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WHEN JESUS COMES AGAIN

The evening before a man was to leave on a long trip, he went into his five year old son's room to tell him good night and remind him that he wouldn't be there in the morning when the boy woke up. The little fellow was concerned. He asked, "Daddy, how can I know when you're coming back?"

The father thought a minute, and then he said, "When you see the leaves on the trees fall to the ground, you can know that I'll be coming very soon."

In the weeks that followed, the first thing the boy did every morning when he went out to play was to look up at the trees. Finally, one fall night there was a strong wind storm, and the next morning when the lad went outside, the ground was covered with leaves. Ecstatic, he ran through the fallen leaves, shouting, "Daddy's coming back! Daddy's coming back!"

Shortly before Jesus left this earth, He assured His disciples, " 'I will come back and take you to be with me.' " (John 14:3) For two thousand years Christians have treasured this promise.

When Jesus will come

Like the little boy in the story, many Christians wonder, When will Jesus come? Some expected Him to come at the time the calendar rolled over from the 1900's to the year 2000. You know, of course, that He didn't. In fact, Jesus said that no one but God knows the day or hour. (Matthew 24:36)

However, Jesus gave us several signs by which we can know that His coming is near. Here's one: " 'This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.' " (Matthew 24:14)

Of course, we humans will never know when every person on earth has had a chance to hear the good news about Jesus and His offer of eternal life to all who believe in Him. But one point is very evident - it's easier today than it has been at any other time in human history to share the good news with every human being. Think of it: TV, radio, books, magazines, and newspapers - and now the Internet and the World Wide Web! Given the right circumstances, the whole world could hear the gospel overnight!

The Bible also says that shortly before Jesus returns the world will be very fascinated with spiritualism and communication with demonic spirits. (2 Thessalonians 2: 9, 10 ; Revelation 16: 12 - 14) And today we see a rapid build-up in New-Age channeling and other forms of so-called communication with the dead. This also is a sign of Jesus' soon coming.

How Jesus will come

So how will Jesus come? He Himself told us that He will come with clouds and His angels will come with Him. (Matthew 24: 30, 31) When Jesus returned to heaven in a cloud, two angels told His disciples that He would come back the same way He had gone. (Acts 1: 9 - 11) And in Revelation John wrote, "Look, He is coming with the clouds." (Revelation 1:7)

Knowing the manner of Jesus' coming is important because He said that imposters will appear at various places on earth, claiming to be Him. He warned, " 'If anyone says to you, "Look,...he is, out in the desert," do not go out; or, "Here he is, in the inner rooms," do not believe it. For as the lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man.' " (Matthew 24: 23, 26, 27)

Jesus' second coming won't be a secret event. Not only will it be visible all across the sky; it will also be announced with a trumpet blast that is far louder and more beautiful than anything human ears have ever heard. And all those who died believing in Jesus will be raised to life again. (1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:52)

So, here are some identifying marks of Jesus' return: His coming in clouds, a loud trumpet blast from heaven, and the resurrection of God's people of all ages. Any purported "second coming" that doesn't have these marks is a counterfeit.

The hope of Jesus' coming

Is it really important that we know that Jesus is coming again?

Absolutely. Are you getting tired of pain and suffering and sickness and death? God promises that in the new home Jesus is preparing for us " 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things' " will have passed away. (Revelation 21:4)

When Jesus comes, those of your friends and loved ones who were believers and have since died will be raised to life. They will join with God's people who are still alive on earth, "and so we will be with the Lord forever." (1 Thessalonians 4: 16, 17) No wonder the Bible invites us to "encourage each other with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4:18)

Wouldn't you like to be ready to meet Jesus when He comes? All you have to do is give yourself to Him. You can do it right now!