



Church of God-21st Century

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Yes, Jesus Christ Will “COME AGAIN”—

But...*Beware* of Setting Dates!

Can *anyone* accurately predict the time of Christ’s “Second Coming”? Should any man dare set a *date* for that *momentous event*—or predict precisely when the “6,000 years” of man’s chaotic misrule will end?

by Raymond F. McNair

Are some of the ministers and brethren in the “Churches of God” heading down a *slippery slope* by setting *speculative dates* for the fulfillment of important end-time biblical prophecies? What will be the dire consequence of unfounded *prophetic speculations*?

The *long wait*—2000 Years of Suspense!

For nearly 2000 years Jesus Christ’s followers have endeavored to *predict* the time of His *Second Coming* to this earth to establish the Kingdom of God. “When will the **Son of Man** return?” While Jesus was still on earth, His disciples pondered this question, but, all in vain.

Shortly before His *crucifixion* Christ’s disciples asked Him, “Tell us...**what will be the sign of YOUR COMING**, and of the *end of the age*?” (Mt. 24:3). Jesus repeatedly warned His disciples of “many *false prophets* [who would] “deceive many” (vv. 4-5, 11), saying there would also be “wars and rumors of wars,” and predicted terrible “famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places” (vv. 6-7), warning of severe persecutions and martyrdom of His followers (vv. 9-10).

Christ also said that near the very end of this age His gospel would be preached in all nations (v. 14), and shortly afterward, an unprecedented “**Great Tribulation**” would occur (v. 21), followed by spectacular *signs* in heaven (v. 29), culminating in the “sign of the Son of man” (v. 30), which would signify the *imminent return* of Jesus Christ to this chaotic, war-torn earth: “Then the *sign* of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, **and they will see the Son of Man COMING** on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a *trumpet*, and they will gather together *His elect* from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (vv. 3-28).

Jesus then told His disciples that, at the end of this age, people would be eating, drinking, marrying, working in the fields, grinding at their mills, etc.—oblivious to the momentous *Second Coming* about to occur. He warned them: “Therefore you also *be ready*, for the **Son of Man is COMING** at an hour when you do not expect him” (v. 44).

Christ also informed His *twelve disciples* that there would be certain definite *indications*, which would herald His return to earth, however, only the *wise* would really understand those “signs.” Further, He told them that when a “*fig tree...puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see ALL OF THESE THINGS, know that it [His Second Coming] is near, at the very doors*” (vv. 32-33).

Christ’s Disciples Thought God’s Kingdom Was Near!

Jesus’ disciples interpreted some of His statements to mean that the Kingdom of God was very near. They thought that since He was the *true Messiah* (the “anointed One”), He would soon expel the Romans, establish His Kingdom over the nation of *Israel*, and eventually rule *all nations!* Christ realized His disciples had *great expectations*, and were mistakenly *assuming* that the Kingdom of God would soon be set up. So, “because He was near to Jerusalem and **because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately**” Jesus gave them a parable, saying: “A certain nobleman [meaning Himself] went into a far country [heaven] to receive a kingdom and to **RETURN**” (Luke 19:11-27). He gave his “ten servants” ten pounds [Gk *minas*], telling them, “Occupy till I come” (KJV).

Clearly, Jesus Christ was informing His apostles that the Kingdom of God would *not* be established on earth “immediately,” but would have to wait until He (the “nobleman”) went to heaven and received a Kingdom, before *returning* to establish that Kingdom over the whole earth (Daniel 7:27; Zech. 14:9; Rev. 5:10 & 11:15). Even after Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, His disciples still thought He was about to establish His Kingdom over *Israel*, and over all nations. So, Jesus “presented Himself alive after His suffering...being seen by [the apostles] during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to **the Kingdom of God**” (Acts. 1:3). “Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, ‘Lord, **will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel** [with Himself as their King]’?” (v. 6). Jesus quickly straightened them out on this point: “**It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority**” (v. 7).

Christ had to again tell His disciples that the “Kingdom” would not “immediately appear”—until after He (as the Nobleman) went to the Father in Heaven and received that Kingdom, then *returned* to this earth (at His *Second Coming*), to establish God’s government over the whole world! A careful study of the books of the New Testament reveals that, for some time after Pentecost, the disciples (including the *Apostle Paul*) continued to believe that God’s Kingdom would soon be established on this earth at the *return of Jesus*—during their lifetime! Later, however, it finally began to sink into their minds that Christ really wanted them to realize that He would *not* set up His Kingdom on earth until much later.

It is doubtful, however, that His disciples ever realized there would be a 2000-year period between Christ’s *First Coming* (to offer Himself as our Sacrifice), and His *Second Coming* in power and glory to establish His Kingdom over the whole world, ruling righteously over all nations (Isa. 2:1-5; 9:6-7; 11:1-9). Did Jesus intend that His disciples should take Him literally?

Christ Promised to “Return”—but When?

“If I go [to Heaven] I will COME AGAIN!” Jesus made it very clear to His disciples that He would *return* to this earth to set up His Kingdom: “In My Father’s house are *many mansions*.... I go to prepare a place for you. **And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will COME AGAIN ...**” (John 14:2-3).

Some believe that Christ was only speaking in *riddles*, and that He will *not* come again to establish His literal Kingdom over the whole world. Others even deny that He will establish His Kingdom on earth, thinking His “Kingdom” would rule from Heaven. The *Apostle Peter* tells us that *skeptics* and *agnostics* would publicize their *disbelief* in Jesus’ many promises in which He said He would **return** to this earth to set up His Kingdom, with the assistance of His then-glorified saints: “But there were also *false prophets* among the people, even as there will be *false teachers* among you, who will secretly bring in *destructive heresies*, even denying the Lord...” (2 Pet. 2:1-2). Furthermore, Peter tells us that “*scoffers* will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘**Where is the promise of His [SECOND] COMING.** For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation’” (3:4-5).

Both the *Bible* and *secular history* tell us that some of the *early Christians*—who thought the “Kingdom of God would appear immediately”—later became *disillusioned* and *discouraged* when God’s Kingdom didn’t *immediately* come; and some even turned away from Christ’s gospel, disbelieving God’s many promises to send His Son Jesus back to this earth to establish that long-awaited Kingdom!

The Apostle Paul clearly affirmed his belief in Christ’s *Second Coming*: “And as it is appointed for men to die once...so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him **He will appear a SECOND TIME** [at His *Second Coming*], apart from sin, for salvation” (Heb. 9:27-28).

Early N.T. Christians Believed in Christ’s Return

Historians of early N.T. history give us some insights into what was going on among the professing “Christians” in the first century, and afterward. The famous Church historian, **Edward Gibbon**, describes some of the early Christian beliefs, showing that they definitely believed both in Christ’s *Second Coming*, and also in His *millennial rule over the earth*. Gibbon says, “The scant and suspicious materials of ecclesiastical history seldom enable us to dispel the dark cloud that hangs over the first age of the *CHURCH*” (*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chapter XV).

Speaking of the “primitive church,” which he also calls “ancient Christians,” Gibbon says: “It was universally believed that the **end of the world**, and the kingdom of heaven, were at hand. The *near approach* of this wonderful event had been predicted by the *apostles*; and it was preserved by their earliest *disciples*, and those who understood in their literal sense the discourses of Christ himself were obliged to expect *the SECOND, and glorious COMING of the Son of Man in the clouds*, before that generation was totally extinguished which had beheld His humble condition upon earth...” (ibid.).

Gibbon continues, “The ancient and popular doctrine of the **Millennium** was intimately connected with the **SECOND COMING** of Christ. As the works of the creation had been finished in *six days*, their duration in their present state, according to a tradition which was attributed to the prophet *Elijah*, was fixed to *six thousand years*. By the same analogy it was inferred that this long period of labour and contention, which was now

almost elapsed, would be succeeded by a JOYFUL SABBATH of a THOUSAND YEARS; and that Christ, with the triumphant band of *the saints and the elect who had escaped death, or who had been miraculously revived, would reign upon the earth till the time appointed for the last and general resurrection*" (ibid.).

Thus we see that both the *Bible* and *secular history* reveal that, from the very beginning, many of Christ's followers *misunderstood* His teachings, thinking that His *Second Coming* would come much sooner than God the Father had planned. It should now be clear to all that nearly 2000 years have elapsed since Christ's *First Coming*—to offer Himself as a Sacrifice for our sins—but Jesus still has not *yet* kept His promise to "come again."

Definite Signs Will Herald Christ's Second Coming

When will Jesus Christ **return** to this earth? Can any *human* really know when His Second Coming will occur? Will *God's angels* even know? If not, will the Son of God Himself know before His Father gives Him a command to **return** to this earth to establish His Kingdom over all nations?

The Bible tells us that Christ's *Second Coming* will occur at the sounding of the "**last trump**" (1 Cor. 15:51-52), at which time the dead saints will then be resurrected, while those who are "alive and remain" shall be changed from "mortal" into "immortality" (Rom. 2:7), as they are *all* "caught up" together to meet Christ in the air (1 Thess. 4:13-18). That *momentous event* will occur when the "**seventh angel**" blows his trumpet, heralding the *Second Coming* of Jesus. At the sounding of the "seventh trump" the Father will give Christ rulership over the whole earth: "Then the *seventh angel* sounded: and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, '**The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever**'" (Rev. 11:15).

Beware of "Setting Dates"!

Brethren, it is only natural for Christ's followers to want to *know* when He will return in great power to this earth to establish His Kingdom and rule all nations! Christ's disciples wanted to know, and every generation of believers since the first century has desired to know, *when* Christ's *Second Coming* will occur. In recent centuries many have falsely predicted various dates when He would "COME AGAIN." Jesus warned His followers to **beware** of those who would say He had come "secretly" to establish His Kingdom on this earth. Many believe this prophecy was fulfilled by the Jehovah Witnesses who, by some convoluted process of reasoning, think Christ's "coming" occurred during World War I (1914-1918).

Here is what they say in their book, *Let God Be True*: "Christ Jesus came, not as a *human*, but as a glorious *spirit creature*" (p. 185). "Some wrongfully expect a *literal* fulfillment of the symbolic statements of the Bible, such Hope to see the glorified Jesus COMING seated on a white cloud where every human eye will see Him..." (*Ibid.* p. 186). "It does *not* mean that He [Christ] is on the way or has promised to COME, but that He has already arrived? (*Ibid.* p. 187).

After telling His disciples that a “Great Tribulation” —the greatest time of trouble ever to occur on earth (Mt. 24:21-22)—He warned them of *false ministers* misleading His people (vv. 11, 24). He then gave this warning: “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ **Do not believe it!** For **false christs** and **false prophets** will arise...to deceive, if possible, even the ELECT.... For as the lightning comes from *east* and flashes to the *west*, so also will the COMING of the Son of Man be” (vv. 23-27). **Millions misunderstand Christ’s Prophecies!** So, let us carefully examine Jesus’ words and the definite *clues* He gave as to *when* His *Second Coming* would occur. Jesus said: “Now learn this parable from the fig tree: when its branch...puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, **when you see ALL THESE THINGS** [wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, false prophets, the “Great Tribulation,” etc.], **know that it is near**, at the very doors. Assuredly, I say to you, **this generation** [who witness *all* of the above prophesied *events*, including the “Great Tribulation” and *heavenly signs*] **will by no means pass away till all these things are fulfilled**” (vv. 32-34).

Carefully note that when Christ said, “**this generation**,” He did *not* mean that generation to whom He then spoke, *circa* 31 A.D. Instead, He referred to a future “generation” who would “**see all these things**”—which He mentioned in His Olivet Prophecies of Matthew 24—that would come to pass at the very end of this age!

“The Great Disappointment”

Since Christ’s warnings, mentioned above, many have mistakenly predicted that His *Second Coming* was *at hand*. In America, during the 1700s and 1800s, many *fiery ministers* went out preaching the *imminent return* of Jesus Christ. Among the prominent leaders of this Great Awakening were: Jonathan Edwards, T. J. Frelinghuysen, Gilbert Tennent, and George Whitefield. After hearing impassioned sermons declaring Christ’s imminent Coming, countless thousands joined various churches, thinking Jesus might come *at any moment*. After learning they had been *misled*, many became *disillusioned*, *skeptical* and *wary* of anyone who was saying Christ’s Coming was imminent.

One widely publicized example of *setting dates* for Christ’s *return* occurred among the “Adventists” in 1844. At that time, **William Miller** predicted Christ’s Coming would occur in the spring of 1844. When He didn’t come as predicted, many of Miller’s followers were *embarrassed*, *disillusioned*, and some became *embittered*. However, those who still believed in the **Second Advent** of Christ came up with the idea that they had *not* been mistaken in regard to the “year” of Christ’s Return, but came to believe that, according to the Old and New Testament patterns and prophecies regarding *atonement* (Daniel 8 & 9; Rev. 14; Lev. 16), Christ would come to this earth to *cleanse it* (the “sanctuary” spoken of in Daniel 8). They said Christ, our High Priest, was prophesied to come to His *sanctuary* (this *earth*) to *cleanse it* in the *spring* of 1844.

When Christ failed to come as predicted, the “Millerites” re-examined their prophetic dates, and concluded that, instead of Christ *coming* in the spring, He would *return* on the *Day of Atonement*, in the *autumn* of 1844, which fell on *October 22nd*.

But when Christ did *not* come on October 22nd, according to Miller’s revised prediction, there was even greater *confusion*, *disillusionment* and *consternation* among the Millerites. What were these “Adventists” to do? After studying the Bible prophecies again, they concluded that they had made a *mistake* in their initial “understanding” of what was meant by “**the sanctuary**.” They had previously concluded that it meant the “**earth**,” which they thought Christ would come to cleanse in 1844. But when He didn’t come that year, a re-examination of the prophecies convinced them that the “year” of 1844 was the proper date, but they now concluded that the “**sanctuary**” to be cleansed

was not the “**earth**” but was the “**heavenly sanctuary.**”

The church leaders could now explain everything to the doubters, scoffers, and to their *disappointed* followers. First, they had to find some other “interpretation” to explain what had really happened in the *fall of 1844*—since Jesus Christ had *not* come that autumn, as they had expected. The leaders of the “Advent” movement then decided that what really happened in the autumn of 1844 was that Jesus Christ had gone into the “heavenly sanctuary” (the *Holy of Holies*) in the fall of 1844, so He could first **cleanse it**, before He began poring over the *heavenly books* in what they termed an “**investigative judgment,**” which began on that very day, October 22nd, 1844. They concluded that was the day Christ went into the “Holy of Holies” in Heaven to begin *examining* the “heavenly books” to see who would be either saved or lost.

According to this interpretation of Scripture, Christ will continue to examine the heavenly books to see whose sins will eventually be blotted out. It is only after He has completed that task, that He will return to this earth to immortalize both the “dead saints” and the “living saints,” while destroying all of the un-repentant wicked of the earth (leaving it totally desolated), before returning to Heaven with His triumphal band of glorified saints, where they will remain for the next 1000 years!

Meaning of “Second Advent”

From 1844 until the present, there have been many other “prophecy failures” concerning *when* Jesus Christ would **return**. During WW II, I well remember being told that many Jehovah Witnesses were teaching that Christ’s Second Coming had occurred during the World War I (1914-1918). Some of my relatives became staunch Jehovah Witnesses, and were very sure that Christ’s *Second Advent* had already occurred.

The following brief account of the 1844 “**Great Disappointment**” of those misled *Millerite Adventists*, who enthusiastically embraced Miller’s teachings concerning Christ’s supposed “Second Advent” is clearly explained in the following comments found in *The World Book Encyclopedia*:

“**ADVENT....** The term *advent* comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means *a coming*.... Church liturgy speaks of His [Christ’s] birth in Bethlehem as the **FIRST ADVENT**, and His **RETURN** in glory on the Day of Judgment as the **SECOND ADVENT**.

“**ADVENTISTS** are members of religious groups that stress the doctrine of the *Second Coming*. That is, they believe that Jesus Christ may **RETURN** to the earth *at any moment*. Such questions as *when, where, and how* Jesus would **RETURN** have excited the curiosity of Christians. Interest was particularly high during the early 1800’s. **William Miller**, a Baptist minister...was one of many students of the Bible who tried to find the answers. For years, Miller studied the prophecies recorded in the O.T. *Book of Daniel* and in the N.T. *Book of Revelation*. After many calculations, he announced in 1831 that the **Second Advent** would occur in **1843** or **1844**. Thousands [some say over 50,000] of people believed him, and many *sold their possessions*. His followers waited for the **COMING** of Christ and the *end of the world*.

“**When the world did not end in 1844**, many of Miller’s followers were bitterly *disappointed*. They abandoned his Adventist movement to form new ones. The Largest one—the **Seventh-day Adventist Church**—emerged about the time of the Civil War. This group continued to stress the doctrine of the *Second Coming*. But it avoided Miller’s inclination to predict the *specific time* [of Christ’s *Second Coming*]” (*The World Book Encyclopedia*, 1972 ed., vol. 1).

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* Explains...

The New Encyclopedia Britannica gives this interesting detailed account of the “Adventist” movement that excited much religious fervor in America during the early and mid-part of the 1800s. This encyclopedia makes the following comments:

“**ADVENTIST**, [a] member of any group of *Protestant Christian churches* arising in the U.S. in the 19th century and rooted in Hebrew and Christian *prophetism, messianism, and millennial expectations* recorded in the Bible. **Adventists** believe that at Christ’s *Second Coming*, He will separate the saints from the wicked and inaugurate His millennial (1,000-year) Kingdom.

“**History.** It was in an atmosphere of millennialist revival in the U.S. that **William Miller** (1782-1849), a founder of the **Adventists**, began to preach. Miller... began to study the books of Daniel and Revelation and to preach as a **Baptist [minister]**, the faith of his father. *He concluded that Christ would come sometime between March 21, 1843, and March 21, 1844*, and was encouraged in His views by a number of clergymen and numerous followers. Miller...stressed the **COMING** of Christ in conjunction with a fiery conflagration, which distressed his hearers. **Christ however, did NOT RETURN on the first appointed date**, so Miller and His followers set a *second date, Oct. 22, 1844*. The quiet passing of this day led to what is called the ‘**Great Disappointment**’ among **Adventists....**

“Among those who persisted after the **failure of Miller’s [second] prophecy** were Joseph Bates...James White...and His wife *Ellen Harmon White....* **These Adventists believed that Miller had set the right date, but that they had interpreted what had happened incorrectly.** Reading Daniel, chapters 8 and 9, they concluded that God had begun the ‘*cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary*’—i.e. an **INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT** that would be followed by the pronouncing and then the execution of the sentence of judgment. **What actually began in 1844**, then, in their view, **was an examination of all of the names in the Book of Life.** Only after this was completed would Christ appear and begin *His millennial reign*. Though *they did not set a new date [for Christ’s Second Coming]*, they insisted that **Christ’s advent was imminent.** They also believed that *observance of the seventh day, Saturday, rather than Sunday, would help bring about the Second Coming.* These Millerites founded an official denomination, the **Seventh-day Adventists, in 1863.**

“Other Adventist bodies emerged in the 19th century as a direct or indirect result of the prophecy of *William Miller*. These include the *Evangelical Adventists* (1849), *Life and Advent Union* (1862), **Church of God** (Seventh Day, 1866), **Church of God General Conference** (Abrahamic Faith, 1888), and the *Advent Christian Church*. These Advent Christians do not accept the teachings of Mrs. White as in any way prophetic” (*The New Ency. Brit.*, 15th ed., vol. 1). During the last 160 years since the “Great Disappointment” of 1844, many others have *set dates* regarding the prophesied time of Christ’s *Second Coming*.

Within the last few years, one “Church of God” leader reportedly informed his followers that they should sell their property and put more money into *God’s work*, because the end of this age is near: the “Great Tribulation,” the “heavenly signs,” and Christ’s *Second Coming*. Another “Church of God” leader has recently informed his Church of specific “dates” in regard to the conjectured fulfillment of certain end-time prophecies: the **end of the “6,000-year” period** of man’s rule, Christ’s *Second Coming* and the beginning of the *Millennium!*

WCG End-time Predictions

Brethren, have we learned *nothing* from the “prophetic speculations” made by some of the prominent leaders in the WCG just a few decades ago? Will we make the same mistakes as those made by the *Millerite Adventists* in 1844?

Some people are quick to point to a few of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong’s WW II predictions which did not come to pass totally as he had predicted. Clearly, however, in later years of his ministry, **Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong never definitely pinpointed the exact dates for the fulfillment of any important prophesied end-time events such as the Great Tribulation, Christ’s Second Coming, or the precise end of the “6,000 years” of mankind’s misrule!**

It is true, however, that he sometimes speculated that the “end” might be *near*, and it is clear that he hoped it would come quickly, so that Jesus might establish His Kingdom soon, and put an end to the *suffering, poverty* and hellish actions of evil men.

Unfortunately, a few leading WCG ministers *did* indulge in *prophetic speculations*, by setting certain *specific dates* (as can be seen in WCG literature of the 1950s-1980s), nearly all of which later proved to have been in error. Are some ministers and brethren of the “Churches of God” slipping into the same *doctrinal quick sands*, into which others have fallen, by **setting new dates** for specific events prophesied in the Bible? Will not such **prophetic speculations** later be proven to be in error?

Sadly, when some former WCG brethren learned that certain end-time prophecies did *not* occur on the dates set by some ministers, many thousands became *disappointed* and *disillusioned*. Some began to ask, “If the ministers were *wrong* in their faulty date-setting predictions, then could they also be *wrong* in *vital doctrinal matters*?” It became quite clear that the **prophetic speculations** of some of the leading ministers in the WCG during the last half of the 20th century simply did *not* “pan out” as predicted.

However, the brethren with more biblical understanding learned an important lesson from these failed predictions: **it is dangerous to go out on a limb of prophetic speculation by setting precise dates for the fulfillment of major end-time prophecies!** As a result of these egregious “prophetic speculation failures,” some who had been supporters of the WCG, including quite a number of *baptized members*, turned away after having *their faith seriously shaken* because of the *failed predictions*. Some began to joke about “prediction addiction.”

If Christ Didn’t Know...How Can You?

If our Lord and Master said He did not know when He would *return to earth* to set up His Kingdom, then, dare any of us, in the “Churches of God” think we can know and teach the precise *date of His Second Coming*? As we have already seen, Jesus Christ gave many important predictions in His Olivet Prophecy (Matt. 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21). Matthew 24 mentions *Christ’s Coming* ten times in the following **verses**: 3, 27, 30, 37, 39, 42, 44, 46, 48 and 50.

Let us carefully examine Christ’s words regarding His *Second Coming*: **“But of that day and hour no one [whether men or angels] knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only”** (Matt. 24:36). Mark’s account of Christ’s words adds the words “nor the Son” as follows: “But of that day and hour *no one* knows, neither the

angels in heaven, **nor the Son**, but *only the Father*” (Mark 13:32)!

Again, notice Christ’s words to His apostles, after His resurrection: “And He said to them, ‘It is *not* for you to know the *TIMES* or *SEASONS* which the Father has put in His own authority [“power” KJV]’” (Acts 1:7)! If Christ told His own twelve apostles that it was *not* for them to know when Jesus Christ would come back to this earth to “**restore the KINGDOM TO ISRAEL**” (v. 6), and if, as we have seen, even *the Son* did not know the time of His *Second Coming*—when the Father would send Him back to this planet—then who are we mortals to “set a date” and say that specific date would be the time when Christ would “come again”?

If we would only believe the words of Jesus Christ, we would *know* that no *man* or *angel* will know the time of Christ’s *Second Coming*. The Father has reserved that knowledge unto Himself!

Why Has God Not Told us...?

Why has the Father not wanted mankind to know the precise timing of the end of the 6000 years, which He has allotted to mankind under Satan’s sway, so that men will flounder in his own ways, governments, religions, social systems, etc.? Why has He not revealed to mankind when His Son Jesus Christ will *return* to earth to establish the Kingdom of God? God’s Word does not tell us precisely *why* He has not revealed these things to us. God realizes the weaknesses of human nature—that if humans believe something is “way off in the future,” they tend to become *careless* and let down in their *Bible study*, become lax in their *prayers*, and generally tend to become “lukewarm”!

Does Bible chronology give us the key to the date of Christ’s *return*? There are too many unanswered *questions*—too many *imponderable unknowns* involved in **biblical chronology**—for *anyone* ever to be able to know for sure exactly *when* man’s 6,000 years of misrule will end. The Father has *concealed* the precise time when He will send Jesus Christ back to this earth. The Apostle Peter says: “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that **He [the Father] may send Jesus Christ...**” back to this earth to establish His long-awaited Kingdom (Acts 3:19-20).

“Behold, I Come Quickly!”

Some skeptics point to Christ’s statement that He would “quickly” return promising—nearly 1900 years ago, to return immediately—yet He has not returned! Some even ask, “Was Jesus *mistaken* in His statements in the Book of Revelation?”

But, is there something which the Bible commentators and translators have misunderstood and mistranslated? Jesus inspired the Apostle John to write the Book of Revelation around A.D. 98. Notice His words to the faithful members of the Church of God in the city of Philadelphia: “Because you have kept my command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial.... **Behold, I come QUICKLY!** Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown” (Rev. 3:11-12). That promise was made over 1900 years ago—yet Jesus Christ has not “come again” to this earth in order to establish His Kingdom. Did Jesus fail to keep His promise? Or, do Bible scholars fail to understand what Christ really *said* and *meant*?

The N.T. was written in Greek, and the translators generally translate the Greek

words *en tachei* (found in Rev. 3:11) by the English word “**quickly**.” But is this the true meaning of this Greek word, as used by John in recording Christ’s statement? No, it isn’t! What does *en tachei* mean? “EN TACHEI...lit., **in**, or **with**, **SWIFTNESS**, with **SPEED**...Rev. 1:1; 22:6. In the last two places, ‘with speed’ is probably the meaning” (*An Expository Dictionary of N. T. Words*, 1970 ed., by W. E. Vine).

English language translators of the Bible render these words (*en tachei*) by the English word “quickly,” but that is *not* the correct translation, as the biblical **context** clearly reveals. What Christ said, and meant, was that at the time when His prophesied events were to be fulfilled, they would happen “**suddenly**”—with *swiftness* or *speed*! It does not refer to the *nearness* of the prophesied event, but to the *manner* in which its fulfillment would come at the time when the prophecy would (future) comes to pass. In fact, a related Greek word, *tacheos*, is rendered “suddenly” by the Authorized Version: “Lay hands *suddenly* on no man” (1 Tim. 5:22).

What Christ really meant in His statements in Revelation was *not* that He would come QUICKLY (in the sense of being in the *immediate future*), but when His return came, it would come **SUDDENLY**, *unexpectedly*, by *surprise*! Christ Himself warns His people: “Watch therefore, for you do not know when the MASTER of the house is COMING—in the evening, at *midnight*, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—lest coming **SUDDENLY**, He find you sleeping” (Mark 13:35-36). Christ also says, “Behold, I come **as a THIEF** [*suddenly and unexpectedly*]” (Rev. 16:15)! (see Rev. 3:3; 1 Thess. 5:2, 2 Pet. 3:10).

All true, Spirit-led Christians long for Christ’s *Second Coming*, and hope that it will be soon, so that the innumerable evils of this Devil-inspired world will be done away, as Satan is bound and banished, rendered powerless to mislead the nations for 1000 years (Rev. 20:1-3).

The Father wants us to realize that even though none of us knows *when* the 6,000-year period will end—and even though no one knows *when* Jesus Christ’s *Second Coming* will occur, nonetheless, we should *always be “ready”* to meet our Maker (Matt. 25:10; 19:7), for none of us knows what *day*, or hour we will *breathe our last*—and then the very *next instant* of our consciousness, we will stand before Jesus Christ to be judged (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10). Jesus says, “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son” (John 5:22)!

Knowing these things, let all of us, the children of God, strive to live godly lives, which are well-pleasing to Him, so that when we meet our Creator, Jesus Christ, we shall have godly “confidence” instead of carnal “shame.”

Christ will keep His promise to “COME AGAIN”! He encourages us in His Word saying, “And now, little children, **abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His [SECOND] COMING**” (1 John 3:28)! Let us all sincerely pray for Christ’s *soon coming*: “Even so, **come, Lord Jesus**” (Rev. 22:20).

A PERSONAL NOTE. Here is a brief note regarding my varied experiences in the Work of God during the past 55 years. Most of you will have become familiar with my articles in various Church publications (the *Good News*, *Plain Truth*, *Tomorrow’s World*, etc), and more recently in articles which were published in other “Church of God” publications. I have served for nearly 50 years as a *writer* and *editor*.

My appointment to serve on the WCG Doctrinal Teams. Mr. H.W. Armstrong

appointed me to serve *under him* over the Headquarters Doctrinal Team in 1974, knowing that I would not introduce “liberal” doctrines into God’s Church. After Mr. Armstrong’s decease, the Pastor General who succeeded Mr. him appointed me to be over the Doctrinal Team in Pasadena; but shortly afterward, my wife and I were sent to the South Pacific to head the Work of God in New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga, etc. Since I would not endorse the *strange doctrines* then being seriously considered at our Pasadena Headquarters, my continued presence would have been a big obstacle in the eyes of those who planned to make sweeping doctrinal changes in the WCG.

My ordination as an Evangelist in the WCG. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong ordained me as an Evangelist—over 51 years ago. During those 51 eventful years I served as the pastor of 14 churches in the U.S., Britain and New Zealand, and in 1954-1955, I founded the Chicago Church of God, the first WCG Church east of the Mississippi River. I also served as Director of the Work of God in Britain (1958-1973).

Appointed Deputy Chancellor of Ambassador Colleges in England, and Pasadena, CA. In 1960, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong appointed me Deputy Chancellor of Ambassador College, near London. Later, in 1978, Mr. Armstrong asked me to serve as Deputy Chancellor of Ambassador College in Pasadena, California—in order to help him put Ambassador College *back on track*. I continued serving God’s Work in that position for nearly ten years—until 2 years after Mr. Armstrong’s death in 1986. I was gratified to hear him say, before his decease, that **he was very pleased to see Ambassador College *back on track***. I always counted it a great honor and a fantastic privilege to work with God’s end-time Apostle for over 36 years, from the time I entered Ambassador College in 1948, until his death in 1986—approximately 36 years.

I was privileged to conduct many baptismal tours while serving in the Worldwide Church of God. In the summer of 1949, Mr. Armstrong sent Raymond Cole and me on the first student-led, nation-wide baptismal tour, during which time we baptized about 125 brethren. In the following years, I conducted *seven* more baptismal tours in the U.S. and Canada before being sent to London, England in 1958 to take charge of God’s Work in Britain, where I continued to serve the Work of Jesus Christ during the next 15 years. After arriving in London, England, I conducted several baptismal tours in the British Isles, and was later sent to Southern Africa with another minister to baptize a number of people in Northern and Southern Rhodesia, and in South Africa.

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