

When Will Christ Return?

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It is popular among a number of this world's Christian organizations, and individuals, to proclaim the date of Christ's return. This practice has been going on for a long time, and all the predictions have failed. A number of scriptures show that these prognosticators are committing a serious offense against the only true God because they are being presumptuous and misleading many people.

But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die (Dt. 18:20, *NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted*).

When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord (as one of God's representatives), if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously: thou shall not be afraid of him (Dt.18:22, *Ed. notes in parentheses*).

The so-called ability to predict Christ's return lends misguided credibility to a religious leader, or organization, and is attractive to many people. However, it is the wrong focus and distracts from the more important issues related to an individual's spiritual growth and understanding, which is the main reason for avoiding this practice.

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and forever. Amen (2Pet. 3:18).

As it is Jesus Christ who is going to return at some point in the future, we should expect statements from him regarding the timing, or events, surrounding his return.

But concerning that day and the hour, no one has known, not even the angels of the heavens, not even the son, except the Father alone.³⁷ For just as the days of Noah, so shall be the presence of the Son of Man.³⁸ For as they were in those days before the flood, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day in which Noah went into the wooden vessel,³⁹ they did not know until the flood came and took up everyone; so also will be the presence of the Son of Man (Mt. 24:36-39; RNT).

Noah was God's prophet during that period of man's history, and he did not know when the flood would come until seven days before the event took place.

For after seven more days I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and I will destroy from the face of the earth all living things that I have made (Gen. 7:4).

This is an important principle showing that although a prophet can know an event will happen at some point in the future, there is no indication he will know the exact timing until God makes that decision and informs His prophet. In the case of Christ's return, scripture indicates that God the Father will take action with very short notice.

Therefore keep awake (spiritually speaking), because you do not know on what kind of day your Lord comes.⁴³ But know this, that if the house-master had known at what guard the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and not have allowed him to break through his house.⁴⁴ For this reason also you become prepared (spiritually speaking), because in that hour **which you do not think**, the Son of Man comes (Mt. 24:42-44; RNT, cf. 25:13, *Ed. notes in parentheses*).

Verse 44 of Matthew 24 clearly shows that people will be expecting Christ's return, but they will be in error regarding the actual timing.

One of the dangers associated with claiming to know when Christ will return is the tendency to neglect growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. If his return appears to be very near, an individual may hold on to a set of beliefs that they believe assures them a place with Christ upon his return, and as a result they stop putting effort into growing or changing (Mt. 25:24-28; Rev. 3:16). Or they may see his return as so far into the future that they begin to lose spiritual focus and revert to physical activities.

But if the evil bondservant says in his heart, 'My lord is taking a long time,' ⁴⁹ and he begins to beat his fellow bond slaves, and eat and drink with the drunkards (those without God's value); ⁵⁰ **the lord of that bondservant will come in that day in which he does not wait expectantly, and in an hour of which he does not know** (Mt. 24:48-50; RNT, *Ed. notes in parentheses*).

Another principle to bear in mind regarding the use of the term "day" is that God views periods of time much differently than mankind.

But beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day (2Pet. 3:8).

Therefore, when God uses the word "day" He can be referring to a period that is much longer than twenty-four hours.

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see **my day**, and he saw it and was glad (Jn. 8:56).

It is highly unlikely that Abraham's understanding of Christ's day consisted of a twenty-four hour period of time. Instead, it would have been the entire period of Christ's

earthly ministry. This same principle has to be applied to other scriptural phrases involving a day.

Look away from him that he may rest (cease/die), till like a hired man he finishes **his day** (the man's lifetime) (Jb. 14:6; – *Ed. notes in parentheses, emphasis added*).

I must work the works of Him (God, the Father) who sent me **while it is day** (the entire period of Christ's earthly ministry); the night is coming (at Christ's death) when no one can work (Jn. 9:4; – *Ed. notes in parentheses, emphasis added*).

The apostle John received many visions depicting a period of time from Christ's return until the final judgment of all who have sinned. This period of time stretches over one thousand years (Rev. 20:5). God inspired John to use the phrase "Lord's day" to describe this entire period.

I (John) was in Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet (Rev. 1:10, *Ed. notes in parentheses*).

The apostle Peter also understood that "the Lord's day" (the day of the Lord) consisted of a lengthy period of time because he included many events that cannot occur within a twenty-four hour period of time.

But the **day of the Lord** will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away (at the end of one thousand years) with great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up (2Pet. 3:10 cf. 3:12; *Ed. notes in parentheses, emphasis added*).

The apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians about "the day of the Lord" and he knew it was

a period of time that would include events leading up to Christ's return and events that would follow for a considerable period of time.

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.² For you yourselves know perfectly that "the day of the Lord" so comes as a thief in the night.³ For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.⁴ But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this day (period of time) should overtake you as a thief (1Thes. 5:1-4, *Ed. notes in parentheses*).

The "day of the Lord" is not limited to a twenty-four hour period of time, and Christ confirmed this fact when he mentioned that events preceding his return would occur during the space of a generation.

Now learn a parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and the leaves sprout forth, know that summer is near.
³³ So also you, when you see all these things, know that it is near – at the doors.³⁴ Amen, I say to you that **this generation** will not pass away until all these things (mentioned in Mt. 24:3-31) come to be (Mt. 24:32-34; RNT, Ed. notes in parentheses, emphasis added).

So, when Christ stated that no man can know the day of his return that includes knowing the generation. Depending on the scripture being used, a generation can be anywhere from approximately thirty-eight years to nine hundred and fifty years (Dt. 2:14; Num. 32:13; Ps. 90:10 cf. Gen. 7:1; 9:29).

As Jesus Christ compared his return to the days of Noah (Mt. 24:37-39), it is possible the span of a generation during Noah's time is what Christ was referring to, and Noah preached (2Pet. 2:5)

for approximately one hundred years while he was building the ark.

And Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Gen. 5:32 cf. 6:10).

At the time that Noah begat his three sons, God tasked him with constructing an ark.

Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch (Gen. 6:14).

One hundred years later the flood came.

Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was on the earth (Gen. 7:6).

Noah's preaching for about one hundred years could constitute a generation, especially as the life-spans of those living at the time were calculated in hundreds of years.

A similar preaching to that of Noah is to occur prior to Christ's return.

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness (of what is to come as a result of disobedience to the law of God; cf. Mt. 24:12) to all nations, and then the end will come (Mt. 24:14, *Ed. notes in parentheses*).

If Noah's preaching is a type of the preaching that is to take place prior to Christ's return, it could last for approximately one hundred years as well, or God could cut the time short.

For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth (Rom. 9:28).

But whenever they persecute you in this city, flee to another; for Amen, I say to you, indeed,

you will not complete the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man comes (Mt. 10:23; RNT)

'Behold the days are coming', says the Lord God, 'That I will 'send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.¹² They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord, but shall not find it (Am. 8:11-12).'

The gospel that Christ mentioned in Matthew 24:14 has to do with preaching and teaching (Mt. 28:20) the truth about the law and word of God.

To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them (Isa. 8:20; light = law, cf. Ps. 119:105; Prov. 6:23).

Once the truth about God's law is taught worldwide, the return of Jesus Christ could be imminent, unless people repent en masse as they did during the time of Jonah (Jon. 3:1-10). As this has not occurred, anyone stating that Christ is going to return at a specific date is sinning presumptuously and needs to repent (Dt. 18:20-22). Those who follow individuals, or organizations, that focus on timeframes or dates predicting Christ's return need to examine why they are participating in these activities because it is a misleading and spiritually damaging practice.

Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? --unless indeed you are disqualified. (2Cor. 13:5).

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