

The Coming of the Messiah

In both the Old and New Testaments, we see many references to the coming of the Messiah who will bring the Kingdom of God to earth and peace and prosperity to humanity. No student of the Bible will deny that the coming of the Messiah is one of the Bible's central themes. However, among student and scholar alike, there is much disagreement as to the timing of this great event. Historically and presently, the Jews are waiting for the Messiah's first arrival. And most professing Christians wait for his second coming, but some anticipate a second and a third coming.

When Will Christ Return?

Does anyone know when Christ will return? Many in the past thought they knew, and many today think they know. One group of believers thought he would return in 1844, another group thought he would return in 1914, and yet another group predicted it would be in 1975. People continually set dates and are continually disappointed; however, does this mean that no one will know the date and hour of Christ's return until it actually happens? How many times will the Messiah return? Will it be one, two, or three times?

Believe it or not the Bible does document the exact date of Christ return; however, this date will only be recognized by those who understand specific biblical prophecies and the sequence in which these prophecies are to occur. If you want to know what some of these prophecies are and the sequence in which they are to be fulfilled continue to listen to these broadcasts.

After Jesus had told his disciples about the future destruction of the temple, they came to him privately to find out when it would happen and when the end of the age would come.

Now let us review what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 24, beginning in verse 23:

"Then if anyone says to you, Behold, here is the Christ; or, There he is! Do not believe. For false Christs will rise up, and false prophets. And they

will give great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I tell you beforehand. Then if they say to you, Behold, he is in the wilderness; do not go out. Behold, he is in the inner rooms; do not believe" (vs.23-26). See also Mk.13:21-22.

In Chapter 3 of Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, Paul gave a prophetic warning of a coming deception which partially applied during his day and during the end time. Paul said that there would be an evil person who would arrive on the world scene after a great apostasy within the church and that this individual would oppose everything godly, pretend to be the true god, and sit in God's temple in order to fool people into believing that he is indeed god.

Throughout the centuries, many false Messiahs and false prophets have come and gone, even during our modern times there have been and still are people who masquerade as Christ. The scriptures reveal that during the time of trouble at the end of the age, religious deception will be so intense that the only ones who will not be deceived are the elect of God who are diligently following the true Sovereign God and his Son.

The apostle Peter said this about false prophets and teachers:

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who shall privily bring in damnable heresies, and even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many [the majority of people] shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (2.Pet.2:1-2 KJV).

There are many things that people consider to be truth; however, what God reveals as the way of truth is not what most people believe as truth. It is God's way of truth that most people hate and ridicule. A number of prophecies tell us that these false prophets and teachers will speak blasphemous things against God and his teachings.

The only way that a person will be able to tell the difference between a false Christ and a false prophet is to be well versed in what the Bible actually says about Christ and those who are teachers of God's truth and way of life.

In the 13 chapter of the Book of Revelation we are shown that in the end of the age that an evil governmental system described as the Beast will emerge and will have a state religion lead by a spiritual leader.

Revelation chapter 13, verses 14 and 15 tells us that this evil spiritual leader will deceive people through awesome supernatural power that he is given by the leader of the Beast governmental system. The scriptures tell that this religious leader has an image made of the Beast, empowers the image so that it has the ability to speak; then, he forces people to worship it or suffer death for disobedience. This enforced worship is reminiscent of king Nebuchadnezzar's forced worship of the image that he made and set up in the plain of Dura.

There are many reasons why intelligent people will worship this image. The first is that if anyone does not worship it they will be killed. The second is that people will actually believe that the image is a god, a representation of their god (the Beast), or a method through which they may communicate with their god (who is in reality Satan the Devil).

The End-time Generation

Continuing in Matthew chapter 24, verse 32:

"But learn the parable of the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and it puts out leaves, you know that the summer is near, so also when you see all these things, know that it is near, at the doors. Truly I say to you, In no way will this generation pass away until all these things have occurred" (vs.32-35).

When Jesus gave this parable, the disciples thought Jesus was speaking of their day and their generation. However, as time passed it became apparent that he was speaking of a people and a generation far in the future. When these heavenly

events occur, Jesus' return is imminent, and nothing can delay it.

The Day and the Hour

Continuing in verse 36:

"But as to that day and that hour, no one knows, neither the angels of heaven but my Father only".

Although Jesus said that no man knew the day or the hour of his return at that time, he did reveal the prophetic events that will lead up to his return to the apostles and these events are recorded for us today.

The apostles did not give up in their quest to find out when Jesus would return and establish the Kingdom of God on earth and establish the twelve tribes of Israel to national prominence again. In the Book of Acts chapter 1, verses 6 and 7, after Jesus death and resurrection, the apostles questioned him further and asked, "Lord, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel at this time?"

Jesus told them the same thing he had told them in regard to this question before he was crucified, he said, "It is not yours to know times or seasons, which the Father placed in his own authority" (Acts 1:6-7 KJV).

It is true that no one including Jesus, the angels, the apostles, or the prophets knew when Christ would return before or shortly after his death and resurrection.

In Acts 1:7, Jesus said it was not for them to know the timing of these events. But why did they not need to know? The primary reason that no one knew these details, is that, it was not necessary for them to know when the end would come. Simply because they were not living in the end of the age; therefore, this knowledge would not benefit them.

Those Who Need to Know

Just because no one but God the Father knew the timing of the end of the age during Christ's time or during the days of the early church, does it mean that this information will be kept secret until the day

Christ returns. As we will see, those who need to know the timing of Christ's return will know, because this knowledge is important to their lives and their mission.

Notice what the angel told Daniel about the prophecies that had been given to him to record:

The angel told Daniel:

"Go your way Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed until the end-time. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tested. But the wicked shall do wrong. And not one of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (Dan.12:9-10 KJV).

In the Book of Daniel as well as in the rest of the Old Testament, there is much information pointing to the end of the age. When this information is combined with the prophecies of the New Testament and specific events that will occur, the time of Christ's return can be known with certainty.

The Two Witnesses

In the Book of Revelation chapter 11, verses 3 through 13, Jesus reveals a series of events that will herald his return:

Just before the first resurrection and Christ's return as Conquering King to establish his Father's Kingdom and during the end of this age of human rule on earth, there will be two dynamic and powerful men who will proclaim God the Father's good news message from Jerusalem.

Beginning in verse 3:

"And I will give power to My two witnesses, and they will prophesy a thousand, two hundred and sixty days, dressed in sackcloth" (Rev.11:3 Para.)

These two men will play a pivotal role in fulfilling prophecies concerning the calling of humanity to repentance and the proclaiming of God the Father's good news message to the world and to announce the return of Jesus Christ to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. They will also foretell and cause

many of the earthshaking events at the end of the age. Moreover, they will prophesy for 1,260 days or approximately three and a half years; then, they will be killed:

Continuing in verse 7:

"And when they complete their witness, the beast coming up out of the abyss will make war with them, and will overcome them, and will kill them. And their bodies will be on the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom, and Egypt—where our Lord was crucified" (Rev.11:7-8 Para.).

The following are some simple questions and answers about the Two Witnesses that pertain to their knowledge of when Christ will return:

- Q. How will they know they are the Two Witnesses of God?
- A. God will tell them.
- Q. Will they know when their ministry begins?
- A. Yes!
- Q. Will these two men know the day when they will be killed?
- A. Yes, because it is 1,260 days from the day they begin their ministry.
- Q. Will they know the day and the hour of their resurrection?
- A. Yes, because they will understand the prophecies that detail their ministry.
- Q. Will these two men know the exact time of Christ's return?
- A. Yes, because they will understand the prophecies concerning their ministry and his return.

Continuing in verse 11:

"And after three days and a half, a spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood on their feet. And great fear fell on the ones beholding them. And they heard a great voice out of heaven saying to them, Come up here. And they went up into heaven in the cloud. And their enemies saw them. And in that hour a great earthquake occurred, and the tenth part of the city fell and there were killed in the earthquake seven thousand names of

men. And the rest became terrified, and gave glory to the God of heaven" (Rev.11:11-13 Para.).

The Two Witnesses will be dead for three and a half days; then, they will be brought back to life and taken up into heaven. Christ will return very soon after these things begin to happen. Moreover, with a small amount of addition or subtraction along with the knowledge of other time frames for specific events given in prophecy, any true Christian alive at this time will have little difficulty calculating the time of Christ's return. Yes, the wise will understand:

Now let us return to Matthew chapter 24, verses 38 and 39

"For as they were in the days before the flood: eating, and drinking, merry making, and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah went into the ark, and they did not know until the flood came, and took them all away; so also will be the coming of the Son of man" (Matt.24:38-39 KJV).

Jesus basically said that most people would be unaware of the true meaning of the cataclysmic events preceding his return:

In Noah's generation, people were so evil that God decided to eliminate the human race. Noah was found to be the only righteous individual in all of mankind. Jesus said that this same condition will prevail at the end of the age. Just as the people in Noah's day did not listen to the call to repentance and the warnings of God's wrath, the vast majority of people in the end of the age will not listen to God's prophets or true ministers. See Gen.6:5-13.

Today, the world is a very evil place, only the very naive or someone entirely out of touch with reality would think otherwise. The second and third chapters of the Book of Revelation depicts a time that is so evil that even six out of seven true followers of the Sovereign God will be punished by Christ for their unrighteous attitudes and behavior.

The Righteous Disappear From Earth

Continuing in verse 40:

"At that time two will be out in the field; the one is taken away, and the one is left; two grinding at the mill, one is taken, and one is left" (Matt.24:40-41 KJV).

Many people feel verses 40 and 41 support a secret return of Jesus; however, Jesus only states that when he sends his angels to gather his elect, they will only gather the righteous; all others will be left. He said nothing about a secret coming.

Notice the clear statement that Christ makes in Matthew chapter 24, verse 27 about one event that will accompany his arrival:

Jesus said,

"For as the lightning comes forth from the east and shines as far as the west, so also will be the coming of the Son of man" (v27).

Here, Jesus gave a vivid picture of one of the signs that will accompany his return. Lightning is not a silent or inconspicuous occurrence; it is always accompanied by a loud thunderous noise, which is very noticeable.

And beginning in verses 28, Jesus said This:

"And immediately after the affliction of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give her light, and the stars will fall from the heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of man will appear in the heavens. And then all the tribes of the land will wail. And they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and much glory. And he will send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather his elect from the four winds; from the ends of the heavens to their ends" (vs.30-31).

The signs that precede Christ's return are awesome events that will occur in the heavens. The sun will become dark (Mk.13:24-26), the moon will not

reflect sunlight to the earth, and the stars will be moved out of their orbits. When Jesus returns in all his glory and power, his very presence will disrupt the physical universe. See Ex.19:16-18; 24:17; Isa.13:9-13; 24:1-5; Joel 2:10-12, 30; Hag.2:6-7.

Every person alive on earth at the time of Christ's return will be aware of the awesome events that will occur in the heavens. Most people will be terrified and fear for their lives; some will be terrified because they know that Christ is returning to destroy them, and others will be in fear because they think that the world is coming to an end. The magnitude of the events that will accompany Christ's return will be far from secret; they will be awesome and terrifying.

The false teaching of a secret coming of Christ is known to most as the Secret Rapture, and it is believed almost universally by professing Christianity. However, the coming of Christ will not be a secret to the elect nor will it be a silent event.

The beginnings of the Secret Rapture theory seems to have come from Emanuel Lacunza who had become a Chilean Jesuit in 1747. When the Jesuits were expelled from Chile, Lacunza settled north of Italy where he devoted the remainder of his years to writing his book, 'The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty', in his book he speculated that Christ will come twice: once for his saints and again with his saints.

Although Lacunza had actually stumbled onto a Biblical truth, his speculation was to be the catalyst for the doctrine of the Secret Rapture. There does not seem to be any literature referring to a secret coming of Christ until after 1830 when many began to come forth with the concept of a secret coming. Among those who taught this concept were the Anglican Curate J.N. Darby, Newton, George V. Wigram, Andrew Jukes, and J.P. Tregelles.

A Prophecy for the Future

Beginning in verse 42 of Matthew 24, there is a warning prophecy for a very specific group of people who live during the end of the age:

Jesus said:

"Watch, then, for you do not know in what hour your Lord comes" (v42).

Jesus gives a very specific command to watch. But what should we be watching for? Jesus is giving this instruction to a specific group of individuals. But who are they? Verse 43 gives us the answer to these questions:

Continuing in verse 43:

"But know this, that if the housemaster had known in what watch the thief comes, he would have watched, and not have allowed his house to be dug through. Because of this, you also be ready, for in that hour you think not, the Son of man comes" (vs.43-44). See also Rev.3:3.

It is the housemaster who is responsible for watching. The ones who have the responsibility for the care of the house of God are the true ministers of Christ (1.Tim.3:14-15; Heb.13:7;17). The things to be watched for are world events as they relate to the specific prophecies that will occur at the end of the age:

Continuing in verse 45:

"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the Lord has set over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is the servant whom the Lord shall find so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you, he will set him over all his substance" (vs.45-47).

Who is a wise and faithful minister at the end of the age? He is one who watches and studies current world events as they relate to Bible prophecy and reveals this understanding to those under his care at the proper time.

Continuing in verse 48:

"But if that evil servant should say in his heart, My Lord delays to come, and should begin to beat his fellow servants, and to eat, and to drink with the drunkards, the lord of that servant will come in a

day in which he does not expect, and in an hour which he does not know, and will cut him in two, and will appoint his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (vs.48-51).

Those who do not watch will not know when Jesus will return. The warning is unmistakable in its meaning: if a true minister at the end of the age does not continue to fulfill his responsibility toward Christ and the elect under his care, he will lose his salvation.

Paul Writes to Thessalonica

By the time Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica, the church understood that Jesus was not going to return in their generation. Paul says that the true elect of God will not be caught unaware by the events that will culminate at the end of the age, because they will understand them:

Paul said:

"But of the times and seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write to you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. You are all the children of light, and the children of this day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (1.Thes.5:1-6 KJV).

Christians and the Tribulation

People who subscribe to the belief in a secret return of Christ, believe Christians will be taken to heaven and spared the horrors and agony of the cataclysmic events that will happen just before his return. Others believe that Christians will be protected in some geographical place of safety on earth. But are either of these teachings true? Will there be Christians on earth during this great tribulation? Will Christians be subject to any of the terrifying events at the end of the age?

Christians Will be Hated

Many scriptures describe, with graphic detail, the time known as the great tribulation. There are also many scriptures that show the elect of God will be persecuted, betrayed by their own children and brothers in the faith, brought to trial because of their belief, made to flee for their lives, and made to suffer many other horrible injustices. The following scriptures speak of this time period.

Continuing in Matthew 24, verse 9:

"Then they will deliver you up to affliction, and will kill you; and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, and they will deliver up one another, and will hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. And because lawlessness shall have been multiplied, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, that one will be saved.

During this time of trouble, Jesus' true followers will be persecuted, killed, hated by almost everyone, betrayed by their own, make foolish decisions concerning the truth, and forsake God.

Revelation chapter 6, verse 9 says:

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, do you not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given to every one of them; and it was said to them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." See also Rev.12:17.

In all of these references, the elect of God are still on earth, even up to and including the opening of the fifth seal. Notice also that they are to remain for some time after this seal is opened, so that others may also be martyred as a witness for Christ.

In Matthew 24 chapter 24 verse 14 Jesus said that one of the major signs that would precede his return would be the preaching of his Heavenly Father's good news message to the world:

He said:

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the earth, for a testimony to all the nations; and then shall the end come."

But has not the Gospel been preached since the time of the early church? No, the good news message that Jesus brought from His Father and that the apostolic church taught it has not been proclaimed in a major way or in its totality since the death of the apostle John and the demise and disappearance of the early church.

To this statement some will say "what are you, crazy, the gospel has been taught by professing Christian denominations for centuries and is being proclaimed today over radio, television, and the printed page. And there are tens of thousands of pastors, preachers, priests, and evangelists teaching the gospel message every day somewhere in the world.

Well call me crazy, but, I believe the Bible when it says that the whole world is being deceived philosophically, politically, and religiously by a powerful evil spirit called Satan and the Devil.

Today, there are tens of thousands of different Christian churches and organizations professing to follow the God of the Bible. And today there are many different philosophies and teachings that claim to be the gospel message. Among these are the gospel of salvation, the gospel of grace, the gospel of the Kingdom, the gospel of Jesus, and the social gospels.

But which of these differing gospel messages is the message that Jesus Christ brought? Or do any of them reflect what Jesus taught as the good news message? Why are there so many different gospel messages proclaimed today? Why is there so much confusion today concerning the good news message, and what it means?

Logic should tell any thinking individual that if any one of these conflicting Christian denominations is correct in their understanding of the Gospel message then all the rest are wrong and their gospel is a false gospel.

The apostle Paul wrote the following to the saints at Corinth about a false gospel being taught during his day:

Beginning in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 3

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. If anyone comes preaching another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if you receive another spirit [an evil, lying spirit], which you have not received, or a different gospel, than the one you accepted" (vs.3-4 Para.).

During the lifetime of the apostle Paul, those who opposed Jesus Christ were preaching another Jesus and another gospel. This same false Jesus and message is still being preached and taught today. Paul said this about those who pretend to be ministers of Christ, but are not:

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (vs.13-15 KJV).

Paul said to the saints Galatia, "But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. So then I say to you, if any man preach any other gospel to you than that you have received let him be accursed."

Is there another gospel being proclaimed today other than the one that Jesus, the apostles, and the early church taught. ? Absolutely, and this counterfeit gospel has been taught for centuries and it is still being preached today.

Take a good look at the world today, look at the violence, the crime, the hunger, the disease, the poverty, the war, immortality, adultery, lying, cheating, unethical behavior, within all of the professing Christian nations. Why do these problems exist, when the diligent practice of Christianity as proclaimed by most of professing Christian churches today is suppose to remove all of these problems. Could it be that their message is the major cause of these problems, because it is the wrong message?

The Bible is unique. It is the only book that has the answers to the basic questions of life, and claims to be written by the Creator God. It tells humanity who its Creator is, why it was created, and what its ultimate destiny is.

Although the Bible does reveal the purpose for human existence, the understanding of this awesome purpose has been intentionally hidden within its pages. But why would God want to hide this vital information? In the Book of Isaiah chapter 6, beginning in verse 8, the prophet gives us part of the answer:

Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom shall I send as a messenger to my people? Who will go?" And I said, "Lord, I'll go! Send me."

9 And he said, "Yes, go. But tell my people this: 'Though you hear my words repeatedly, you won't understand them. Though you watch and watch as I perform my miracles, still you won't know what they mean.' Dull their understanding, close their ears, and shut their eyes. I don't want them to see or to hear or to understand, or to turn to me to heal them."

Then I asked, "Lord, how long will it be before they are ready to listen?"

And he replied, "Not until their cities are destroyed-without a person left-and the whole country is an utter wasteland, and they are all taken away as slaves to other countries far away, and all the land of Israel lies deserted! Yet a tenth-a remnant-will survive; and though Israel is invaded again and again and destroyed, yet Israel will be like

a tree cut down, whose stump still lives to grow again."

Almost all of prophecies that concern the end of the age have as their focal point two groups of people, the Sovereign God's holy nation of earthly priests and ambassadors and the scattered tribes of national Israel who are prophetically call the house of Israel and the House of Judah that are the ancient nation of Israel today. Therefore it is important to know who these peoples are today in order to understand the following are some of the major signs that Christ is about to return:

1. The appearance of False Messiahs.
2. False prophets working great signs and wonders.
3. People proclaiming that the Christ has come secretly and is hold up some place on earth.
4. The appearance of a multinational government that has a state religious system with a spiritual leader who has supernatural powers and who enforces idol worship.
5. The universal proclamation of the true gospel by two men having supernatural powers and proclaim this gospel from Jerusalem
6. The persecution and murder of those who proclaim the true gospel message.

I see that my time is up, if you want to know more about the prophecies concerning the return of Christ or the other subjects that I have briefly touched on in this in this broadcast, Write to me at the at the address given in the following announcement. Until next time this is Bud Cocherell for Bible Research .org.

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