

Hope Channel presents

DISCOVERIES '08

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By Mark Finley

Hope Beyond Tomorrow

The triumphs of technology are inspiring. The achievements of the space program are so tangible and specific. All the complex details—the flow of rocket fuel, the humming of computers, the astronaut’s check list—fit together like clockwork. But religious hope today tends to be vague and shapeless. People have *hunches* about life after death; people *imagine* what heaven might be like. We don’t have much that’s specific or tangible, just a light at the end of the tunnel or mankind somehow stumbling into love and peace. Vague hope is OK as a few lines on a greeting card. But what about when death comes close and you’re face to face with eternity? Vague hope doesn’t do much for us then. We need something more than hunches. We need something specific to cling to.

And God HAS laid out His end-time plan for our world in the Scriptures. He’s specific and eager to tell us what’s coming, what we can hope for. Much of God’s wonderful picture is in the Book of Revelation. Revelation pictures the Event that brings human history to a climax in various dramatic ways:

Revelation 14:14. John writes: “I looked, and behold, a white cloud and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown and in His hand a sharp sickle.” This pictures Jesus coming in glory, coming to a world ripe for the harvest.

Revelation 19:11-14: “Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True. . . . And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.” This is Jesus Christ riding down like a triumphant general, leading the hosts of heaven, coming to rescue His people from a doomed planet.

1 Corinthians 15:51-53 tells us what will happen to believers: “Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothed itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.” This is not some mystic speculating about the future. This is the God of the Universe telling us about His end-time plan! He will re-create us as imperishable beings. When? At the last trumpet. **1 Thessalonians 4: 16-17** says Christ will descend with the trumpet call of God, and the dead will rise from their graves!

Scripture outlines God’s end-time plan. It also says an enemy will try to sabotage that plan. Speaking about the appearance of false Christs, Jesus warned in **Luke 17:23,24, NIV:** “Men will tell you, ‘There he is!’ or ‘Here he is!’ Do not go running off after them. For the Son of Man in His day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other.” Charismatic figures will arise in the last days and claim to be Christ. Their miracle-working powers will seduce many people. They’ll gain large followings, and people will come to you excitedly, with glowing faces, and say, “We’ve *seen* Christ face-to-face! There He is! Come and see Him.” And what are we told to do? “Don’t go running off after them.” Christ won’t suddenly appear on a talk-show in New York or as a miracle-worker on the streets of

Paris. He won't rise up from somewhere down here—He'll be coming down from up there.

People can *fake* miracles; people can *claim* to be Christ. Even Satan himself, who can masquerade as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14) may try to impersonate Christ. But no one can counterfeit the Second Coming as the Bible describes it. It will be unmistakably real. When the heavens above us explode and ten thousand angels lift their voices, and the unspeakable glory of God Almighty breaks through the clouds, no one will wonder who has come calling!

Some have misinterpreted a few Scripture texts and built up the picture of a Secret Rapture, where individuals are whisked away to heaven while others go about their business. The Secret Rapture theory relies primarily on a few texts that speak of Christ coming like a thief in the night. We're told to watch and be ready for the unexpected event. On the surface this seems to imply a secret, perhaps invisible, event. But all the Bible passages which discuss Jesus' coming as a thief discuss not a *secret* coming but an *unexpected* one. Jesus is not coming secretly to a chosen few—He's coming suddenly when millions don't expect Him.

The problem is, texts about Jesus coming like a thief stand side by side with texts about Jesus coming in a blaze of glory. Peter in fact mentions the two in the same breath: "The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire. . . ." **2 Peter 3:10, NIV**. Obviously the Lord comes like a thief in the sense that His Return will be a great *surprise* to those who aren't ready—it catches them off guard. But it's NOT silent or invisible. There's nothing quiet about the heavens disappearing with a roar.

Here's how Christ Himself pictures the event in **Matthew 24:27 & 30, NIV**: "As the LIGHTNING comes from the east and *flashes* to the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man . . . the Son of Man will APPEAR in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with POWER and great GLORY." This eye-riveting Event may come as an incredible surprise to some—but it *won't* be quiet and invisible or secret and mystical!

God has laid out His end-time plan very carefully in His Word. Specific events will take place:

1. Seismic upheavals. **Revelation 6:14; 16:18-20** There'll be stupendous seismic upheavals. The heavens roll back like a scroll; mountains and islands are moved; and a great earthquake shakes the planet.
2. The righteous dead are resurrected. **1 Thessalonians 4:16; John 5:28-29** "The dead in Christ shall rise first." The faithful asleep in their graves will hear Christ's voice and rise up to eternal life.
3. The righteous living are translated. **1 Thessalonians 4:17** The righteous who are alive will be caught up together with the resurrected and ascend toward Christ, their Redeemer.
4. Immortality is bestowed. **1 Corinthians 15:53** Both the resurrected dead and the translated living receive the gift of immortality for their faith in Christ. "This mortal must put on immortality."
5. The wicked are destroyed. **2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 19:11-21** Those who deliberately and persistently rejected God's mercy will finally be destroyed.
6. The righteous welcome the returning Christ. **Isaiah 25:9** The redeemed exclaim, "This is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. . . . We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."
7. The righteous journey to heaven. **John 14:2-3** The righteous are welcomed into the divine procession and journey with Christ toward their heavenly home.

What will you feel during those last moments of Earth's history? Joy? Or terror? You may feel indifferent about God right now, may not think faith is important. But one day soon it will make all the difference and will divide humanity into two groups. One group sees Christ's Coming as a horrifying surprise. **Revelation 6:15-17** says they'll pray for the mountains and rocks to fall on them! The other group sees it as a wonderful deliverance, a fulfillment of all they've lived for. Open your Heart and make your commitment to Christ right now.

THE BIBLE SAYS

- John 14:1-3** Like a promissory note, Jesus said He would return—and we can bank on it!
- Acts 1:9-11** Angels confirmed His promise and testified to its truthfulness.
- Jude 14** Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of our Lord's return.
- Revelation 1:7** It will be an **VISIBLE** event. When Jesus returns, every eye shall **SEE** Him.
- Matthew 24:27** Jesus taught that His Return shall be like *lightning* flashing across the sky.
- Matthew 24:30** The wicked also “will **SEE** the Son of Man coming . . . with power and great glory,” but they “will mourn” their lost opportunity.
- 1 Thess. 4:15-17** It will be an **AUDIBLE** event. The Lord Himself will *shout*, and the trumpet—the noisest of instruments—shall *sound*.
- Psalms 50:3-5** David declares “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent. . . . He shall call . . . gather My saints together to Me.”
- Matthew 16:27, 25:31** It will be a **GLORIOUS** event, in His own glory and the glory of His Father. He comes with “**ALL** the holy angels”—which Revelation 5:11 says are trillions!
- Revelation 19:11-16** As King of kings leading the armies of heaven, He returns as triumphant Lord.
- Isaiah 25:9** The righteous, delighted to see Christ, joyfully exclaim, “Lo, this is our God!”
- Revelation 6:14-17** The unsaved wicked fear His Coming and cry for the rocks to fall upon them.
- 1 Thess. 4:15-17** The faithful *dead* will first be resurrected and rise to meet the Lord; then the faithful *living* will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air.
- 1 Cor. 15:51-54** God will clothe His faithful people with immortality.
- 2 Thess. 2:8** The wicked are struck dead by the brightness of His Coming.
- Matthew 13:37-43** The evil are purged out of His kingdom, and the righteous are saved through all eternity.
- Titus 2:13** Christ's Coming is called the “Blessed Hope” of a lost mankind.
- Revelation 22:11-12, 17 & 20** Jesus offers His final invitation to prepare for His soon Return.

If you like statistics . . .

There are over 1500 prophecies of Jesus' Second Coming recorded in the Bible.

For every prophecy of His first coming mentioned in the Old Testament,
there are eight predicting His Second Coming.

The return of our Lord is mentioned once in every five verses in the New Testament.

Quick Quiz

Our heavenly Father has *so much* He longs to teach us! Think of each seminar session as one in a series of steps leading upward—a series of “lessons from heaven.” May we learn our lessons well, so we in turn can teach others. God’s Word, the Bible—our Textbook for this seminar—offers **Learning Unlimited!**

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1. Jesus *promised* to return to this sinful world when He said, “I _____ come again”!
To check your answer, see John 14:3.
2. The Savior leads us to believe His Return would be *visually spectacular* when He says it will be “as the _____” that comes out of the east and shines all the way to the west.
To check your answer, see Matthew 24:27.
3. The Apostle Paul leads us to believe Christ’s Return will be *noisily audible* when he describes that event by saying, “The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a _____, with the _____ of the archangel, and with the _____ of God.”
To check your answer, see 1 Thessalonians 4:16. Compare Matthew 24:31 and John 5:28-29.
4. T What the Bible means by “the Second Coming of Christ” is that Jesus comes into your
 F heart when you invite Him and accept Him as your Savior.
To check your answer, see any or all of the Scripture texts listed on this Quiz.
5. Could John the Revelator use human language any more *clear* or *emphatic* about the visible nature of Christ’s Return than to say simply: “_____ shall see Him”?
To check your answer, see Revelation 1:7.
6. Besides the fact that the wicked are all struck dead by “the brightness of His Coming,” another very cataclysmic, catastrophic event in connection with Christ’s Return is “a _____ earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so _____ an earthquake, and so great.”
To check your answer, see 2 Thessalonians 2:8 and Revelation 16:18, 6:14, and 16:20.

A Thought for Today

John 14:1-3

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And 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.”