

THE UNKNOWN HOUR
Biblical Signs, Warnings, Hope,
and Peace

Revised by Gaylord Haan and Jerome Julien

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Hope, and Peace**

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 Reformed
Fellowship Inc.
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A REFORMED FELLOWSHIP BIBLE STUDY

*The Unknown Hour:
Biblical Signs, Warnings, Hope, and Peace
Revised by Gaylord Haan and Jerome Julien*

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*This revision of The Signs of the Times
is dedicated to the memory of its original author,
Rev. Henry Vander Kam.*

*Rev. Vander Kam has also written several
other Bible study books published by
Reformed Fellowship, Inc., and has faithfully served
congregations in Michigan, Iowa, and Florida
during his ministry.*

*Rev. Vander Kam was a colleague of Rev. Julien
and a relative of Mr. Haan.*



Study Hints and Tips

Begin your preparation with sincere prayer.

Follow the layout of the lesson.

- Read the background Bible passages.
- Read the Lesson Commentary.
- Make notations and questions as you work through the lesson and questions.
- Complete the Scripture search.
- Answer the discussion questions.

Reading through the Bible passage more than once helps to thoroughly understand it.

Read the passage from more than one version of the Bible, if you have them available.

Study Bibles, hand books, and commentaries can be helpful to gain insight into the passage.

Use your dictionary for finding the meanings for words you don't fully understand.

Don't be afraid to ask questions about things you don't understand.

Studying with another person is often stimulating.

Apply the lesson to your life.

For Leaders:

Read the related Scriptures first, before engaging in discussion.

Discuss questions about the related Scriptures.

Discuss the commentary before going to the questions.

Avoid making it a lecture by encouraging everyone to contribute.

Prepare questions to ask and guide discussions.

Encourage members to ask questions about things they don't understand.

Encourage more than one person to answer the same question as often members will have different answers.

Encourage follow-up questions.

Assure members their questions are important. Usually, if one person has a question, so do others.

Allow for differences of opinion, without argumentation.

Summarize discussions that are "lengthy" before moving on to the next question.

When commentary sources are used ask for the member's interpretation of the source.

Forword

In light of the national and global circumstances in which we find ourselves today, the Reformed Fellowship board felt the need to edit, revise, and republish Rev. Henry Vander Kam's undated Bible study book about the signs of the times which you are about to study.

Indeed, the signs of the times is a vital and timeless topic of concern for all believers. Rev. Vander Kam's insight into this topic was evident in his original text. He saw these signs as being warnings for the believer; that it was important for the Church to be faithful to the Creator; and that the faithful will be rewarded for their faith by spending eternity with Him. He wanted to remind all believers that Satan is always present in everyday life and therefore they must be constantly vigilant in watching for his attacks during every moment of life on earth.

We have taken great pains to faithfully retain the authenticity and context of the original text. At times we have expanded on some of his thoughts by giving examples and references, as well as cited additional proof texts for them. We have revised some of the text in order to facilitate ease of reading and clarity of thought. We have, also, expanded the amount of study and discussion questions for each lesson in order to help you to understand each lesson.

The scriptural reference texts included in this study are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible.

We are grateful to Reformed Fellowship for making this revision possible. Also, we are grateful for Rev. James Admiraal's support, encouragement, and review of the contents of this study.

Finally, it is our prayer that, as you work through each lesson, you will be blessed in your study and that your faith and commitment to the Lord will be increased and strengthened through your study.

Soli Deo gloria!

Be comforted ...

“... lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
–*Matthew 28:20b*

“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer.
...Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.”
–*Revelation 2:11*

“Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”
–*James 4:7, 8a*

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”
–*Ephesians 6:10, 11*

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.”
–*Matthew 24:36*

“Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.”
–*Matthew 25:13*

“The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night...”
–*2 Peter 3:10a*

“He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely, I am coming quickly.’ Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus!”
–*Revelation 22:20*

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Lesson 1

The Importance of Biblical Signs, Warnings, Hope, and Peace



Scripture

Matthew 12:38–45; 16:1–4
Isaiah 40:1–11

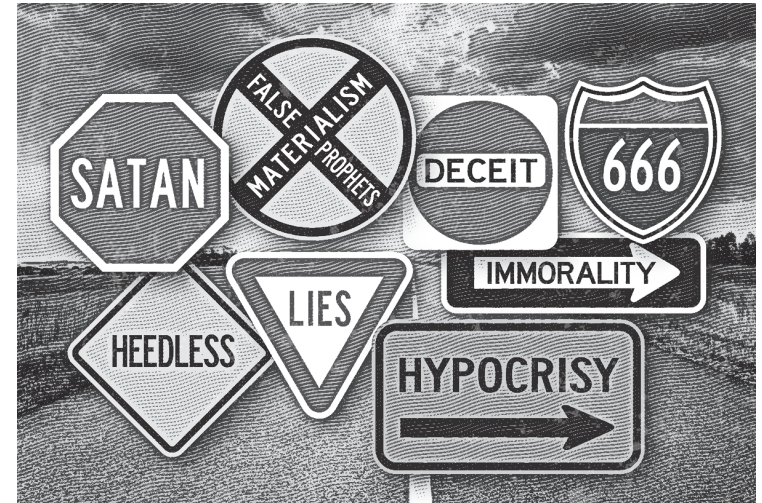
Lesson Commentary

People become especially concerned about the subject “the signs of the times” during critical periods of the world’s history. Today is such a time, a time of unrest and turmoil. Although many do not know where to turn for direction, the believer looks to the Author of all history and listens intently to His words concerning them. These, then, become good reasons to study these topics. We look to the Bible for its message for us.

While on earth, the Pharisees tested Jesus by asking Him to show them a sign affirming His authority to say and do what He did. To this Jesus replied that to He was the Messiah by referring to Jonah being in the belly of a great fish for three days, and that so also would the Son of Man be three days and nights in the belly of the earth (Matt. 12:38–40; 16:4). This was a clear testimony that He was indeed the promised, crucified Messiah. This prophecy, and many other signs which were given to the leaders of His day, were overlooked or misinterpreted. If they had been faithful, shouldn’t they have been able to deduce that Jesus was the Christ from them?

Jesus rebuked the religious leaders of that day because they failed to recognize, properly interpret, or ignored the signs which had been given. Therefore, He challenged and referred them to the signs in nature which men read and said, “When it is evening you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red’; and in the morning, ‘It will be foul weather, for the sky is red and threatening’” (Matt 16:2–3). Thus, He infers that it seems strange that they could read nature’s signs but were not able to read the signs God had given in history to inform and warn all men of the future. Notice the Lord’s reference in Matthew 16:4 about Jonah. Why Jonah? Jonah had preached repentance to Nineveh. Nineveh believed, repented, and was spared. The Jewish leaders didn’t. Their only aim was to trap Him. Therefore, He left them with no further answer to their question. Could it be that they blocked the Holy Spirit from working in their hearts because of their desires for power and materialism? More astounding yet was John the Baptist, who, while in prison, sent his disciples to Jesus asking, “Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?” To this, Jesus’ answer was to refer them to various signs but told them no more (Matt. 11:2–6).

God had given various signs to the people of Israel and her leaders during Old Testament times regarding the coming of the Messiah. Notice the following prophecies: in Malachi 4:5–6 we learn about the coming of John the Baptist and his work; Isaiah 40:1–11 tells about John the Baptist along with the announcement of Jesus’ coming and His tasks; in Isaiah 7:14 the prophet speaks of the virgin birth; and Micah 5:2 indicates where the birthplace of Jesus is proclaimed. Had the religious leaders been able to read these signs accurately they could virtually have known the time of Christ’s coming, as well as the place of His birth, and if they had understood them, they could have greeted the Christ, their promised Messiah. Instead, they didn’t recognize Him, although they had their own notions about Him.



The graphic illustrates why we learn that reading and understanding signs is extremely important. This is the case regarding knowledge and understanding of the signs of the times, too, for they speak of and give us directions regarding the return of the Son of Man at the end of time along with the things which must precede it. Through them we learn what time it is on God’s clock. Yes, through them He teaches us how to tell the time of the Savior’s return. We must use this ability because He will hold us responsible for doing so. In many ways these signs are as clear as those in nature, yet in other respects they are difficult to interpret. As history develops many of them will become clearer. We must always remember that God does not speak to His people in riddles, but He does give them clear revelation.

Much is happening in our present-day world. We make more history in a decade than was formerly made in centuries. The news media speak of terrible things that are happening and spread fear about things which are expected to happen. We might now be shaken by what we see and hear today had the

Bible not spoken of the latter days, and if we had not believed in Christ as our Savior. This does not mean we will be free of concerns about what is going on around us. God has told us about the signs of the times in order that we might not fear but take refuge in Him. We must live our faith and read (or listen to) our daily news reports in the light of Scripture. Yes, to be able to do so we must learn to interpret accurately the signs of the times. It is our intent in *The Unknown Hour* to study and explain both the signs of the times and the end times. Remember, we are to fear not during these times for the Savior has promised, “lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20b).

Searching Scripture

Matthew 12:38–45

1. What was behind the Pharisees’ question (or demand)? (vv. 28–29)

2. What had they missed? (vv. 22–24)

3. Why did Jesus refer them to Nineveh? (v. 41; Jon. 3:5)

4. Why did Jesus compare them with the Queen of Sheba? (Compare 1 Kings 10:9–10 with the attitude of the Jews in Matthew 12:38–39.) How does this passage refer to the signs of the times?

Matthew 16:1–4

1. Why did Jesus give such an answer to the Pharisees’ and Sadducees’ question?

2. What judgment does our Lord make? (vv. 3–4)

Acts 8:26–40; John 16:13

What do we learn about the only way we can understand Scripture in the account of the Ethiopian eunuch? (Remember, this event took place after Pentecost.)

For Discussion

1. What signs did the leaders miss?

Genesis 3:15 _____

Isaiah 7:14; 53 _____

Daniel 2:44; 9 _____

Micah 5:2 _____

2. What signs did John the Baptist miss?

Isaiah 29:18 _____

Isaiah 35:4–5 _____

Isaiah 40:3 _____

Malachi 3:1 _____

Malachi 4:5–6 _____

Luke 1:76 _____

3. Why did the leaders and John the Baptist miss them?

4. What did the leaders really think about Jesus?

5. What is happening in our world today that you think could be a sign of the times?

6. What danger might there be in interpreting Scripture in the light of daily news?

7. What does it mean to live out our faith in the light of Hebrews 11?

Notes and Questions

Glossary

Symbolic Numbers¹

Although there are many passages where numbers are used in the Bible, to focus on them extensively can lead to missing the glorious message of the gospel. The numbers listed below are all found in the book of Revelation, and remembering them can be helpful in the interpretation of John's visions.

3 The number of God, of divine fullness and unity

6 The number for man

7 The number that signifies fullness, perfection, completion

10 The number that represents a completed course of time

666 The number of the Antichrist; because he is a man it can never arrive at completeness (7)

1000 The number of complete completeness: 10 x 10 x 10; that is the complete, completed work of God

Emperors and Rulers

Antiochus Epiphanes

Antiochus Epiphanes became ruler of Syria in 175 BC. He was victorious over Egypt and aggressively expanded his country. He took Jerusalem by storm in 169 BC. According to 1 Maccabees 5:14, "within the total of three days 80,000 were destroyed, 40,000 in hand-to-hand fighting; and as many were sold into slavery as were slain." We also read "that he carried off eighteen hundred talents from the temple [approximately 40 million dollars today] . . . and

1. See O. T. Allis, *Bible Numerics* (Nutley, NJ: P&R, 1974); John Jefferson Davis, *Biblical Numerology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968).

Diagrammed Views of the Millennium

Amillennialism

Amillennialism is the teaching “that there will be parallel and contemporaneous development of good and evil (God’s kingdom and Satan’s kingdom) in this world which will continue until the second coming of Christ. At the second coming of Christ the resurrection and judgement will take place. [Judgment will be] followed by the eternal order of things, the absolute, perfect Kingdom of God in which there will be no sin, suffering, or death.”¹

¹ . J. G. Vos, *Blue Banner of Faith and Life* (January March 1951).

Christ’s First Coming	Development of Righteousness and Sin		Satan’s Season	End of Time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satan is bound by Christ’s death and Resurrection • The Great Commission given at His ascension 	Righteousness	Sin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satan is loosed • Antichrist is revealed and rules • Great tribulation • All of the sins of the Millennium intensified • Battle of Armageddon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christ returns • Resurrection • Judgment of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Men -Earth -Satan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Great Commission is practiced • The preaching of the Gospel is effective • The elect are gathered by grace • The Church grows and spreads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs of the times are visible • False teachers arise • Tribulation grows • Lawlessness increases • Falling away occurs • False church develops • Doctrinal laxity practiced 		

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A Note to the Reader

The publisher invites you to respond to us about this book by writing to Reformed Fellowship, Inc., at president@reformedfellowship.net

Founded in 1951, Reformed Fellowship, Inc., is a religious and strictly nonprofit organization composed of a group of Christian believers who hold to the biblical Reformed faith. Our purpose is to advocate and propagate this faith, to nurture those who seek to live in obedience to it, to give sharpened expression to it, to stimulate the doctrinal sensitivities of those who profess it, to promote the spiritual welfare and purity of the Reformed churches, and to encourage Christian action.

Members of Reformed Fellowship express their adherence to the Calvinistic creeds as formulated in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort, and the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.

To fulfill our mission, we publish a bimonthly journal, *The Outlook*, and we publish books and Bible study guides. Our website is www.reformedfellowship.net.