

## EGF-8: The Grand Homecoming EGF Group Bible Study 7-23-11

On April 11, 1970 the spacecraft called Apollo 13 was successfully launched toward the Moon. Two days later an oxygen tank ruptured which crippled the service module upon which the Command Module depended. To conserve its batteries and the oxygen needed for the last hours of flight, the crew instead used the Lunar Module's resources as a "lifeboat" during the return trip to Earth. The question on everyone's lips was whether or not Apollo 13 would make it back to earth.

Jesus told the disciples that He was going to be leaving them and that they could not go with Him at that time. He then made a promise to return again to receive not only them, but the redeemed of all ages, so that they could be together for all eternity.

Christians believe that Jesus will return again just as He promised but there are many theories today pertaining to the manner of His return to the earth. Some say He is returning in secret to take His people and that they will just disappear. Some say that He is going to return and bring 1000 years of peace and prosperity to all. And others say He is returning to keep the promises made to the Jews. These theories sound plausible when considering just a few Scriptures by themselves but what does the Bible say in its entirety concerning the second coming of Jesus? Lets find out right now!

1. **Will Jesus return to this earth the second time? Can we be positive? Hebrews 9:28; John 14:3.**
  
2. **In what manner will Jesus return the second time? Acts 1:9-11; Matthew 24:30; Luke 24:39.**

The Scriptures promise that Jesus will return to this earth in the same manner that He left at His ascension—in a visible, literal, bodily, personal manner. He will come in the clouds literally, as a personal being with a body of flesh and bones, and His coming will be visible.

3. **Will the second coming of Christ be visible to all men or only to a select group? Revelation 1:7; Matthew 24:27**
  
4. **But wasn't Jesus speaking of the secret rapture when He said, "One shall be taken, and the other left"? Luke 17:31-37.**

The secret rapture so commonly believed and taught today is not in the Bible. It is a human invention. The second coming will be a literal, worldwide, visible, personal appearance of Christ in the clouds to bring this world to an end and to reward or punish all men and women.

5. **Who will come with Jesus at His second coming, and why? Matthew 25:31-33; 24:31**

6. **What is the purpose of the second coming of Jesus to this earth? Revelation 22:12; John 14:3; Acts 3:20-21**
  
7. **What will happen to the righteous people when Jesus comes the second time? 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; Philippians 3:20-21**

The righteous dead will be raised from their graves, given perfect, immortal bodies like that of Christ, and caught up into the clouds to meet the Lord. Then the righteous living will also be given bodies like Christ and will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. And Jesus will take the righteous to heaven with Him.

8. **What will happen to the wicked people when Jesus comes again? 2 Thessalonians 2:8; Isaiah 11:4; Jeremiah 25:33**
  
9. **How will Christ's second coming affect the earth itself? Revelation 16:18, 20; Jeremiah 4:26; Isaiah 24:1, 3**
  
10. **Does the Bible give specific information regarding the nearness of Christ's second coming? Matthew 24:33**

The Lord placed signs all along the way from His ascension to His second coming. Let's take a look at them:

**A. The Destruction of Jerusalem. Matthew 24:2, 16**

Fulfillment: Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Roman warrior Titus.

**B. A Great Persecution, or Tribulation. Matthew 24:21**

Fulfillment: This prophecy points primarily to the long period of tribulation that took place during the Dark Ages and was instigated by the Catholic Church. It lasted for 1,260 years. Over 50 million Christians (some historians have it as high as 150 million) were slain for their faith in this terrible tribulation period. One writer says the Catholic church *"has shed more innocent blood than any other institution that has ever existed among mankind."* W.E.H. Lecky, History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe, (Reprint; New York: Braziller, 1955) Vol. 2, pp. 40-45.

**C. The Sun Turned into Darkness. Matthew 24:29**

Fulfillment: This was fulfilled by a day of supernatural darkness on May 19, 1780. It was not an eclipse. Timothy Dwight says, *"The 19th of May, 1780, was a remarkable dark day. Candles were lighted in many houses; the birds were silent and disappeared, and the fowls retired to roost. ...A very general opinion prevailed, that the day of judgment was at hand."* Quoted in Connecticut Historical Collections, compiled by John Warner Barber (2nd ed.; New Haven: Durrie & Peck and J.W. Barber, 1836) p. 403.

#### **D. The Moon Turned into Blood. Joel 2:31**

Fulfillment: The moon became as red as blood on the night of the "dark day," May 19, 1780. Milo Bostick in Stone's History of Massachusetts says, "*The moon which was at its full, had the appearance of blood.*"

#### **E. The Stars Fall from Heaven. Matthew 24:29**

Fulfillment: The great star shower took place on the night of November 13, 1833. It was so bright that a newspaper could be read on the street. One writer says, "*For nearly four hours the sky was literally ablaze.*" Peter A. Millman, "The Falling of the Stars," *The Telescope*, 7 (May-June, 1940) 57.

#### **F. Jesus Comes in the Clouds. Matthew 24:30**

Fulfillment: This is the next great event. Are you ready?

#### **11. How may we know when we have reached the very last days of earth's history?**

Here are some more specific signs of the last days. And these are just a few of many signs that show we are in the closing days of earth's history.

- **Management--labor troubles. James 5:4, 8**
- **Wars and commotions. Luke 21:9**
- **Unrest, fear, and upheaval. Luke 21:25-26**
- **Increase of knowledge. Daniel 12:4**
- **Scoffers and religious skeptics. 2 Peter 3:3-4; 2 Timothy 4:3-4**
- **Moral degeneracy--decline of spirituality. 2 Timothy 3:1-5; Romans 1:24-32**
- **Craze for pleasure. 2 Timothy 3:2-4**
- **Increasing lawlessness, bloody crimes, and violence. Matthew 24:12; 2 Timothy 3:13; Ezekiel 7:23**
- **Destructive earthquakes, storms, and famines. Luke 21:11**
- **A special message to the world in the very last days. Matthew 24:14**
- **A turning to spiritism. 1 Timothy 4:1; Revelation 16:14**

#### **12. Just how near is the Lord's second coming? Matthew 24:32-34**

The Bible is very specific and plain on this point. The signs have almost all been fulfilled.

#### **13. Satan is telling many falsehoods regarding the second coming of Christ and, with lying wonders and miracles, will deceive millions. How can you be certain you will not be deceived? Revelation 16:14; Matthew 24:24; Isaiah 8:20**

Satan has invented many false teachings about the second coming and is deceiving millions into believing that Christ has already come or that He will come in some non-biblical manner. But Christ has warned us of Satan's strategy, saying, "*Take heed that no man deceive you.*" Matthew 24:4.

He then exposes Satan's plans and falsehoods so we will be forewarned, and He reminds us, "*Behold, I have told you before.*" Matthew 24:25. There is no reason to be deceived if we learn what God's book teaches about Christ's second coming. People who love God supremely and know what the Bible says about the second coming will not be led astray by Satan. All others will be deceived.

**14. How can I be certain to be ready when Jesus comes back? John 6:37; 1:12; Hebrews 8:10; 1 Corinthians 15:57; Revelation 3:20**

Through the Holy Spirit and my conscience, Jesus knocks and asks to come into my heart so that He can change my life. If I unreservedly turn my life over to Him, He will erase all my sins of the past (Romans 3:25) and give me the power to live a godly life (John 1:12). As a free gift, He bestows upon me His own righteous character so I can stand unafraid before a holy God. Then doing His will becomes a pleasure. It is so simple that many doubt its reality. But it's true. My part is simply to give my life to Christ and let Him live within me. His part is to work the mighty miracle within me that changes my life and prepares me for His second coming. It is a free gift. I need only to accept it.

**15. Of what great danger does Christ solemnly warn? Matthew 24:44; Luke 21:34; Matthew 24:37**

There is great danger in becoming so busy with the cares of this life or so entranced by the pleasures of sin that the coming of the Lord may slip up on us as the Flood did on the world in Noah's day, and we will be surprised, unprepared, and lost. This will be the experience of millions.

One last and potentially fatal problem existed for Apollo 13 as they neared earth on April 17th, eight days after their launch. The possibility of heat shield damage from the O2 tank rupture would cause the module to burn up upon re-entry into the atmosphere, and there was only one way to find out.

The crew jettisoned the Lunar Module, leaving the Command Module to begin its lone re-entry through the atmosphere. A normal lunar re-entry was accompanied by four minutes of communication blackout caused by ionization of the air around the Command Module. This heightened the tension of the blackout period, which took 33 seconds longer than normal.

It was as if the whole world stood still for five minutes as NASA searched the sky for Apollo 13. The craft regained radio contact and splashed down safely in the Pacific with all crew members alive. It was a grand homecoming.

Jesus is coming again just as He promised He would. Are we watching for His return? Those who are found watching will experience the return of Jesus to receive the redeemed of all ages to live for eternity with Him. Do you want to be a part of that grand homecoming? Are you planning to be ready when Jesus returns?