we have been experiencing an increasing frequency and intensity in all of our natural calamities. The statistics are overwhelming. It's as if God is shaking all of nature and shaking it harder, and harder, and harder, the closer we get to the coming of Jesus. He is saying to the world, "Listen to me! Listen to me! Jesus is coming soon!"

My friends, the signs of nature are for real, and we had better pay attention to them. They are proclaiming that Jesus is returning soon.

Closing

Dr. Reagan: Well, folks, that's our program for this week. I hope it has been a blessing to you. And I hope, the Lord willing, that you will be back with us next week when I will continue this teaching by presenting an overview of all the signs of the times that clearly reveal that we are living in the season of the Lord's return. I will be presenting information about the signs of society, the spiritual signs, the signs of technology, the signs of world politics and the signs of Israel. And I will conclude by revealing the most important sign of all.

Until then, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministries, saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our Redemption is drawing near."