

What Next?

When you open this session with your students, it might be interesting to point out that there are 318 places in the New Testament that refer to the Second Coming of Christ. Anything repeated that many times is certainly an important event! Jesus went away saying, "I will come again," and today that is one of the most vital messages we can bring to our students. Jesus was here, lived, died, arose again, and ascended into Heaven, but He will come back to earth again. His words to us on this subject are, "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 24:44).

Exactly when He will return, we do not know. There are many details we do not yet understand, but this we do know: one day soon, Jesus will return. It is repeated over and over in Scripture, "Prepare for it! Be ready!" That is the message that pertains to us, and it is the key thought you will want to develop with your students in the course of this lesson.

Response 1— Discuss with the class that the signs of the times should make us heedful of our spiritual standing with Jesus Christ. He said, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. . . . Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. . . . Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 24:12,13,42,44). "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17). As your students review these verses, have them pinpoint the specific actions which are to be taken in order to be prepared for the coming of the Lord.

Objective

The students will be able to give indicators that the events of our day point to the nearness of Jesus' Second Coming. The importance of preparation may also be explained.

Key Texts

Amos 8:11; Zechariah 14:3-5; Matthew 24:3-14; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-9; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; Revelation 6:12-16

Other Scriptures Used in This Study

Psalm 119:11; Matthew 24:42,44; Luke 21:28; 2 Corinthians 13:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17; Revelation 3:15,16

Suggested Verse for Memorization

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. — 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17

Response 2 — Jesus told His disciples that when these things come to pass, they should not be troubled. As your students discuss this, emphasize the importance of Jesus' answer. War is a terrible thing—with so much suffering, insecurity, devastation, and death—yet it seems that nations cannot avoid war, no matter how hard they try. Jesus admonished His disciples that these events would surely come to pass in the end time. The natural human response is to view these circumstances with apprehension and dismay, but Jesus said to "look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28). This is one of the joys of being a Christian—we can have peace in our hearts in spite of outward turmoil. No matter how difficult the situation, as we keep our faith and trust in our Lord Jesus Christ, He will see us through.

Response 3 — The Amos text refers to a famine for the hearing of the Word of God. "Behold, the

days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD" (Amos 8:11). As your students discuss how we should prepare for this famine, they should conclude that it is important to hide God's Word in our hearts today. (See Psalm 119:11.) Discuss ways this can be done: regular personal devotions, systematic Bible memorization, careful attention to Bible-based sermons and to Sunday school lessons, etc.

Response 4 — In talking over this information, the students should be able to come up with a number of other diseases and conditions that could be labeled pestilences. AIDS has been named. Coronary heart disease (CHD) causes an enormous percentage of deaths each year. It is estimated that 538,000 will die annually of cancer in the United States. Diabetes, Alzheimer's, tuberculosis, and many other plague-type diseases could be mentioned in this response.

Response 5 — Discuss with your students that earthquakes are not only a sign of the times in which we live, but also will be a part of the Tribulation that will come upon people because of their sins. Earthquakes are a fearsome event, and they will be no less so during the Tribulation. In the Revelation account, people from all walks of life will flee to the dens and rocks of the mountains to hide themselves from the faces of God and of Jesus Christ. Zechariah describes what will happen when Jesus reveals Himself to the Jewish people at the end of the Tribulation. He will stand upon the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem. The Mount will cleave in the midst, with half moved toward the north and half toward the south, and with a very great valley between. Imagine the tremendous force of nature exerted to accomplish this!

Response 6 — Encourage your students to give their answers. Among their responses, no doubt the thought of Jesus coming as a thief in the night will be mentioned. If we knew a thief was coming, we would take every precaution possible to protect ourselves. Taking note of the phrase, "Peace and safety," might be another item on the list. When the world says peace and safety, God's Word says that sudden destruction is imminent. The Apostle said also that Christians are children of light and of the day, not children of darkness and night. We must remain aware and expectant of the Lord's returning. We should not be sleeping spiritually, but should "be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." Finally, God has not appointed His people to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Response 7 — It should not be difficult to maintain a discussion about conditions in the world today. No doubt most of your students will agree that the signs of the times are being rapidly fulfilled. The last verse of our text tells us that many live, "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." The verse goes on to say, "from such turn away." There is much religion in the world today, but so much of it is hindered by the conditions described in this text. We read of the Laodicean church, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:15,16). The remedy for the Laodiceans was repentance. In these last days it is prudent to take inventory of our spiritual condition. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Corinthians 13:5).