

Lesson 8

It's no fairytale! One day, you can be free from all the hurt, hunger, loneliness, crime, and chaos infecting the world today. Doesn't that sound wonderful? But it's not going to be some charismatic world leader who is going to deliver you—no, your deliverer is far superior! Jesus is coming soon, but there are a lot of misconceptions regarding how He's coming back. So take a few minutes to understand what the Bible really says about the second coming so you won't be left behind!

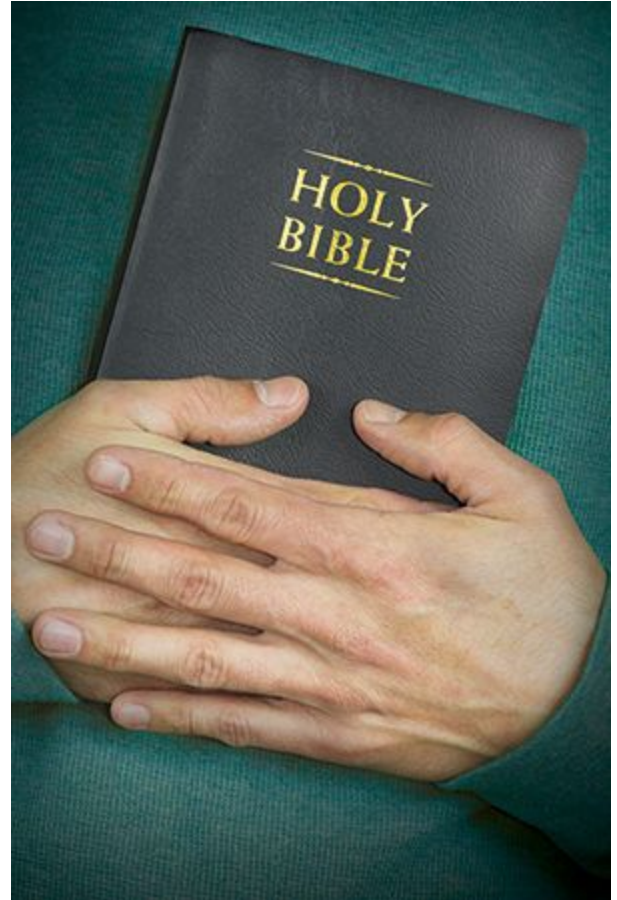
1. Can we be positive

Jesus will return a second time?

“Christ ... will appear a second time” (Hebrews 9:28).

“If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again” (John 14:3).

Answer: Yes! In Matthew 26:64, Jesus testified that He would come back to this earth again. Since the Scriptures cannot be broken (John 10:35), this is proof positive. It is Christ's own personal guarantee. Besides, Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of His first coming—so we can be absolutely certain that He will fulfill the prophecies concerning His second coming too!



2. In what manner will Jesus return the second time?

“When He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven’ ” (Acts 1:9–11).

Answer: The Scriptures promise that Jesus will return to this earth in the same manner that He left—in a visible, literal, bodily, personal manner. Matthew 24:30 says, “They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” He will come in the clouds literally, as a personal being with a body of flesh and bones (Luke 24:36–43, 50, 51). His coming will be visible; Scripture is clear on these facts!



3. Will the second coming of Christ be visible to everyone or only to a select group?

“Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him” (Revelation 1:7).

“As the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matthew 24:27).

“The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Answer: Every man, woman, and child living in the world when Jesus returns will see Him at His second coming. The staggering brightness of His appearance will stretch from horizon to horizon, and the atmosphere will be charged with brilliant glory like lightning. No one will be able to hide from it. This will be a loud, dramatic event in which even the dead are raised.

Note: *Every person will know the second coming is occurring! Some use 1 Thessalonians 4:16 to suggest a “secret rapture,” where the saved disappear from the earth quietly, but it’s actually one of the noisiest verses in the Bible: The Lord shouts, a trumpet blasts, and the dead are*

raised! The second coming is not a quiet event, nor is it only a spiritual coming into the heart. It does not take place at a person's death, nor is it figurative. All these theories are human inventions, but the Bible plainly states that the second coming will be a literal, worldwide, visible, personal appearance of Christ in the clouds.

4. Who will come with Jesus at His second coming, and why?

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory” (Matthew 25:31)

Answer: All the angels of heaven will come with Jesus at His second coming. As the bright cloud nears the earth, Jesus will send forth His angels, and they will quickly gather together all of the righteous people in preparation for the trip back to heaven (Matthew 24:31).

5. What is the purpose of Jesus' second coming to this earth?

“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work” (Revelation 22:12).

“I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:3).

“That He may send Jesus Christ ... whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things” (Acts 3:20, 21).

Answer: Jesus is coming back to this earth to save His people, just as He promised, and to take them to the beautiful home He has prepared for them.





6. What will happen to the righteous people when Jesus comes the second time?

“The Lord Himself will descend from heaven ... and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17).

“We shall all be changed ... and the dead will be raised incorruptible. For ... this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:51–53).

“We also eagerly wait for... the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body” (Philippians 3:20, 21).

Answer: Those who accepted Christ during their lives but have died will be raised from their graves, given perfect and immortal bodies, and will be caught up into the clouds to meet the Lord. The saved living will also be given new bodies and will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Jesus will then take all the saved to heaven.

Note: *that Jesus does not touch the earth at His second coming. The saints meet Him “in the air.” So God’s people won’t be fooled by any report that says Christ is in, for instance, London, New York, Moscow, or anywhere else on the earth. False christs will appear on the earth and do miracles (Matthew 24:23–27), but Jesus will remain in the clouds above the earth at His second coming.*

7. What will happen to the wicked people when Jesus comes again?

“With the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked” (Isaiah 11:4).

“At that day the slain of the Lord shall be from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth” (Jeremiah 25:33).

Answer: Those who are rebelliously clinging to sin when Jesus comes will perish from His radiant glory.

8. How will Christ’s second coming affect the earth itself?

“There was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. ... Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found” (Revelation 16:18, 20).

“I beheld, and indeed the fruitful land was a wilderness, and all its cities were broken down at the presence of the Lord” (Jeremiah 4:26).
“The Lord makes the earth empty and makes it waste. ... The land shall be entirely emptied” (Isaiah 24:1, 3).

Answer: The earth will be seized by a great earthquake at the coming of the Lord. This earthquake will be so devastating that it will leave the world in a state of total destruction.

9. Does the Bible give specific information regarding the nearness of Christ’s second coming?

Answer: Yes! Jesus Himself said, “When you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors!” (Matthew 24:33). The Lord placed signs all along the way from His ascension to His



second coming. See below ...

A. The Destruction of Jerusalem

Prophecy: “Not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down. ... Let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” (Matthew 24:2, 16).

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

B. Great Persecution, Tribulation

Prophecy: “Then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world” (Matthew 24:21).

Fulfillment: This prophecy points primarily to the tribulation that took place during the Dark Ages and was instigated by the apostate Christian church. It lasted more than 1,000 years. Over 50 million Christians were slain by the false church, which “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. Sun Turned into Darkness

Prophecy: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened” (Matthew 24:29).

Fulfillment: This was fulfilled by a day of supernatural darkness on May 19, 1780. It was not an eclipse. One eyewitness described, “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." *Connecticut Historical Collections*, compiled by John Warner Barber (2nd ed. New Haven: Durrie & Peck and J.W. Barber, 1836) p. 403.

D. Moon Turned into Blood

Prophecy: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord" (Joel 2:31).

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

E. Stars Fall from Heaven

Prophecy: "The stars will fall from heaven" (Matthew 24:29).

Fulfillment: A stunning star shower took place on the night of November 13, 1833. It was so bright that a newspaper could be read on an otherwise dark street. People thought the end of the world had come. Look into this. It is most fascinating—and a sign of Christ's coming. One writer said, "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

Prophecy: “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30).

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



10. How can we know when we have reached the very last days of earth’s history? Does the Bible describe the world and its

people in the last generation?

Answer: Yes! Look at the following signs of the last days. You will be amazed. And these are just a few of many signs that show we are in the closing days of earth’s history.

A. Wars and Commotions

Prophecy: “When you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass” (Luke 21:9).

Fulfillment: Wars and terror attacks are affecting millions worldwide. Only Jesus’ soon coming will bring an end to the pain and destruction.

B. Unrest, Fear, and Upheaval

Prophecy: “There will be ... on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity ... men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth” (Luke 21:25, 26).

Fulfillment: This is a very accurate picture of the world today—and there is a reason: We are the people of the very last days of earth’s history. The tense atmosphere present in the world today should not surprise us. Christ foretold it. It should convince us that His coming is near.

C. Increase of Knowledge

Prophecy: “The time of the end ... knowledge shall increase” (Daniel 12:4).



Fulfillment: The dawn of the Information Age makes this one obvious. Even the most skeptical mind must admit that this sign is fulfilled. Knowledge is exploding in all areas of science—medicine, technology, and more.



D. Scoffers and Religious Skeptics

Prophecy: “Scoffers will come in the last days” (2 Peter 3:3). “They will not endure sound doctrine. ... They will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Timothy 4:3, 4).

Fulfillment: It isn’t difficult to see the fulfillment of this prophecy today. Even religious leaders are denying the plain Bible teachings of Creation, the Flood, the divinity of Christ, the second coming, and many other Bible truths. Public educators teach our youth to scoff at the Bible record and substitute evolution and other false teachings for the plain

facts of God's Word.

E. Moral Degeneracy, Decline of Spirituality

Prophecy: "In the last days ... men will be lovers of themselves ... unloving ... without self-control ... despisers of good ... having a form of godliness but denying its power" (2 Timothy 3:1–3, 5).

Fulfillment: America is in the midst of a spiritual crisis. People from all walks of life are saying so. Nearly one marriage in two ends in divorce. The current generation's decreasing interest in Bible spirituality is a plain fulfillment of God's Word. For a real shock, see how many of the last-day sins listed in 2 Timothy 3:1–5 you see described in the news today. Nothing short of the coming of the Lord will stem the tide of evil now engulfing the world.

F. Craze for Pleasure

Prophecy: "In the last days ... men will be ... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:1, 2, 4).

Fulfillment: The world has gone crazy for pleasure.

Only a few people attend church regularly, but thousands jam sporting arenas and other places of amusement. Americans are spending billions each year for pleasure and only "peanuts," in comparison, for God's causes. Pleasure-mad Americans waste billions of hours in front of the TV searching for worldly gratification—in direct fulfillment of 2 Timothy 3:4.



G. Increasing Lawlessness, Bloody Crimes, and Violence



Prophecy: “Lawlessness will abound” (Matthew 24:12). “Evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse” (2 Timothy 3:13). “The land is filled with crimes of blood, and the city is full of violence” (Ezekiel 7:23).

Fulfillment: It is obvious that this sign is fulfilled.

Lawlessness is increasing with shocking rapidity.

Many fear for their lives just stepping out the door of

their homes. Many today are concerned about the survival of civilization because crime and terror sweeps forward relentlessly.

H. Natural Disaster and Upheaval

Prophecy: “There will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences ... and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity” (Luke 21:11, 25).

Fulfillment: Earthquakes, tornadoes, and floods are increasing at an unprecedented rate.

Thousands die daily of starvation, disease, and lack of water and health care—all signs that we live in earth’s last hours.

I. A Special Message to the World in the Last Days

Prophecy: “This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).

Fulfillment: The great, last-warning message of Christ’s second coming is now being presented in nearly every world language. Before Jesus’ second coming, every person in the world will be warned of His soon return.

J. A Turning to Spiritism

Prophecy: “In latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits” (1 Timothy 4:1). “They are spirits of demons” (Revelation 16:14).

Fulfillment: People today, including a vast number of the heads of nations, seek counsel from psychics, channelers, and spiritists. Spiritism has invaded Christian churches as well, propped up by the unbiblical teaching of the immortality of the soul. The Bible teaches that the dead are dead. (See Study Guide 10 for more on this subject.)

K. Capital Labor Trouble

Prophecy: “The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord. ... Be patient ... for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (James 5:4, 8).

Fulfillment: Trouble between capital and labor is predicted for the last days. Do you doubt this is fulfilled?

11. Just how near is the Lord’s second coming?

“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place” (Matthew 24:32–34).

Answer: The Bible is very specific and plain on this point. Almost all the signs have been fulfilled. We cannot know the day and hour of Christ’s return (Matthew 24:36), but we can know that His coming is near. God has promised to finish things very quickly now (Romans 9:28). Christ is coming back to this earth for His people soon. Are you ready?



12. 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?

“They are spirits of demons, performing signs [miracles]” (Revelation 16:14).

“False christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect” (Matthew 24:24).

“To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20).

Answer: 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 a manner not consistent with the Bible's teachings. But Christ has warned us of Satan's strategy, saying, "Take heed that no one deceives you" (Matthew 24:4). He has exposed Satan's falsehoods so we can be forewarned, and He reminds us, "See, I have told you beforehand" (Matthew 24:25). For example, Jesus stated specifically that He will not appear in the desert or come to a séance chamber (verse 26). There is no reason to be deceived if we learn what God teaches about Christ's second coming. People who know what the Bible says about the second coming will not be led astray by Satan. All others will be deceived.

13. How can you be certain you'll be ready when Jesus comes back?

"The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37).

"As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

"I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts" (Hebrews 8:10).

"Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Answer: Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in" (Revelation 3:20). Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus knocks and asks to come into your heart so that He can change your life. If you turn your life over to Him, He will erase all your sins (Romans 3:25) and give you the power to live a godly life (Philippians 2:13). As a free gift, He bestows upon you His own righteous character so you can stand unafraid before a holy God. Doing His will becomes a pleasure. It is so simple that many doubt its reality, but it's true. Your part is simply to give your life to Christ and let Him live within you.



His part is to work the mighty miracle within you that changes your life and prepares you for His second coming. It is a free gift. You need only accept it.

14. Of what great danger does Christ warn us?

"Be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Matthew 24:44).

"Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly" (Luke 21:34).

"As the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:37).

Answer: 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 could sneak up on us as the Flood did on the world in Noah's day, and we would be surprised, unprepared, and lost. Sadly, this will be the experience of millions. Jesus is coming back very soon. Are you prepared?



15. Do you want to be ready when Jesus returns for His people?

Answer:

Thought Questions

1. Isn't the great tribulation yet to come?

It is true that a terrible tribulation will cover the earth just before Jesus returns to deliver His people. Daniel described it as "a time of trouble, such as never was" (Daniel 12:1). However, Matthew 24:21 refers to the awful persecution of God's people during the Dark Ages, when millions were slain.

2. Since the Lord is coming “as a thief in the night,” how can anyone know anything about it?

The answer is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:2–4: “You yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.” The emphasis of this passage is on the suddenness of the day of the Lord. It comes as a thief only for those who are unprepared, not for those who are prepared—those called “brethren.”

3. When will Christ set up His kingdom on the earth?

After the great 1,000-year period of Revelation 20. This millennium begins at the second coming, when Jesus takes the righteous from earth to heaven to live and reign with Him “a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4). At the close of the 1,000 years, “the holy city, new Jerusalem” (Revelation 21:2) comes down from heaven to the earth with all the saints (Zechariah 14:1, 5) and the wicked dead of all ages are raised to life (Revelation 20:5). They surround the city to capture it (Revelation 20:9), but fire comes down from out of heaven and devours them. This fire purifies the earth and burns up all traces of sin (2 Peter 3:10, Malachi 4:3). Then God creates a new earth (2 Peter 3:13; Isaiah 65:17; Revelation 21:1) and gives it to the righteous, and “God Himself will be with them and be their God” (Revelation 21:3). Perfect, holy, happy beings, restored once again to the perfect image of God, will at last be at home in a sinless, spotless world as God originally planned. (For more information on God’s beautiful new kingdom, see Study Guide 4. For more about the 1,000 years, see Study Guide 12.)

4. Why don’t we hear more preaching and teaching today regarding Christ’s second coming?

The devil is responsible. He well knows that the second coming is the “blessed hope” (Titus 2:13) of the Christian, and that once understood, it changes the lives of men and women and leads them to take a personal, active part in spreading that good news to others. This infuriates Satan, so he influences those who have “a form of godliness” (2 Timothy 3:5) to scoff, saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning” (2 Peter 3:3, 4). Those who deny or make light of Christ’s second advent as a literal, soon coming event are fulfilling Bible prophecy—and doing the devil a service.

5. But wasn’t Jesus speaking of a secret rapture when He said in Luke 17:36, “One will be taken and the other left”?

No. There is no indication that the event is secret. Jesus was describing Noah’s flood and the destruction of Sodom. (See Luke 17:26–37.) He told how God spared Noah and Lot and

destroyed the wicked. He said specifically that the flood and fire “destroyed them all” (verses 27, 29). Plainly, in each case, a few were taken to safety and the rest were destroyed. Then He added, “Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed” (verse 30). To illustrate, Jesus continued, “Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left” (verse 36). There is nothing secret about His return. “Every eye will see Him” (Revelation 1:7). At His second coming, Christ publicly and openly takes the righteous up into the clouds (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17), while His holy presence slays the wicked (Isaiah 11:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:8). That’s why Luke 17:37 speaks of the bodies of the wicked and mentions the eagles (or vultures) gathered around them. (See also Revelation 19:17, 18.) The wicked who are left behind at Christ’s coming are left dead. (For more on the “secret rapture” theory, contact us for our book on the subject.)

Quiz Questions

1. At His second coming (1)

- Christ will arrive privately and visit certain cities of the earth.
- Christ will appear in the desert.
- Christ will remain in the clouds and call the righteous up to meet Him in the air.

2. When Jesus returns to this earth (1)

- Only the righteous will see Him.
- Every eye will see Him.
- People will not know it until it is announced on TV.

3. What will happen to the righteous at Christ's second coming? (2)

- Righteous dead will be raised, given immortality, caught up into clouds, and taken to heaven.
- Righteous living will be given immortality, caught up into clouds, and taken to heaven.
- Righteous will stay here and convert the wicked.
- Righteous will be secretly snatched away.

4. On the basis of biblical signs, Christ's coming (1)

- Will be very, very soon!
- Will be several hundred years from now.
- Has already occurred.

5. The wicked who are living when Jesus returns will be (1)

- Placed in hell, where they will burn forever.
- Slain at His second coming.

_____ Spared and given another chance.

6. Check the statements below that tell the truth about Christ's second coming: (4)

- _____ He will come secretly.
- _____ The second coming is the experience of conversion.
- _____ He will come in the clouds.
- _____ Christ comes for us on our deathbed.
- _____ The wicked will not see Him.
- _____ All the angels will be with Him.
- _____ He will not actually touch the earth.
- _____ It is possible to know the day and hour of His coming.
- _____ Millions will be surprised and lost.

7. At Christ's second coming (1)

- _____ The whole world will be ready and waiting.
- _____ There will be a devastating, worldwide earthquake.
- _____ The wicked will be converted.

8. Mark all statements that are true signs of the last days of earth: (7)

- _____ The world will get better and better.
- _____ Strife between capital and labor.
- _____ Fewer earthquakes, storms, etc.
- _____ Falling away from Bible truth.
- _____ Craze for pleasure.
- _____ Moral degeneracy.
- _____ A great drop in the crime rate.
- _____ Great famines.
- _____ Increase of knowledge.
- _____ Unrest and upheaval.

9. Which signs in the heavens are signs of Christ's return? (2)

- _____ Haley's comet.
- _____ The dark day of May 1780.
- _____ The falling stars of November 1833.
- _____ The moon falling to the earth.

10. How do we know that Jesus is coming back to earth very soon? (1)

- _____ The Bible gives signs and specific descriptions of the last days.
- _____ Because so many people believe that Jesus is coming soon.
- _____ Some fortune-tellers predict it.

11. Millions will be deceived regarding the manner and time of Christ's return because (1)

- God does not want all to be saved.
- They do not give large enough offerings.
- They do not study their Bibles to find the truth of the matter.

12. I can be ready for Christ's return if (1)

- Jesus lives within me.
- I read the newspaper daily.
- I do what my minister suggests.

13. I am planning to be ready when Jesus returns.

- Yes.
- No.