

The Big Picture

*20 Family-Friendly Lessons
on God's Plan for You*

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Other Books by John Hilton III and Anthony Sweat

*Why? Powerful Answers and Practical Reasons
for Living LDS Standards*

How? Essential Skills for Living the Gospel

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Preface

This book can be used in two ways.

First, this is a book written for teenagers to sit down and read. If you're a teenager reading this book, great! You are who we are writing to! We hope this book provides you with additional knowledge and insights about God's plan so that you can go forward and use those truths to guide your everyday life. We promise you that you will be blessed as you follow "the great plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8).

Second, this is also a book that parents and teachers can use as a resource when teaching the gospel. Because this book is written to teenagers, perhaps the best thing you can do is to hand it to your child and ask him or her to plan the lesson! As you go through each chapter, you'll periodically find three different kinds of icons.



The Teach the Plan icon that includes a number on it. We refer back to these icons at the end of each chapter where we have provided a lesson outline to help you teach the material in family settings, church, or mutual.



In every chapter, you'll also see the Experiment upon the Word icon. It identifies a hands-on activity that you can do to help you "experiment upon [the word]" (Alma 32:27) and learn more about God's plan for you.

PREFACE



Each chapter also includes a Live the Plan icon that invites you to act on the truths of the plan you are learning.

We know that true doctrine, understood, has the power to change attitudes and behavior. Our sincere desire is that this book can assist you in teaching youth to understand the vital doctrines that are a part of the plan of salvation.

Christ's Return to Earth



Imagine it's a bright and sunny afternoon, and as you drive down the road with your parents you look up and notice that the sky looks different than normal. The clouds are luminescent, bright, and heavenly. Suddenly, without warning, the sky seemingly bursts open and the veil between heaven and earth is split. Trumpets start sounding from the sky, and you see above you the most glorious being your mind could ever conceive of descending out of heaven and touching down on earth—Jesus Christ in all His glory has just returned to earth to rule and reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. The power of His resurrected glory—like fire—is transfiguring some people and consuming others.

Do you get out of your car and run towards the event, or away from it? Do you step forward in joy at Christ's appearance, or run and seek to "enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for the fear of the Lord and the glory of his majesty shall smite thee" (2 Nephi 12:10)? In essence, are you prepared for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ?

What Is the Second Coming of Christ?

After His death and resurrection in Jerusalem, Jesus reappeared to His disciples there and taught them for a short time. Then, while in the midst of His disciples, "[Jesus] was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9). As the disciples looked up into heaven, two angels appeared and said, "Ye men of Galilee,

why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, *shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven*” (Acts 1:11; emphasis added). Since that day, the Saints have anxiously waited for the Lord to return to the earth to rule and reign in power over the whole earth. This is known as the “second coming” of Jesus Christ.

The Second Coming of Christ will be very different than the first coming of Christ. At His first coming, Jesus was “born of Mary” and came to earth as a child (Alma 7:10), with the purpose of teaching God’s children and fulfilling the Atonement. At the Second Coming, the Lord will come out of “the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30) to “take vengeance upon the wicked” (Doctrine and Covenants 29:17) and to cleanse the earth from sin. The Lord told Joseph Smith: “For behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, the time is soon at hand that I shall come in a cloud with power and great glory. And it shall be a great day at the time of my coming” (Doctrine and Covenants 34:7–8). Indeed it will be a great day. In fact, for the righteous, the return of Jesus Christ will be one of the best days on earth.

What Will Happen at the Second Coming?



The prophet Joel described the Second Coming as both “the *great* and the *terrible* day of the Lord” (Joel 2:31; emphasis added). How can a day be great for some, but terrible for others? Well, it is because of what will happen when Jesus comes—for the righteous it will be the greatest day, but for the wicked and rebellious it won’t be so great (that could be the understatement of the century). The scriptures teach us that at the Second Coming “among the wicked, men shall lift up their voices and curse God and die” (Doctrine and Covenants 45:32) and that the rebellious sinners’ “faces shall be as flames” (2 Nephi 23:8). The Lord said, “For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea,

and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up” (3 Nephi 25:1).

However, the Lord also says that at the Second Coming, “unto you that fear my name, shall the Son of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings” (3 Nephi 25:2). “The Lord shall be in their midst, and his glory shall be upon them, and he will be their king and their lawgiver” (Doctrine and Covenants 45:59), and “the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion, singing with songs of everlasting joy” (Doctrine and Covenants 45:71). Sin will cease, because when Jesus comes again, “Satan shall be bound, that he shall have no place in the hearts of the children of men” (Doctrine and Covenants 45:55). Perhaps best of all, all our righteous loved ones who have died will be resurrected at the Second Coming of Christ (see Doctrine and Covenants 45:45) and we will be with them again. Healing, singing, joy, sinlessness, and seeing our past loved ones—that doesn’t sound too bad, does it? Yes, for the righteous the Second Coming will be a joyous day indeed. It will be the best day.

As we think about the Second Coming, we should be encouraged and joyful. If we are prepared, it will be a marvelous day.

What Are the Signs of the Second Coming?

“And it shall come to pass that he that feareth me shall be looking forth for the great day of the Lord to come, even for the signs of the coming of the Son of Man” (Doctrine and Covenants 45:39). In His mercy, the Lord wants us to be ready and righteous for His coming, so He has given us “signs” to help us prepare and anticipate His glorious return.

EXPERIMENT UPON THE WORD If you know these signs, do you know the signs of the Second Coming? (Answers are at the bottom of the page.)

TEACH THE PLAN The following are *some* of the signs of the Second Coming listed in the scriptures (in no particular order). Some have been fulfilled, some are being fulfilled now, and some have yet to happen. As you go through the list, check off whether you think these signs are fulfilled, in process, or have yet to begin.

FULFILLED	IN PROCESS	NOT STARTED	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Coming forth of the Book of Mormon (see Isaiah 29; Ezekiel 37; 2 Nephi 3, 27, 29)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The gathering of Israel (see Isaiah 11:11–12; Doctrine and Covenants 45:25, 43)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wars and rumors of wars (see Matthew 24:6–7; Doctrine and Covenants 45:26)

(Answers: Stop Sign, No Parking, State Highway, Railroad Crossing, No U-Turn, Yield, School Crossing, One Way/Detour, Circular Intersection, Reserved Handicapped Parking, Do Not Enter, Side Road, Interstate, Food, Workers Ahead)

CHRIST'S RETURN TO EARTH

FULFILLED	IN PROCESS	NOT STARTED	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The whole earth will be in commotion (see Doctrine and Covenants 45:26)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	People will despair in their hearts (see Doctrine and Covenants 45:26)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Love of men will "wax cold" (see Matthew 24:12; Doctrine and Covenants 45:27)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Church will progress and fill the earth (see Daniel 2:34–35; 1 Nephi 14:12)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Lord will pour out His spirit upon all flesh. People will begin to have visions and dreams and prophesy (see Joel 2:28–32)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	False Christs and false prophets will appear and deceive people, including some members of the Church (see JS-Matthew 1:22; Matthew 24:24)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	People will reject the truth because of the philosophies of men (see Doctrine and Covenants 45:29)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Widespread wickedness across the world (see Doctrine and Covenants 45:27; Matthew 24:37)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Gentiles will have great power and influence in the world (see Doctrine and Covenants 45:30; 1 Nephi 13:13–19)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	An overflowing scourge or desolating sickness shall cover the land (see Doctrine and Covenants 45:31)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The righteous will be persecuted (see Matthew 24:9)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The righteous will stand in holy places and come unto Zion for protection (see Doctrine and Covenants 45:32)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	People will curse God (see Doctrine and Covenants 45:32)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There will be earthquakes in many places (see Isaiah 24:20; Matthew 24:7; Revelation 16:18–20; Doctrine and Covenants 45:33)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There will be famines and pestilences (see Matthew 24:7)

THE BIG PICTURE

FULFILLED	IN PROCESS	NOT STARTED	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	People will harden their hearts against God (see Doctrine and Covenants 45:33)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Violence and murder will abound (see Doctrine and Covenants 45:33)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Latter-day temples of the Lord will be built (see Isaiah 2:2; Isaiah 19:19–20; Micah 4:1–7)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The sun will be darkened (see Joel 2:31; 3:15; Matthew 24:29; Doctrine and Covenants 45:42; 133:49)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The moon will have the color of blood (see Matthew 24:29; Doctrine and Covenants 45:42; 133:49)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stars will fall from heaven (see Matthew 24:29; Doctrine and Covenants 45:42; 133:49)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A great war called Armageddon will erupt in the Middle East (see Joel 3:14; Zechariah 12:11; Revelation 16:14–21)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The righteous Saints who have died will be resurrected and be caught up to meet Christ (see Doctrine and Covenants 45:45)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Christ's foot will touch down on the Mount of Olives and split it (see Zechariah 14:4–7; Doctrine and Covenants 45:48)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The gospel will be preached to every nation (see Matthew 24:14; Doctrine and Covenants 133:37)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Jews will return to Jerusalem and receive their promised land (see Amos 9:14; Zechariah 2:4–12; 2 Nephi 9:2)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Christ will suddenly come to His temple (see Malachi 3:1)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Two prophets will minister in Jerusalem for more than three years, then be killed, lie dead in the streets for three days, and then be taken up into heaven (see Revelation 11:3–11)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Elijah the prophet will appear to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers (see Malachi 4:5–6)

CHRIST'S RETURN TO EARTH

FULFILLED
 IN PROCESS
 NOT STARTED

F	I	N	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Water will flow from under the temple at Jerusalem and heal the waters of the Dead Sea (see Ezekiel 47:1–12; Zechariah 14:8)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pools of living water will spring up in the barren deserts (see Doctrine and Covenants 133:29)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A great latter-day meeting with Christ, Adam, and other saints will take place in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman (see Daniel 7:13–14; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; Doctrine and Covenants 27:5–14; 107:53–57; 116:1)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Lamanites will blossom as a rose (see Doctrine and Covenants 49:24–25; 2 Nephi 30:6)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The lost ten tribes will return from the north countries (see Doctrine and Covenants 133:26–34)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	God will send angels to preach the gospel (see Revelation 14:6–7)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	People will say that Christ delays His coming (see Doctrine and Covenants 45:26)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The city of Zion, the New Jerusalem, will be built upon the American continent (see Articles of Faith 1:10; Isaiah 4:5–6; Ether 13:8)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A great sign will be given in heaven that all the earth shall see together (see Doctrine and Covenants 88:93)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Christ will appear in power and glory to rule and reign over the earth (see Isaiah 63:1–4; Matthew 24:27; Doctrine and Covenants 45:44; 133:46–48)

Remember, the purposes of these signs aren't to scare us, they are to help us recognize the signs of and become more prepared for the Second Coming. As the Lord said, "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear" (Doctrine and Covenants 38:30). When the Lord told some of these signs of the Second Coming to His disciples in Jerusalem, they "were troubled. And I said unto them: Be not troubled, for, when all

these things shall come to pass, *ye may know that the promises which have been made unto you shall be fulfilled*" (Doctrine and Covenants 45:34–35; emphasis added). Seeing these signs fulfilled should help us see that God is in control, that soon evil will be defeated, and that we will have the privilege of living in the Millennium with the Lord and our loved ones.

When Will the Second Coming Be?

Would you believe us if we answered, "Tomorrow!"? President Joseph Fielding Smith said:

I was asked, not long ago, if I could tell when the Lord would come. I answered, Yes; and I answer, Yes, now. I know when he will come. He will come *tomorrow*. We have his word for it. Let me read it:

“. . . For after today cometh the burning—this is speaking after the manner of the Lord—for verily I say, *tomorrow* all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble. . . .” [Doctrine and Covenants 64:24; emphasis added].

So the Lord is coming, I say, *tomorrow*. Then let us be prepared. . . . We are living in the Saturday Evening of Time. [One day for the Lord is equal to a thousand years of our time. See Doctrine and Covenants 77:6–7.] This is the 6th day now drawing to its close. When the Lord says it is today until his coming, that, I think, is what he has in mind, for he shall come in the morning of the Sabbath, or seventh day of the earth’s temporal existence, to inaugurate the millennial reign and to take his rightful place as King of kings and Lord of lords, to rule and reign upon the earth, as it is his right.¹

If the Lord is coming “tomorrow” we definitely need to prepare “today.”

But what if Jesus really *did* come tomorrow? What would you do?



Elder Dallin H. Oaks said:

What if the day of His coming were tomorrow? If we knew that we would meet the Lord tomorrow—through our premature death or through His unexpected coming—what would we do today? What confessions would we make? What practices would we discontinue? What accounts would we settle? What forgivenesses would we extend? What testimonies would we bear?

If we would do those things then, why not now?²

What Can I Do to Prepare for the Second Coming?

Let's look at three keys to preparing for the Second Coming:

1. Take the Holy Spirit as our guide.
2. Stand in holy places.
3. Look to the modern prophets to discern the signs and times of the Second Coming.

Take the Holy Spirit As Our Guide

Perhaps the best thing we can do to prepare for the Second Coming is to live so that we have the Holy Ghost with us in our daily life. We read in *True to the Faith*, “Do not concern yourself with the exact timing of the Savior’s Second Coming. Instead, live so that you will be prepared whenever He comes.”³ We can know if we are prepared for the Second Coming if we have the Spirit of the Lord with us. The Lord gave us this key when He said of His Second Coming: “For they that are wise and have received the truth, and *have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide*, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day” (Doctrine and Covenants 45:57; emphasis added). As we live worthy of the Spirit, we will be guided, strengthened, and protected in the days leading up to the Second Coming.

Stand in Holy Places

Doctrine and Covenants 45 gives us another key to prepare for the Second Coming. The Lord said, “My disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved” (Doctrine and Covenants 45:32). Elder Dallin H. Oaks explained: “What are those ‘holy places’? Surely they include the temple and its covenants faithfully kept. Surely they include a home where children are treasured and parents are respected. Surely the holy places include our posts of duty assigned by priesthood authority, including missions and callings faithfully fulfilled in branches, wards, and stakes.”⁴

Clearly standing in holy places includes *not* standing in *unholy* places. By avoiding the evil that is all around us, we will have the Spirit in greater abundance. As we stand in holy places, our lives, homes, wards, and stakes will “be for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm” (Doctrine and Covenants 115:6). Stay active in the Church, and you will be actively ready for the Second Coming.



Think about the places where you have “stood” (literally, or perhaps figuratively through the Internet or other media) in the past week. Were they holy places? Were there any holy places that you should have stood in but didn’t? Based on your analysis, make a plan to stand only in holy places this next week.

Look to the Modern Prophets to Discern the Signs and Times of the Second Coming

The scriptures tell us that “the Lord will come as a thief in the night” (2 Peter 3:10). Many people will be caught totally by surprise and unprepared when Jesus comes again. Anyone who tells you that they can calculate or know the hour or day of the Second Coming is leading you astray. Joseph Smith taught, “Jesus Christ never did reveal to any man the precise time that He would come. Go and read

the Scriptures, and you cannot find anything that specifies the exact hour He would come; and all that say so are false teachers.”⁵



However, the scriptures also tell us that although “the hour and the day no man knoweth” (Doctrine and Covenants 49:7), the faithful will not be caught totally off guard. Listen to what the Lord said to the Saints: “The coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and it overtaketh the world as a thief in the night—therefore, gird up your loins, that you may be the children of light, and that day shall not overtake you as a thief” (Doctrine and Covenants 106:4–5; emphasis added).

The Apostle Paul gave an analogy of the Second Coming, likening it to a woman who is expecting to have a baby. She may not know the exact day she will deliver the child—and the day she goes into labor may be unexpected—but as she pays attention to the time and also the signs of her body, she can know for certain when the time is close (see 1 Thessalonians 5:3). Paul said, “But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day [of the Second Coming] should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness” (1 Thessalonians 5:4–5). As we become “children of light” by studying the scriptures and following the modern prophets, the Second Coming will not be a surprise to us.

We testify that the Lord will come again, and that it will be a glorious time for the faithful. Let us continue to prepare ourselves, and continue to “prepare the world for the Second Coming of the Savior.”⁶

Still Have Questions?

What if Jesus returns as a child or in a different form than we are looking for?

Sometimes people say that Jesus will return as a child or in some other way. In Joseph Smith’s day, a woman named Ann Lee claimed

that she was Jesus and He had returned as a woman. The Lord told Joseph Smith in a revelation that “the Son of Man cometh not in the form of a woman, neither of a man traveling on the earth. Wherefore, be not deceived, but continue in steadfastness, looking forth for the [scriptural signs of the second coming]” (Doctrine and Covenants 49:22–23). We know what Jesus will look like when He returns, and His return won’t be a secret to the world (see Doctrine and Covenants 88:93).

What if the Second Coming happens before I can have a family?

Some teenagers worry that they will never have the opportunity to have a family because the Second Coming will bring about the end of the world. President Boyd K. Packer said to the youth, “Sometimes you might be tempted to think as I did from time to time in my youth: ‘The way things are going, the world’s going to be over with. The end of the world is going to come before I get to where I should be.’ Not so! You can look forward to doing it right—getting married, having a family, seeing your children and grandchildren, maybe even great-grandchildren.”⁷

How does paying my tithing relate to the Second Coming?

While we might not think of tithing as being connected to the Second Coming, it is. In the Doctrine and Covenants we read, “Behold, now it is called today until the coming of the Son of Man, and verily it is a day of sacrifice, and a day for the tithing of my people; *for he that is tithed shall not be burned at his coming*” (Doctrine and Covenants 64:23; emphasis added). The Lord has promised that if we are faithful tithe payers, we will not be burned at the Second Coming.

Teach the Plan!

Christ's Return to Earth

Objective: To help us understand and prepare for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Attention Getter: Teach the Plan #1. Show a painting of the Second Coming of Christ and ask your children if that is how they picture the event. Read Doctrine and Covenants 133:48, which suggests that the Lord will be wearing red when He returns.

Attention Getter: Experiment upon the Word: Test how many of these signs your children know by having them guess what they mean. Ask them if they know the signs of the Second Coming. Have them list as many signs of the Second Coming that they can think of in one minute.

Lesson Activity: Teach the Plan #3. Go to <http://www.seek.deseretbook.com/big> picture and download a copy of the signs of the Second Coming. Have your family divide into groups and discuss which signs have been fulfilled, are in process, or have yet to be started and why they think that. Have each group review the entire list. You might ask your children to discuss signs they know of that aren't included on this list.

Discussion Questions: The following questions may help your children in understanding, identifying, and applying some gospel truths related to Christ's Second Coming.

Teach the Plan #2. Why do you think the Second Coming will be a great day for some people, but terrible for others? How will it be great? How will it be terrible?

Teach the Plan #4. Read the quote by Elder Dallin H. Oaks. Then ask, "If Jesus' Second Coming were tomorrow, what would you do today?"

Teach the Plan #5. Ask, "Where are some of your personal 'holy places' where you are able to feel of and be influenced by God's Spirit? What might be the difference between 'standing' in holy places and merely 'visiting' holy places?"

Teach the Plan #6. Ask, "What have the modern prophets told us recently that you think might apply to our preparation for the Second Coming?"

Invitation to Act: Invite your children to do the Live the Plan activity and evaluate the places where they have stood in the past week. Follow up with them later to discuss the places where they were able to be influenced by God's Spirit and the places they might have labeled as "unholy" places.