

# The Signs of the Times:

## Part 2—Signs of the Second Coming

By PAUL J. SCHARF

It will be here before we know it! December 25, that is....

But long before that big day, we'll sense the sights, the sounds and smells.

Christmas, in fact, permeates our culture so thoroughly that it almost mingles together with all things related to fall—the cooler weather, a warm sweater, the desire to stay inside, football on television, a hot cup of cocoa, and the crackling of the fireplace.

We do take a big break from it all, though, for about two weeks. Those Christmas lights we'll soon be seeing will first give way to our favorite fall colors—orange and black. That space in the front yard where Santa will shortly be enthroned on his sleigh, along with Rudolph, a few more reindeer, and—how could I forget!—the baby Jesus ... well, right now, it's filled with ghosts and goblins. When those trick-or-treaters come around on October 31<sup>st</sup>, you want to be ready to scare the stuffing out of them!

But, after that, it's all about Christmas. Why, with just one more light, placed slightly higher up on the roof, you might even win the Christmas decorating contest this year!

Now, you're really seeing the *signs of Christmas!* for sure!

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Are there signs of Christ's second coming? This is unquestionably the case.

When the disciples asked Jesus about "the sign of (His) coming, and of the end of the age" (Matt. 24:3), He proceeded to describe numerous actions that will mark the beginning of the seven-year tribulation period, before His final return.

Christ used the word "sign" again in verse 30 with reference to Himself to portray more of the amazing happenings involved in His return.

Jesus further depicted this time in Luke 21:11: "There will be ... great signs from heaven." Then, in Luke 21:25 He added: "There will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars."

Those searching for signs during the days of the tribulation will not have to look far. The grace of God will be prominently displayed through signs that will point everyone to the returning Christ and His provision of grace—even as mankind faces His awesome "wrath" (Rev. 6:16-17).

But can we see "the signs of the times" (Matt. 16:3)—which point ahead to the tribulation and the second coming—even now? I believe, undoubtedly, that we can.

The return of Christ in glory at His second advent is so brilliant that its light falls back, as it were, into our time. Further, some of the occurrences that stand between it and us are so humongous that we can see their prophetic shadows landing on us now. I believe that we can legitimately speak of such forewarnings as “the signs of the times.”

Notice that there is a qualitative difference between the signs that everyone on Earth will see during the tribulation, and these “signs of the times” that we can perceive now only with the knowledge of the prophetic Scriptures. Those tribulation-era signs are specifically prophesied to take place; “the signs of the times” are not. But when we see current proceedings that are similar in character to those that are prophesied for the tribulation, we may rightly think of them as “signs of the times”—a preview of all that is about to transpire.

Another way of describing all of this is “setting the stage for end-time events.”<sup>ii</sup>

My theology professor, Dr. Myron Houghton, explained it as follows: If you arrive early for a play, you will be able to watch the stage being prepared for the production—behind the curtain. The stage is being set. Then, when you begin to witness the actors actually moving around on the stage, you know that the production is about to unfold very shortly.

But there is one more prophetic manifestation of monumental consequence, which has no signs to go before it. We will ponder that in the concluding installment of this series.

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<sup>i</sup> This classic illustration, which I have modified and am developing over the course of the three installments in this series, has been widely used, and is credited to Dr. John Walvoord. I have not found a particular source where Walvoord himself put this illustration in print. For background to it, see John F. Walvoord with Mark Hitchcock, *Armageddon, Oil and Terror* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007), p. 200. Regarding the illustration specifically, see Ron Rhodes, *End-Times Super Trends* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2017), p.10; and Thomas Ice; “Signs of the Times;” Pre-Trib Research Center; n.d.; <https://www.pre-trib.org/pretribfiles/pdfs/Ice-SignsoftheTimes.pdf>; p. 2; Internet; accessed 6 October 2022.

<sup>ii</sup> Thomas Ice; “Prophetic Stage Setting;” Pre-Trib Research Center; n.d.; <https://www.pre-trib.org/pretribfiles/pdfs/Ice-PropheticStageSetting.pdf>; p. 1; Internet; accessed 13 October 2022.