

JESUS PROMISED TO RETURN

- A. Introduction: We have begun a short series about the soon return of Jesus to this earth. There is much lack of knowledge and misinformation about this topic, and it has produced fear and confusion for many.
1. People want to start their study of the Lord's return with the Book of Revelation. But that's not the place to begin because Revelation describes the end of God's plan, so we've started at the beginning.
    - a. In eternity past God devised a plan to have a family. He created men and women to become His sons and daughters and made the earth to be home for His family. Eph 1:4,5; Isa 45:18
      1. The first man Adam took the whole race in him and the earth itself into bondage to sin, Satan, corruption and death, disqualifying men for sonship and severely damaging the home God made for His family. Gen 2:17; Rom 5:12,19; Gen 3:17-19; Rom 8:20; etc
      2. God immediately began to unveil His plan to rectify the situation and still have His family on earth. His plan to deliver men and the earth from this bondage is called redemption.
    - b. Following Adam's disobedience, God promised the coming of the Seed (Jesus) of the woman (Mary) who would undo the damage done by man's sin. Gen 3:15
      1. Jesus came to earth the first time to pay for sin at the Cross and open the way for men and women to become sons and daughters of God through new birth. Isa 53; John 1:12; I John 5:1
      2. He will come again to cleanse the earth of all sin, corruption and death and make it a fit forever home for God and His family. Rev 11:18
  2. People have a tendency to focus on the sensational topics like the Antichrist and mark of the Beast. But you can't properly discuss those topics without doing so in the context of the overall plan of God.
    - a. Our goal in this series is to provide an overview of the outworking of God's plan to give you a framework of reference with which you can assess things you hear about the Second Coming.
    - b. We are making the point that there are many more people involved in and concerned about Jesus' coming and the completion of the plan than just we who live right now. All who, since Adam, have put faith in God's grace given through the Cross are awaiting His return. Our understanding and interpretation of end time events must be consistent with theirs.
    - c. The Second Coming is about the return of the rightful King, Jesus, coming back to earth to complete the plan of redemption by establishing His visible kingdom on earth. Rev 21,22
- B. After God made His initial promise of the coming Redeemer He gradually revealed increasing aspects of His plan of redemption, instructing men to keep a record of the revelations He gave. The Bible is that record. It tells the story of God's desire for a family and the lengths to which He has gone to obtain it.
1. God set apart the people group through whom the promised Seed would come to earth (the descendants of Abraham) identifying a tribe (Judah) and a family in the tribe (David's) as the specific line of the Redeemer. Gen 12:1-3; Gal 3:8,9,16; Gen 49:10; II Sam 7:11-13;16; Ps 89:35-37
    - a. God also charged Abraham's descendants with the task of compiling, recording and preserving His written record, the scriptures. Rom 3:2
      1. God promised Abraham that nothing would stop his descendants from growing into the nation from which the Redeemer would come. Gen 12:3--If anyone curses you (tries to put a spell on you, hem you in with obstacles or render you powerless to resist) I will do the same to them.
      2. God entered into covenant relationship with them promising to protect and provide for them if they remained faithful to Him. He warned that if they worshipped anyone but Him they would be overwhelmed by their enemies and removed from the land. Lev 26:1-13; Deut 4:25-30
    - b. Abraham's descendants did grow into a great company of people and established the nation of Israel. But over an almost 900 year period they repeatedly abandoned God to worship idols, refusing His call (through His many prophets) to return to Him. In 586 B.C. they were overrun by the Babylon Empire. Jerusalem was burned and all but the poorest people taken away to Babylon.
  2. While Israel was exiled in Babylon God revealed much about the end of His plan of redemption to the

prophet Daniel. Because he was of noble birth and taken from Israel as a youth, Daniel was trained for government service and became a high-ranking advisor to Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon.

- a. God revealed to Daniel that He was going to establish His kingdom on earth and that His people would have a part in it. Dan 2:44,45; 7:27
- b. Daniel was also given two timelines as to when God will establish His kingdom on earth.
  1. Dan 2--God revealed that four empires would rule over Israel and, in the time of the fourth empire, the Redeemer will set up His kingdom. Those empires can be traced out in the historical record (Babylon, Persia, Greece) with the fourth empire (Rome) in place when Jesus came to earth two thousand years ago.
    2. Dan 9:24-27--God also revealed that He would deal with Israel for their sin for 490 more years. Then He will establish His kingdom on earth. Specific historical events were given in the prophecy by which those years can be counted out.
      - A. They began when the command was issued to allow the Jews to go back to their land and restore and rebuild Jerusalem (Mar 5, 444 B.C.). Neh 2:1-8
      - B. From the time that decree was issued until Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday the week He was crucified (March 10, 33 A.D.) was 483 years to the day. (A year in Biblical times was 360 days long with five extra days at the end; must also account for leap years.)
  3. Anticipation was high in Israel when Jesus came the first time. Based on Daniel's timelines Israel knew the time of the Redeemer was near. They were looking for the promised Seed, not the Antichrist.
- a. Consider some examples of men and women just as interested in Jesus' coming as we are.
  1. Luke 1:31-33--Gabriel, the angel who delivered the 490 year timetable to Daniel, appeared to Mary and told her that she was going to give birth to the Son of God who would take the throne of David and set up His everlasting kingdom. II Sam 7:11-13; Ps 132:11; Isa 9:6; etc.
  2. Luke 1:42,43--Mary went to visit her cousin (six months pregnant with John the Baptist). By the power of the Holy Ghost Elisabeth recognized the woman and the Seed of Genesis 3:15.
  3. Luke 1:11-19--An angel appeared to her husband Zacharias and said: Your wife will bear a son who'll go forth in the spirit of Elijah preparing the way for the Lord. Isa 40:3; Mal 4:5
  4. Luke 2:25-29--God promised a man named Simeon that he would see the Lord's Christ (Dan 9:25) before his death. The Holy Spirit led him to the Temple the day Jesus was circumcised.
  5. Luke 2:36-38--Anna, a prophetess who had lived in the Temple most of her life, also saw Jesus "and publicly proclaimed the Messiah's arrival to everyone in Jerusalem who had been awaiting the coming of the Savior" (v38, Living Bible).
- b. All these people are presently in Heaven awaiting the Lord's return to earth. They'll come with Him and be reunited with their bodies (raised up from the grave). Jesus will establish His kingdom on earth where they will live forever, completing the plan of redemption.
4. The Old Testament prophets did not see clearly that there would be two comings of Jesus separated by at least two thousand years or that His kingdom would take two forms -- first His reign in the hearts of men through the new birth (Luke 17:20,21) and then His visible kingdom on earth.
  - a. At some point in His earth ministry Jesus revealed to His disciples that He would be leaving for a time and then return and establish His kingdom on earth.
    1. Remember, just a few days before the crucifixion Peter, James, John and Andrew asked Jesus what would be the signs indicating His return was near. He answered their question in what is called the Olivet Discourse. Matt 24; Mark 13; Luke 21
    2. Although we don't have details, we know that in the forty days between the resurrection and His ascension, Jesus spoke to His disciples about things pertaining to the Kingdom. And, His first message to them after He returned to Heaven was: I'll be back Acts 1:3; 11
  - b. His followers went out and began to preach the resurrection of Jesus, the remission (wiping out) of sins, and the return of the Lord to complete His plan of redemption. Acts 3:14-15; 19-21
    1. In one of his first sermons Peter said Jesus would return at the time of restitution, a term that

means to restore something to its former state. v21--When all things are put right (Basic); restored anew (Knox); until the final recovery of all things from sin (Living Bible).

2. Notice that Peter said God has been talking about the end since the beginning. v21--Until the time for the complete restoration of all that God spoke by the mouth of all His holy prophets for ages past—from the most ancient time in the memory of man. (Amp)
3. The prophets wrote that the curse that entered the earth following Adam's sin would be removed and the earth made new. Gen 3:17-19; Isa 51:3; 55:13; 65:17; etc.
- c. Note: At this point in time the disciples already knew from Daniel's writings about the leader of the final world empire and the havoc he will bring to earth. Yet in their sermons and epistles their theme is looking for Jesus who will come and complete His plan. I Pet 1:3-7; 4:7; etc.
5. After Jesus returned to Heaven His disciples were given more revelation about His coming and kingdom. Peter, in his second epistle, recorded specifics about the transformation that will take place in the earth at the time of restitution or restoration when the Lord returns. II Pet 3:10-13
  - a. Some have mistakenly interpreted this passage to mean that the earth will be destroyed by fire at the Lord's return. But Peter's point is transformation not destruction.
    1. The words shall melt (v10) and dissolved (v11,12) are translated from the word LUO which means to loosen. The same word is used in John 11:44 of Lazarus: Loose him and let him go.
    2. Shall melt (v12) is TEKO. The English word thaw comes from it. Thaw means reverse the effects of freezing. Winter releases its grip when the spring thaw sets in.
    3. Elements (v10) is STIOCHEION and means the most basic components of the physical world.
  - b. God is not going to destroy the world. The molecules and atoms that make up our world are going to be loosed from the bondage of corruption and death by the fire of God's Word. Jer 23:29
    1. Just as God spoke His Word in the beginning and created the material universe, He will speak and atoms will be loosed and put back together, restored to their original condition.
    2. Fire doesn't destroy anything in that it makes it cease to exist. Fire causes things to change form. Wood is changed to ashes by fire. The heavens and earth will be made new (KAINOS). The Greek word means new in quality or form as opposed to new in time.
6. When Jesus returned to Heaven, although the fourth empire (Rome) was in place, seven years of the 490 years in Daniel's prophecy were still unfulfilled. Dan 9:27 sets those years apart from the rest.
  - a. v27--He (the prince of the people who crucified Christ) will make a seven year covenant (treaty) with Israel and break it midway through. Then as a climax to all his terrible deeds, he will set up a sacrilegious object that causes desecration (NLT) until he is destroyed.
    1. The Hebrew literally says "an abomination of desolation". Jesus made reference to this event in Matt 24:15 as a principle sign that His return is very near. He indicated it will signal the start of a time of tribulation unlike anything the world has ever seen (Matt 24:21,22).
    2. II Thess 2:4--Paul was given the revelation that this final ruler will set himself up in the Temple demanding to be worshipped as God resulting in severe persecution of all who refuse.
    3. But it was also revealed to Paul that one of the ways God will provide for His people in the chaos preceding His return will be to take them off the earth.
  - b. From Paul's writings we learn there will be two phases to the Second Coming of Jesus separated by seven years. He will first come in the clouds, not to earth and take believers to Heaven.
    1. I Thess 4:13-18--To encourage believers who had lost loved ones Paul assured them that when Jesus comes He will bring them with Him. Their bodies will be raised, the bodies of those still alive will be changed (I Cor 15:51-53) and we will all be caught up to Heaven.
    2. II Thess 1:8-10--Paul also told these people that Jesus will come seven years later to carry out justice on all who have refused to believe on Him. This will be fulfillment of Enoch's prophecy (Jude 14,15) when He comes to earth with His saints to set up His kingdom.
  - c. Paul was given information as to when this abomination of desolation will take place.
    1. II Thess 2:3--Do not begin to allow anyone to lead you astray in any way, because that day

shall not come except the aforementioned departure [of the Church to heaven] comes first and the man of lawlessness is disclosed [in his true identity]. (Wuest)

2. Believers in Jesus will be removed prior to the final seven years of Daniel's prophecy because it nothing to do with the church. It is Jacob's time of trouble (Jer 30:7). At the end of these years Israel as a nation will finally acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah (Zech 12:10; 13:1,8-9). (Whole lessons for other days).
  7. Jesus' first followers expected Him to return during their lifetime. None of them knew that both Israel and Rome would cease to exist and that two thousand years would pass before the Lord's return. According to scripture both will be involved in the Lord's Second Coming.
    - a. II Pet 3:4-9--Before Peter died he wrote that we should not be concerned about the passage of time because God keeps His Word. For the past two millennia God has been gathering sons and daughters for His family.
    - b. But the reemergence of Israel as a nation in 1948 along with technological developments that make a worldwide government and economy possible, combined with the capabilities to wipe out the population of the world through nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons indicate the lateness of the hour. Jesus is coming soon.
- C. Conclusion: We still have much to discuss, but consider these points. The emphasis in scripture regarding Jesus' return is on the end result. He's is coming back to renovate the earth and establish His kingdom.
1. Paul preached that we are to be waiting for Jesus' coming. I Thess 1:10--We are to wait (present tense) continuously. It literally means to wait for like a child expecting its parents at any minute.
    - a. Titus 2:13--While we look forward (NLT), prepared to welcome (Rotherham), looking for the [fulfillment, the realization of our] blessed hope (Amp); the happy fulfillment of our hope (NEB).
    - b. The removal of the sin, corruption and death that has plagued the human race and the earth since the fall of man in the garden at the return of Jesus will result in the realization of all our hopes and longings. The best is yet to come.
  2. In Matt 24:4-8 Jesus referred to the signs of His coming as birth pangs. In childbirth the pains start out light, grow more intense, frequent and closer together as the birth approaches. But the joy of what is ahead sustains you during the birth process.
    - a. People tend to want to focus on individual birth pangs and not the end result or the completion of the plan of redemption. Times will grow increasingly difficult as the birth pangs get closer together and more intense (we'll discuss why and how in a later lesson).
    - b. We have to learn to keep things in perspective and see things according to what the Bible says. Remember, it's not what you see. It's how you see what you see.
  3. God's been talking about the end since the beginning because He is working out a plan. The plan is just as important to the multitudes of people who have put faith in the Redeemer through the centuries and are now in Heaven awaiting His return to earth. Let's keep them and the end of the plan in view.