

~Audience Relevance~

Regarding the second coming of Jesus, I would like to present what I feel is the Biblical truth on the subject. We all believe we have the truth on any Biblical topic, until someone comes along and shows us the more correct way.

Having said that, I would like you to consider a view of which you may not have heard, or considered as viable. Before you close your mind to it, remember that if you *had* closed your mind to some of the truths you now hold dear, because they sounded strange or new or unbiblical, you would not believe what you do now. All of us, at one time or another, as we grow in grace and knowledge, change our views on something in the Bible. That is natural. Have *you* ever changed your mind regarding something in the Bible? If you haven't, it means that either you are not a Christian, or have never studied the Scriptures! The question is: "Can you be a Christian and not study the Bible?"

Please read the material and consider it. I did and am now convinced of the truth of it. It has answered many heretofore unanswerable questions and cleared up many problems on eschatology!

The Bible is written **to** first century believers but written **for** all believers of all centuries. Before you discount that statement, think about it!! The problems of the early church were specific and the Bible addresses them as such. However: the principles are for our instruction in our present circumstances. When Paul addresses the Corinthians regarding a man sleeping with his father's wife he is not addressing us although the principles are **for** us. The same is true of the whole New Testament.

When Jesus is addressing the first century disciples, He is specifically telling them things that will happen **to them**. He is not **necessarily** addressing **us** in the 21st century when He is talking to them. The principles are for us, but not necessarily the specifics. For example, He tells them that they will be delivered up to the synagogues and beaten (Matt. 10:17, etc.). No one would suppose He is talking to you or me today.

Please, at this point, read the entire chapter of Matthew 24. Do not stop until you are finished! Pretend that you are a first century disciple to whom the Lord is speaking. Listen to all the words that are spoken to you and then ask yourself what would you, **as a first century disciple**, have thought and what the first century disciples must have thought after hearing this discourse.

Chapter 24 of Matthew is addressed to the 1st century disciples specifically! In verse 4, the Lord is answering the question posed to Him by the disciples in verse 3. From then on until the end of the chapter are the specifics of that answer. In order to show that He was addressing them specifically, observe the following verses in the chapter:

Matt 24:3-4

3 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell **us**," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

4 Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives **you**."

Matt 24:6

You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.

Matt 24:9

"Then **you** will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me.

Matt 24:15

"So when **you** see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel-- let the reader understand--

Matt 24:19-20

Pray that **your** flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.

Matt 24:23

At that time if anyone says to **you**, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it.

Matt 24:25

See, I have told **you** ahead of time.

Matt 24:26

"So if anyone tells **you**, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it.

Matt 24:33-34

Even so, when **you** see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door.

34 I tell you the truth, **this** generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.

What do you notice about these verses?

Is Jesus talking to us?

- Is He telling **us** to "see all these things" (the Temple, etc.)?
- Is He telling **us** that **we** "will be handed over to be put to death"?
- Is He telling **us** that **we** will see the "abomination that causes desolation" or, as Luke says in the parallel passage, "Jerusalem surrounded by the (Roman) armies" (Luke 21:20)?
- Is He telling **us** to "pray that **our** flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath"?
- Is He telling **us** "not to go out to the desert or in the inner rooms" (what desert -- what inner rooms)?
- Is He telling **us** that "when **we** see all these things" (verses 4 through 33)?

Or is He telling His disciples things that are going to happen to them?

'**All these things**' that **they** were to see were the things described in verses 4 through 33. Agreed? Now comes the controversial part. One of those things was His return!

Matt 24:30

30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth (or 'land' ie: Israel) mourn, and *they shall see the Son of man coming* in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Now read:

Matt 24:34

34 Verily I say unto **you**, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

What are "**all these things**"? All the things mentioned in the chapter prior to verse 34--one of which is verse 30! Unmistakable proof that Jesus said He would return before that generation would pass--IN THEIR LIFETIME!

NOTE: For 25 years, I was stumped on the meaning of these verses. I did not admit that they meant what they seemed to mean because that would go against most (not all) of historical thinking on the subject. However, when I discovered there were other Bible students who felt the same way as I did, I inquired as to how they reconciled these verses. They said "Simple, we take Him at His word and believe He came back when He said He would (before the generation to whom He was speaking had died)!" Well, you can imagine how shocked I was. I had considered all of this as heresy and un-biblical, etc.

I asked pastors and professors and commentaries and anyone I could who had any inkling of the Bible and do you know what?--NO ONE could explain these verses satisfactorily. I concluded that the simple and only way to believe these verses is **just as they read!**

That is why I wanted you to read Chapter 24 right through! Do you see what I mean? Did you get the idea (from reading) that if we didn't have any presuppositions, we would expect the return of Jesus within the lifetime of those 1st century disciples--within that generation?

I believe that one cannot read the New Testament without the overwhelming feeling that all the writers of the NT expected an imminent return--not one down the road several thousand years and counting!

Can one believe that the Lord explained His return to plain men, such as the Apostles, in such a manner, that after 2100 plus years the church still does not know what He meant?

I have heard no less than 6 different interpretations of Matthew 24:34 and not one of them is correct! It is incredible that a simple answer given to the Lords' disciples, by the Lord Himself, is not enough to satisfy us.

Observe the different translations:

Matt 16:28

28 Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.
(KJV)

Matt 16:28

28 "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."
(NAS)

Matt 16:28

28 "I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."
(NIV)

Matt 16:28

28 "And some of you standing right here now will certainly live to see me coming in my Kingdom."
(TLB)

Matt 16:28

28 "I assure you that there are some here who will not die until they have seen the Son of Man come as King."
(TEV)

NOTE: Here is a strictly grammatical explanation of this verse with an explanation by the United Bible Society Translators::

Matthew 16:28

Truly, I say to you]: see discussion at <Matt 5:18; 6:2>, where similar constructions are used.

[There are some standing here]: the use of the verb [standing] is not to imply that some people were standing and others sitting. Rather, in the present context it means "those of you who are here with me now." It can be rendered "some of you standing here with me now." The reference is to the disciples (see verses 13, 21, 24).

[Taste death] is a Jewish way of saying "[die]" (TEV) without actually mentioning the word itself; the same expression is also used in <John 8:52; Hebrews 2:9>. In place of the negative form, [will not taste death], GeCL 1st edition has "will yet be alive."

[Before they see the Son of man coming] may be translated "until the Son of Man comes," which is similar to GeCL. The omission of the verb [see] does not represent a shift in focus; the intention of the verse is to affirm the coming of the Son of Man within the lifetime of some of Jesus' disciples.

[Coming in his kingdom] (so also NEB, NIV) is a literal rendering of the Greek text as is "coming with his kingdom" of NJB, since the Greek preposition may mean either [in] or "with." However, neither of these translations really conveys the impact that the construction had for Jewish readers, for whom [in his kingdom] would have meant "to rule as king." Both TEV ("[come as King]") and Phps ("coming as king") retain a noun phrase to express the concept, while others more effectively shift to an infinitive phrase, showing activity via a verb form: "coming himself to reign" (Mft) and "come to reign" (AT). GeCL 1st edition has "when the Son of Man comes with power and glory."
(from UBS Translator Handbook Series)

No clearer proof needs be presented. Unless we have more than 1 **second** coming, it has already happened! The New Testament is full of the presentation that the Lord would return in the first century within the lifetime of His disciples or else His words are untrue. No other option!

That is why people have had such a hard time believing that what He said is exactly what He meant. They have been told so often that the 2nd coming is still future that when the Bible contradicts their view, people will not believe the Bible rather than challenge the church's traditional understanding! Sounds a little like Luther's day.

I believe it is time to study the Bible for ourselves and come to the conclusions that the Holy Spirit impresses on us, rather than creedal traditionalism.

I know this is radical thinking, but it is Biblical! The difficulty in understanding this portion of Scripture has been on the part of the traditional church thinking rather than the plain words of Jesus! Because the coming of our Lord **was future to the disciples in the first century**, does by no means mean that it is still future to us 2100 plus years later!

By now a thousand questions are arising in your mind--what about the resurrection? The judgment? The graves opening? The devil and his angels? Every eye shall see Him, etc.

Those questions are addressed in the "Preterist Archive" on the net (www.PreteristArchive.com) --a site I have been studying prayerfully and carefully for years now and am amazed that I haven't understood these verses before! You will find the articles therein well thought out and articulated. I have found the research clear and well presented. Many of the questions posed by the contributors to the site are unanswerable by those who espouse a futurist view.

I have taught classes on cults and false religions for most of my (since 1976) years as a Christian and am aware of what constitutes a cult or cultic teaching. This site does not qualify for either. Rather, they seem to be folks who simply want to dialogue with their futurist brethren and want to discuss, in love, the fulfilled (preterist) view. They are not antagonistic or judgmental towards their futurist brethren, but want dialogue. Why not a council on eschatology? It has never been done. Why not now?

Surely, in light of the innumerable wrong guesses on the part of people like Jack van Impe and Hal Lindsey, Tim la Haye, etc. etc. on the date setting of the Lord's return, we need some sanity. How long are we going to hold up the second coming of Christ as a mockery to the world?

We all have to start a study of a doctrine somewhere. Some verse has to be our cornerstone upon which we build our understanding. My cornerstone is Matthew 24:34. It is a clear "timeline" on our Lord's return. He could not be clearer on **when** His return was to take place--within the lifetime of some of His listeners. He did not know the "day or hour", but He knew the approximate time. He says it so clearly in so many passages that only those who are disposed to another view could miss it. The interpretation you would get from just reading His words is the same interpretation His disciples got when they heard Him. Their generation!!

If you go verse by verse through Matthew Chapter 24, you will notice all the things that are to happen "before this generation shall pass". One of those "things" was His return in verse 30. In verse 34 when Jesus says: "ALL these things", He is including verse 30--His return. There is just no getting away from it. Try as you will (and some commentators try hard) there is no escaping the plain meaning of His words. His words are truth--our commentaries are what some man (or men) **think** His words mean.

If the words that describe His coming such as: "**shortly**" "**soon**" "**at the door**" "**quickly**" "**at hand**" "**near**" "**in a very little while**" "**ax is already at the root**" "**speedily**", don't mean what they say, then why did our Lord use them? Imminence is throughout! The old argument that: "a thousand years is like a day..." does not apply because the Lord, **when talking to men**, uses words they would understand and would apply to them. He would not tell them that His coming was "shortly" "speedily", etc. if He didn't mean it literally! When the Bible says that to the Lord, a thousand years is like a day, it is simply stating that God is not limited to time. When God talks to man, He uses language in the terms that man can understand! In other words, soon means soon--not 2100 years and counting!

It is a joke now that when something is taking too long to happen it is referred to as "**slow as the Second Coming...!**" The second coming was not slow!! It was **soon!**

Maybe this sounds new to you or maybe not, but whatever you think, you must come to terms with the **time-lines**. We simply keep saying, generation after generation, that the Lord's return is "soon". What does that mean???? If you tell your children that you are going away for a while and you will return "soon" and you do not--you are a liar! If you do not intend on returning "soon", then DO NOT USE THAT WORD! Simply say that you are returning.

In conclusion, let me give you some verses to ponder and see if you can fit them into your eschatological system to your satisfaction. If not, then reconsideration is recommended!

Matt 10:23

23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, *Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.*

Matt 16:27-28

27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.
28 Verily I say unto you, *There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.*

Matt 24:34

34 Verily I say unto you, *This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.* Verse 30 is His return!

Luke 21:32

32 Verily I say unto you, *This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.*

John 21:22-23

22 Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me."
23 Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?

Rom 13:11-12

11 And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for *now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*
12 The night is far spent, *the day is at hand*: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

James 5:8

8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because *the Lord's coming is near.*

1 Pet 4:7

7 But the *end of all things is at hand*: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

I Jn 2:18

18 Children, *it is the last hour*; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour.

Rev 3:11

11 Behold, *I come quickly*: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

Rev 22:7

7 Behold, *I come quickly*: blessed is he that keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

Heb 10:37

37 For *yet a little while*, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

ALL these verses fit perfectly into a 1st century return but cannot into a 21st century return.

I used to say to Claire, my wife, that we would do such-and-such "**if the Lord should tarry**". I even heard pastors and teachers use the phrase and yet, that phrase is NEVER used in Scripture. The usage of the word "tarry" in relation to His coming is used in Hebrews 10:37 and says that He will **NOT** tarry! The verse also says that He will come in "**a very little while**" a phrase in Greek that means right away. It cannot mean over a long period of time.

Observe the following comparison:

John 16:16

16 *A little while*, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.

Heb 10:37

37 For *yet a little while*, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

To show that the phrase "**a little while**" (mikron which means very small) means very, very soon (not thousands of years), compare the 2 verses and if the phrase in the second verse means thousands of years, then it must in the first verse. How ridiculous that is! Jesus is telling His disciples that in a "very little while" He would be taken from them (the very next day, in fact). It certainly was a "*little while*".

Are we to suppose that in John 16:16 it means within a day and yet the same phrase in Hebrews 10:37 was 2100+ years away? I think the answer is obvious.

Charles Spurgeon, on commenting on the book "**The Parousia**" by **James Russell** [that espouses the preterist (fulfilled) view], said that the book "**throws so much new light upon obscure portions of the Scriptures, and is accompanied with so much critical research and close reasoning, that it can be injurious to none and may be profitable to all.**"