

PLEASE READ THE BIBLE

- A. Introduction: We are taking a few weeks to discuss the Second Coming of Jesus. His return is near and we need accurate knowledge from the Word of God to help us navigate through the months and years ahead.
1. I want to give you a framework with which to assess what you hear about His return. I want to give you information that will help you deal with fear and confusion and protect you against deception.
 - a. Jesus warned that a hallmark of the period just before His return will be religious deception (Matt 24:4,5,11,24). To be deceived means to believe a lie. Lies can undermine your faith and make you ineffective. Lies can influence you to the point where you embrace heresy. We need the truth of God's Word.
 - b. Perilous times are coming on the earth (II Tim 3:1-5). Jesus said that men's hearts will fail them for fear but that His followers are to be elated in joyous expectation (Look up! Luke 21:28).
 1. It's not what you see it's how you see what you see. You can't be elated in joyous expectation unless you know how to look at things. You must know how to look at what is happening in the world in terms of what God's Word says.
 2. There are many voices saying lots of things about the Lord's return, some accurate, some not. You must know how to judge what you hear in the light of the Bible. The greatest gift you can give yourself is to read the New Testament through, cover to cover, over and over.
 3. Here's the test for any teaching you hear about any subject. If your only source of information was the new Testament, would you ever conclude that what you just heard is accurate?
 2. Confusion and fear concerning the return of Jesus comes from not understanding what Jesus' return is all about (the big picture) as well as from lack of understanding of how to read the Bible which leads to misapplying or misinterpreting scripture. We want to address both issues in this lesson.
- B. This is the big picture: The return of Jesus to earth will mark the completion of God's plan of redemption.
1. God created men and women to become His literal sons and daughters through faith in Christ. He made the earth to be home for Himself and His family. Eph 1:4,5; Isa 45:18
 - a. God's plan seemed thwarted when the first man chose independence from Him. Adam was enticed to join Satan in rebellion against their Creator and rightful King of this world. Gen 3:1-6
 - b. As the head of the human race and first steward of the earth, Adam took the whole race and the earth into sin, corruption and death and gave his authority in the earth over to Satan. Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12-19; Luke 4:6; II Cor 4:4; John 12:31; etc.
 - c. But God immediately began to unveil His plan of redemption, His plan to deliver men and women and the earth itself from this pitiful condition and still have a family on a perfect earth for eternity.
 1. Following that original sin, God made His first promise of the coming of the Redeemer as He marked out the line through which Jesus would come into this world. Gen 3:15
 2. God instructed men to begin to make a record of His plan of redemption, His plan to deliver mankind and the earth from bondage to sin, Satan, corruption and death.
 2. God gradually revealed increasing aspects of His plan, foreshadowing and picturing what the coming Redeemer would be like and the work He would do. The Bible is the record of that plan.
 - a. As the years passed, God set apart the people group through whom the Redeemer would come (Abraham's descendants, the Jews) then a tribe within that group (Judah), and finally a family from that tribe (David's). Gen 12:3; Gen 49:10; Ps 89:35
 1. The Old Testament is mainly the history of Israel (the nation founded by Abraham's descendents) because they are the people group through whom the Redeemer came.
 2. The Bible is redemptive history. It records history directly related to the carrying out of His plan of redemption. That's the reason only Middle East countries are mentioned. That region is where the people group through which Jesus came into this world developed into a nation.
 - b. The Bible tells the story of God's desire for a family and the lengths to which He has gone to

obtain His family through Jesus. Everything in it adds to or advances the story of redemption.

1. The prophets who wrote about the coming Seed (Redeemer) in the Old Testament did not see clearly that there would be two comings of the Redeemer separated by two millennia. Isa 9:6
2. But they knew He was coming to reclaim the earth and establish His visible, eternal kingdom of righteousness and peace on this earth. Dan 2:44; 7:27; etc.
 - A. Jesus came to earth the first time to pay the price for sin so it could be removed and men and women could become sons of God through union with Christ. Heb 9:28; Gal 4:4-6
 - B. He'll come again to complete the plan of redemption by cleansing the world of all sin, corruption and death and establishing His visible kingdom on earth. Rev 11:15,18; Isa 9:7
3. Everybody wants to talk about the Antichrist and the mark of the beast or argue about when the rapture and tribulation will take place. But you cannot rightly interpret scriptures pertaining to these topics unless you have a clear understanding of the big picture.
3. We must realize that many more people are interested in Jesus' coming than just we who are alive now.
 - a. All who have ever put faith in God and the work of the Redeemer have a stake in Jesus' return. Multitudes of people currently in Heaven are awaiting the return of Jesus because they will come with Him to live in His eternal kingdom on this earth, cleansed and renewed.
 1. I Pet 1:10-12--This salvation was something the prophets wanted to know more about. They prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you, even though they had many questions as to what it all could mean...They were told that these things would not happen during their lifetime, but many years later...(NLT)
 2. Heb 11:39,40--All of these people we have mentioned received God's approval because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised. For God had far better things in mind for us that would also benefit them, for they can't receive the prize at the end of the race until we finish the race. (NLT)
 - b. Consider several examples of people who lived and died centuries ago. Although they did not have all the details about the plan, they knew they'd be back to live on earth in God's kingdom.
 1. Adam, whose actions damage the world, received the first promise of the Redeemer. Gen 3:15
 2. Enoch, seventh generation from Adam, prophesied in the time of Adam of the coming of the Lord to earth to make things right. He and Adam will be two of the saints who return with Jesus. Gen 5:21-24; Jude 14,15
 3. Noah, tenth generation from Adam, built an ark at the Lord's command through which he and his family survived a worldwide flood. Noah's name means rest, picturing the rest the Seed will bring. His ark pictured Jesus as our ark of safety, protecting from judgment of sin. Noah's return to live on earth pictured a return to earth cleansed of sin. Gen 6; II Pet :5,6
 4. Job, who lived at the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob knew he'd one day return to live again on earth with his Redeemer in his body raised from the grave. Job 19:25,26
 5. Joseph was sold into Egyptian slavery by his jealous brothers. When he died in Egypt he instructed his descendants to take his bones with them when they returned to Canaan. He knew he'd one day live on earth again and wanted the first spot on which he will stand to be the land of his birth. Gen 50:24,25
 6. Moses and Elijah briefly stepped out of Heaven to discuss with Jesus His upcoming crucifixion. They were and are fully aware that a plan was unfolding. It will culminate with the Lord's return. Luke 9:31
 - c. We must never lose sight of what the Second Coming is all about: the return of the Rightful King to establish His kingdom on as God comes to live with His entire redeemed family. Rev 21,22
4. That leads to our next point. The Bible is not a collection of unrelated verses. It is a collection of sixty-six books and letters, all of which pertain to the story of redemption. They all fit that theme.
 - a. Everything in the Bible was written by someone to someone about something. We must consider those things in order to properly interpret a verse. The scriptures cannot mean something to us that

it would not have meant to the original hearers and readers.

b. We gave the example last week of the Shemittah year, a teaching that has swept through the Body of Christ -- the idea that every seventh year is a Shemittah and it brings cursing or blessing depending on our actions, particularly in regard to the nation of Israel.

1. Last week we discussed how it is a misapplication of the concept of a Sabbath Year from the Old Testament (Lev 24:4,5; Deut 15:1,2,9). The original readers would never have gotten from that passage the teaching that has been popularized in recent months.

2. Additionally, there is nothing about the Shemittah in the New Testament, the portion of the Bible written to describe what Jesus accomplished through His death, burial, and resurrection, what His followers must believe, and how we are to act. Col 2:16,17

c. This is an example of proof texting, where you come to the Bible with a preconceived idea and find verse that supports your presupposition. Here is example.

1. II Pet 3:9 says that God is not willing that any should perish. Therefore all people will ultimately be saved no matter what they believe or how they live.

2. But that interpretation can't be right because it contradicts numerous other scriptures that make it clear all who reject Jesus will perish.

C. Much confusion is coming from misunderstanding the role of Israel in God's plan. Prominent Christian ministers are declaring that for a Christian, one of our greatest duties before God is love for and care of the nation of Israel. They cite Gen 12:3 where God says He'll bless those who bless Israel and curse those who curse it. But that verse does not mean what it has morphed into in 21st century American Christianity.

1. Gen 12:1-3--God made this statement to Abraham when He called him to leave his father's house and travel to Canaan. God set Abraham and His descendants apart as the people group through whom the Redeemer would come: In thee shall all nations of the world be blessed (Gal 3:8).

a. Bless means to bless, kneel, salute or greet. Curse means to inflict with a curse. There are at least five other Hebrew words with the same general meaning. But this word in a more specific sense means to bind with a spell, to hem in with obstacles, or render powerless to resist.

1. We aren't going to discuss the whole incident. But in Num 24:9 we find a statement about blessing and cursing Israel which helps us understand the meaning of the word in Gen 12.

2. When the adult children of the generation of Israel that refused to enter Canaan were on their way from their wilderness wanderings back to the land, the King of Moab, Balak, hired the prophet Balaam to curse Israel so that they would be immobilized and made powerless and he could defeat them before they conquered his kingdom. Num 22:6

3. Balaam didn't do it. But the meaning of the word is clear: Immobilize them somehow.

b. When God spoke to Abraham he was an old man with no heirs who was being directed into a foreign land with many formidable enemies. In Gen 12:3 God was promising him that nothing (no one) can stop you from growing into a great nation through which the Redeemer will come.

1. When Abraham's descendants came out of four hundred years of slavery in Egypt God told them: My Angel (the Angel of the Lord, Preincarnate Jesus) will go before you and bring you into the land. No enemy shall be able to stand against you (Ex 23:20-23).

2. When we read their story we see that everything that came against them to thwart God's promise to Abraham was overcome by the power of God. The verse has nothing to with: If America's Congress doesn't pass an agreement favorable to Israel you all are going to get it.

c. If you can't be blessed unless you support Israel what did everyone do from 70 A.D. when it ceased to exist as a nation until 1948 when it was reestablished? No one be could be blessed?

d. Let me clearly state: As America's ally and as a fellow democracy, I believe it is right for our country to support them. But we've taken that verse way too far.

2. There is great misunderstanding of what it means that the Jews are God's chosen people. They were chosen as the people group through whom the Redeemer would come.

- a. They were entrusted with compiling and recording God's written record, the scriptures. Rom 3:2
 - b. Rom 9:4,5--They are Israelites, and to them belong God's adoption [as a nation] and the glorious (Shekinah) Presence. With them were the special covenants made, to them was the Law given. To them [the temple] worship was revealed and [God's own] promises announced. To them belong the Patriarchs, and as far as His natural descent was concerned from them is the Christ. (Amp)
 - c. When God delivered Israel from Egypt He met with Moses on Mount Sinai and said: If you obey me and keep my covenant you will be a peculiar people (purchased possession) to Me. Ex 19:4-6
 - 1. They are not called God's chosen people in the New Testament. The New Testament calls the Church God's chosen people
 - 2. Peter (a Jew), under the inspiration of the Holy spirit, applied Ex 19:5 to the Church. I Pet 2:9 --but you are God's "chosen generation", his "royal priesthood", his "holy nation", His "peculiar people"—all the old titles of God's people now belong to you. It is for you now to demonstrate the goodness of him who has called you out of darkness into his amazing light. (Phillips). v10--Now you are the people of God.
 - d. They were not (are not) the end game. They were a means to an end. The prophets make it clear that Israel, as a nation, has a future when Jesus returns to earth. Paul stated that even though Israel as a group rejected their Messiah God has not abandoned them (Rom 9-11). What all this will entail is not fully stated in scripture. It will be clear when it happens. We shouldn't make the Bible say more than it says.
 - 3. In parts of the Church today there is an emphasis on going back to the Jewish roots insisting that Christians celebrate Jewish feasts, wear prayer shawls and pray Old Testament prayers in Hebrew.
 - a. Eph 2:11-17--Jesus didn't die to make everyone Jewish. He died to make one new man out of both Jew and Gentile. His genealogy combines Jew and Gentile (Rahab and Ruth). Luke 3
 - b. Col 3:11--There is nothing but Christ in any of us (Knox); In this new man of God's design there is no distinction between Greek and Hebrew, Jew or Gentile, foreigner or savage, slave or free man. Christ is all that matters for Christ lives in them all. (Phillips)
 - c. Col 2:16,17--Let no one sit in judgment on you in matters of food and drink or with regard to a feast day or a new moon or a Sabbath (Amp). These things are only the shadow of what is to come, the substance is in the Christ (Phillips).
 - d. I Cor 11:4--Jewish law said: A man should veil himself when he prays to show that he is ashamed before God and unworthy with open face to behold him. Paul said this was inappropriate for a new covenant believer.
- D. Conclusion: We have more to say but consider one thought. The greatest gift you can give yourself is to become a consistent reader of the New Testament. It will give you a framework by which to assess what you hear. All of these various conflicting voices are only going to increase in the days ahead.