

Bethany Baptist Church
112-17 148th Street, Jamaica, NY 11435
718-529-5842

The Pastor's Corner Vol. 23

November, 2010

When Will Jesus Return?



.... I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. Jude 1:3 NIV

Reviewed by: Dr. Lambert Duncan

When Will Jesus Return?

Matthew 24:36-39 (NIV) “³⁶ **But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.** ³⁷As it was the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and to took them all away. This is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.”

Matthew 24:42-44 (NIV) “⁴² **Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.** ⁴³But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

John 14:1-3 (NIV) “¹ Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ² My Father’s house has many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (NIV) “⁵¹ Listen, I tell you a mystery: **We will not all sleep, but we will be changed –** ⁵² **in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.**”

1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 (NIV) “¹⁴ For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. ¹⁵According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”

1 Thessalonians 5:1-3 (NIV) “¹ Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, ²for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³While people are saying, ‘Peace and safety’, destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.”

Acts 1:11 (NIV) “ ‘Men of Galilee’, they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.’ ”

In John Chapter 13, verse 33, Jesus gave his disciples some disturbing news. Jesus told them, *“My children, I will be with you only a little while longer...”* In other words, Jesus would be leaving them soon to be crucified. Jesus knowing his disciples were troubled by the fact he was leaving them, comforted them with the words we read in John Chapter 14, verses 1–3. There, Jesus said, *“¹ Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ² My Father’s house has many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.**”* There are at least two things we glean from Jesus’ words of comfort:

- He was going to prepare a place for them so they could be where he was
- He would come back and take them to be with him

Throughout the pages of the New Testament, we find more than 300 references to the second coming of Jesus. In fact, Jesus’ second coming is mentioned eight times as often as his first coming.

There is no doubt then, that the Bible says Jesus will return. In 1 Thessalonians Chapter 4, Paul comforted the believers of his day that had lost their loved ones, before Jesus’ return with a description of what would happen when Jesus returns. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 (NIV) says, *“¹⁴ **For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.** ¹⁵According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶**For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.** ¹⁷**After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.**”* Here are the clear points Paul makes to those that lost their loved ones before Jesus’ return:

- Those that died before Jesus’ return, God would be bringing them back with Jesus when he comes again. (Death occurs when our spirit/soul is separated from our body. For the Christian, when death occurs they go immediately to be with the Lord, as these verses clearly teach. The Apostle Paul affirms this in 2 Corinthians 5:8 (NIV), he says, *“We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”*)
- Jesus himself will be coming down from heaven. It will not be a “secret”, unnoticed return. He comes with a “loud command” and with the “trumpet call of God” (you will hear him).
- Those that are alive when Jesus returns will without dying first, be caught up (raptured) together with the dead in Christ to meet the Lord in the air. However, those still alive and will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air must be changed first.

In 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 (Amplified) we read, “⁵¹ Take notice! I tell you a mystery (a secret truth, an event decreed by the hidden purpose or counsel of God). We shall not all fall asleep [in death], but **we shall all be changed** (transformed). ⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the [sound of the] last trumpet call. For a trumpet will sound, and the dead [in Christ] will be raised imperishable (free and immune from decay), **and we shall be changed** (transformed). ⁵³ For this perishable [part of us] must put on the imperishable [nature], and this mortal [part of us, this nature that is capable of dying] must put on immortality (freedom from death).

These passages, John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 teach that Jesus will someday return and rapture the saints of God. At this return to rapture the saints, Jesus does not place his feet upon the earth; he calls the saints to meet him in the sky. However, other passages teach that in addition to the time he comes to rapture the saints, there is a time when Jesus will physically/literally return to earth. Consider the following passages:

Zechariah 14:3-4 (NIV) says, “³ Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. ⁴ On that day his feet **will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.**” (Compare with Acts 1:9-12, Jesus ascends from the Mount of Olives and he will return to the Mount of Olives)

Acts 1:11 (NIV) says, “ ‘Men of Galilee’, they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.’ ”

While the Bible is crystal clear as it relates to the comings of Christ (the rapture and advent), it is also clear that nobody knows when these comings will occur. Matthew Chapter 24, verse 36 could not be clearer when it says (NIV), “**But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.**” Therefore, no man or woman under the sun knows when Jesus will return to rapture the Church or literally/physically return to the earth, it’s not possible.

However, down through the years, many have tried to give dates for the rapture and/or Second Advent of Jesus. Currently, Harold Camping has the rapture occurring May 21, 2011 and the end of the world as we know it, October 21, 2011. Mr. Camping, apparently, has not learned his lesson about fixing dates for the rapture and the end of the world. In 1994, he said Jesus would return, needless to say he didn’t. Later, he changed his story saying he got “new information from the Bible” revealing what really happened in 1994. According to Mr. Camping, 1994 marked the end of the Church Age. Of course he was wrong about that too. In addition to Mr. Camping, others that have put dates on Jesus’ Second Advent and/or rapture, are the following:

- Jehovah's Witnesses – the first president of the Watchtower, Charles Taze Russell calculated from measurements within the “Great Pyramid of Gizeh”, Jesus' return to be in 1874. He later changed it to 1914, a date the witnesses still hold as the Lord's invisible return despite the fact that Jesus' comings (Advent and rapture) are described as something all will see and hear. Consider the following:

Matthew 24:26-27 (Amplified) “²⁶ *So if they say to you, behold, he is in the wilderness (desert) – do not go out there; if they tell you, behold, he is in the secret places or inner rooms – do not believe it.* ²⁷ *For just as the lighting flashes from the east and shines and is seen as far as the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.*”

Revelation 1:7 (NIV), “*Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him.*”

1 Thessalonians 4:16 (NIV) “*For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.*”

- William Miller – (his surviving offshoot is the Seventh-Day Adventist Church) said Jesus' second coming would be between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. Needless to say he was wrong.

More examples could be given but space does not permit me to add them. Although Christians sometimes disagree on the timing and sequence of Jesus' return, none can give a specific date as to when Jesus will return.

Here are the popular views concerning the events surrounding Jesus' return relative to the tribulation period (all are valid views since the Bible is not crystal clear on this subject):

- Partial Rapture – some saints go through the tribulation (only certain believers will be raptured, there will be several raptures)
- Pretribulational Rapture – no saints go through the tribulation (The rapture comes before the tribulation, Jesus' Second Advent comes after the tribulation)
- Midtribulational Rapture – all saints go through half (3 ½ years) of the tribulation (The rapture will occur 3 ½ years into the tribulation, after the seven years of tribulation Jesus returns)
- Posttribulational Rapture – all saints go through the seven years of tribulation (The rapture and Second Advent occur after the seven years of tribulation)

Whichever view a Christian holds is entirely up to them. Each of these views are acceptable and Christians should not waste time debating over them. However, nobody can from a biblical standpoint place a date or time for the rapture or the Second Advent. With that said, the question, “When Will Jesus Return?”, cannot be answered by anyone under the sun, no one knows when they will happen.

In closing, I leave the following thoughts:

- Be ready – (Matthew 24:44)
We should never spend our time trying to fix a date or time for Jesus’ return, instead we should live as though He’s coming today, we must always be ready.
- Signs – we know we are in the last days. However, looking for signs to pinpoint the Lord’s return is a bad idea. Matthew 24:39 (NIV) says, while comparing Jesus’ return with the flood in Noah’s day, ***“and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. This is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.”*** (see also Matthew 24:44)
- Ignore those that claim they know when Jesus will return – people like Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mr. Camping should be ignored and labeled false prophets by their own words. Jehovah’s Witnesses are wrong about Jesus’ invisible return in 1914. Mr. Camping was wrong in 1994 and he’s wrong about May 21, 2011, as we shall soon see. When people or groups claim to be hearing from God and they prophecy falsely, it’s clear they are not hearing from God. Therefore, we do well by not accepting their literature or listening to their broadcasts.

God Bless,
Pastor D. M. Duncan

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