

## *Signs In The Heavens –*

# **Brightest Comet In Modern Times Coming In 2013**

Comet “Ison” is coming in 2013 – expected to be the brightest comet by far to enter the solar system in hundreds of years, if not since man was upon the earth. What does it portend? What is its significance? Could it be a harbinger of the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, in glory in the near future?

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For centuries people believed that the coming of a comet would bring disaster upon the earth, such as war or disease epidemics and plague.

Comets are noteworthy signs and portents of the future. A comet blazed in the heavens at the Exodus, when God’s plague struck Israel when David numbered the people, at the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., at the Battle of Hastings in 1066 A.D., at the fall of the Inca empire in 1520 A.D. Comets have blazed in the heavens at the fall of presidents, kings, tyrants, and empires.

Could there be something very significant about the comet expected in 2013?

### *Celestial Omens*

Comets were long regarded, at least up until very modern times, as "omens of doom." A comet appeared in 1665 during the Great Plague in England when people died like flies. One in five Londoners died of the bubonic plague. Daniel Defoe, who wrote *Journal of the Plague Year*. had no doubt the comet portended “a heavy judgment, slow but severe, terrible and frightful, as was the plague.” The next year, another comet appeared, and the Great Fire of London broke out which nearly destroyed the whole city.

Records of comets go back at least to 500 B.C. The ancient Greeks called them “hairy stars.” In fact, the word “comet” itself comes from the Greek *kometes*, meaning the “hairy one.” The Chinese, on the other hand, compared the tails of comets to the straw of a broom, and called them “broom stars.” Fiery, with a brilliant tail stretching half way across the sky, major comets have been regarded since the dawn of history with a feeling of dread and awe. For primitive people, comets were looked upon as terrible portents, presaging the wrath of gods.

Often comets appear white, but sometimes they are yellow or blood red. They may hover in the night sky for days, weeks, or even months, waxing brighter or growing

dim. Their tail may lengthen till it reaches nearly half the sky, swell up, shrink, or sometimes split into as many as five separate tails. Sudden jets may shoot out from the head of the comet toward the sun. On rare occasion a comet may fragment into two or three separate comets as it goes around in close proximity to the sun.

For thousands of years, comets instilled terror into mankind, auguring the coming of pestilence, the death of kings and the overthrow of kingdoms. In the Middle Ages comets were equated with evil and were called by some “Satan's tail.”

In December 2013, astronomers expect to see the most astonishing and spectacular comet seen on earth in centuries, if not millennia!

### *The Comet “Ison”*

*Scientific American* reports, “As it flares out of the distant Oort Cloud, the newly discovered comet C/2012 S1 (ISON) appears to be heading on a trajectory that could make for one of the most spectacular night-sky events in living memory. Why is this comet expected to be so unique? Two reasons:

“Astronomers predict that the comet will pass just 1.16 million miles from the Sun as it swings around its perihelion, or closest approach. (This may seem like a lot, but remember – the Sun is big.

“If we were to scale the Sun down to the size of Earth, the comet would pass well within the orbits of dozens of satellites.) The close approach will melt enormous amounts of the comet's ice, releasing dust and gas and forming what should be a magnificent tail.

“After it loops around the Sun and forms this tail, the comet should then pass relatively close to Earth – not near enough to cause any worry, but close enough to put on a great show. Viewers in the Northern Hemisphere will get the best view as the comet blooms in the weeks approaching Christmas 2013. *The comet could grow as bright as the full moon. . .*” (“Next year’s ‘brightest comet in modern times’ to be ‘once in a civilization’ event,” *Scientific American*, Oct.6, 2012).

*Astronomy Now* is calling the comet *Ison* “a once-in-a-civilization's-lifetime” event. Says *Astronomy Now*, “A new comet has been discovered that is predicted to blaze incredibly brilliantly in the skies during late 2013. . . . Current predictions are of an object that will dazzle the eye at up to magnitude —16. That’s far brighter than the full Moon. If predictions hold true then C/2012 S1 will certainly be one of the greatest comets in human history, far outshining the memorable Comet Hale-Bopp of 1997 and very likely to outdo the long-awaited Comet Pan-STARRS (C/2011 L4) which is set to stun in March 2013” (“New comet might blaze brighter than the full Moon,” by Peter Grego, *Astronomy Now*, Sept.25, 2012).

The new comet named C/2012 S1 (ISON) was found by the International Scientific Optical Network (ISON) in Russia on 21 September, by astronomers Vatali Nevski and Artyom Novichonok.

### *The Great Comet of 1680*

The comet expert John E. Bortle compares ISON with the Great Comet of 1680, which, according to contemporary accounts, caused the people of New York's Manhattan Island to be “overcome with terror at a sight in the heavens such as has seldom greeted human eyes. . . . In the province of New York a day of fasting and humiliation was appointed, in order that the wrath of God might be assuaged.”

A contemporary description of that comet was given in *The Dutch and Quaker Colonies in America* by John Fiske who wrote in Chapter XI, “New York in the Year 1680” as follows:

“Late in the autumn of 1680 the good people of Manhattan were overcome with terror at a sight in the heavens such as has seldom greeted human eyes. An enormous comet, perhaps the most magnificent one on record, suddenly made its appearance.

“At first it was tailless and dim, like a nebulous cloud, but at the end of a week the tail began to show itself and in a second week had attained a length of 30 degrees; in the third week it extended to 70 degrees, while the whole mass was growing brighter.

“After five weeks it seemed to be absorbed into the intense glare of the sun, but in four days more it reappeared like a blazing sun itself in the throes of some giant convulsion and threw out a tail in the opposite direction as far as the whole distance between the sun and the earth.

“Sir Isaac Newton, who was then at work upon the mighty problems soon to be published to the world in his *Principia*, welcomed this strange visitor as affording him a beautiful instance for testing the truth of his new theory of gravitation. But most people throughout the civilized world, the learned as well as the multitude, feared that the end of all things was at hand.

“Every church in Europe, from the grandest cathedral to the humblest chapel, resounded with supplications, and in the province of New York a day of fasting and humiliation was appointed, in order that the wrath of God might be assuaged.”

*Astronomy Now's* choice of words is interesting. A re-examination of history in light of cyclic catastrophes reveals “once-in-a-civilization” events to be such because they are civilization-ending events!

Notice that the name of the comet is “ISON” – which is remarkably similar to I, Son” – that is, “I [the] Son” – a reference to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is soon to

return to the earth! Is this comet the forerunner, the end-time anticipatory comet blazing the way for the coming of the Son of God?

In the Mount Olivet Prophecy, Jesus Christ declared that before His second coming, a fascinating omen would be seen in the heavens. He asserted, speaking of the end-time tribulation and world distress preceding His coming, “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” (Matt.24:30).

The Greek word translated as “sign” here is *semeion* and means “an indication, miracle, sign, token, wonder.” *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon* defines it as “a sign, prodigy, portent, i.e. an unusual occurrence, transcending the common course of nature.” Could this comet be the “sign” or “portent” of the glorious coming of the Messiah? This comet, if it lives up to its billing, certainly could point to the glorious soon coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven!



The Hale-Bopp comet, pictured above, wowed viewers in 1997, which was the 6,000<sup>th</sup> year from the Creation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It apparently was “small potatoes” compared to the ISON comet projected to plunge through the solar system in the latter months of 2013.

Comet ISON will be seen best by observers in the northern hemisphere. It is expected to reach binocular visibility by late summer of 2013 and a naked eye object in early November. Its peak brightness will be in late November and it will remain visible to the naked eye until the middle of January 2014.

*“And there will be signs in the sun and moon and stars; and upon the earth [there will be] distress (trouble and anguish) of nations in bewilderment and perplexity [without resources, left wanting, embarrassed, in doubt, not knowing which way to turn] at the roaring (the echo) of the tossing of the sea, men swooning away or expiring with fear and dread and apprehension and expectation of the things that are coming on the world; for the [very] powers of the heavens will be shaken and caused to totter” (Luke 21:25-26, Amplified Parallel Bible).*