

17: When Is Jesus Coming Back?

The New Testament leaves us in no doubt that one day Jesus will return to the earth. Jesus Himself referred to His return often.

"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."

Matthew 24:30

"If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself."

John 14:3

The angels who were present when He ascended to heaven reminded His disciples of it.

"This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

Acts 1:11

And it is spoken about repeatedly in the epistles.

"To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time."

Hebrews 9:28

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God."

1 Thessalonians 4:16

Some Things Must Happen First

We know that there are some things that must happen before Jesus returns.

The Gospel Must Be Preached

The good news of His kingdom must be preached to all the nations.

"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."

Matthew 24:14

All Israel Must Be Saved

The full number of Israel must be converted.

"And so all Israel will be saved,"

Romans 11:26

Romans 11:26 refers to a conversion of Israel and seems to connect it with the end of time. Some think it means that Israel, the nation, will finally turn to the Lord. Others believe that verse 26 refers to the full number of the elect; the true Israel.

Apostasy and Tribulation

Toward the end of time many who have professed faith will fall away and rampant wickedness will result in terrible suffering.

“Many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.”

Matthew 24:10 – 12

That Day will not come unless the falling away comes first.”

2 Thessalonians 2:4

The Coming Of Antichrist

The spirit of Antichrist was already in evidence in the apostolic age and many antichrists had made their appearance.

“This is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.”

1 John 4:3

“You have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.”

1 John 2:18

But at the end of the age a single individual will stand out as the incarnation of all wickedness. He is called, among other things, ‘the man of sin’ and ‘the son of perdition.

“That Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”

2 Thessalonians 2:3 – 4

Question: People like to speculate about who the Antichrist might be or where he might come from. What do you think?

Signs and Wonders

The Bible also refers to striking signs as marking the beginning of the end. There will be wars, famines, and earthquakes as well as fearful signs in the heavens.

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”

Matthew 24:29

Then The End Will Come

Immediately after these signs the Son of Man will be seen coming on the clouds of heaven. Nevertheless when it happens it will still take people by surprise.

“Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him.”

Revelation 1:7

“The day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.”

1 Thessalonians 5:2

From God’s point of view the Second Coming is always near; but no one knows when it will be, not even the angels or Jesus Himself.

“Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!”

James 5:9

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.”

Matthew 24:36

The Millennium

Some believe the Second Coming will either be preceded or followed by a millennium.

Post-millennialism

Post-millennialism teaches that the millennium will be toward the end of the age in which we are now living, and that at the end of it Jesus Christ will appear. Their expectation is that the gospel will become much more effective and will usher in a period of righteousness, peace and blessing. However, that idea does not fit with what we know about the great apostasy.

Pre-millennialism

According to pre-millennialism Jesus will return, re-establish the kingdom of David, and reign at Jerusalem for a thousand years. The idea is based on a literal reading of Revelation 20:1 – 6 but the New Testament says nothing about an earthly, temporal Kingdom. It teaches us that the Kingdom of Christ is a spiritual and universal kingdom that already exists.

"My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."

John 18:36

"Nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."

Luke 17:21

"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son."

Colossians 1:13

Moreover, Revelation 20:1 – 6 represents a scene in heaven and makes no mention either of the Jews or of a national kingdom in Palestine where Jesus will rule.

Amillennialism

Amillennialists believe that Revelation 20:1 – 6 is a figurative representation of the present age in which the church is reigning with Christ on the earth.

Question: What practical difference will each of these views make in the lives of those who hold them?

Key Words

Millennium Literally one thousand years. In the Bible this word, which is used to refer to the period of Christ's reign on earth is only found in Revelation 20:2 – 7.

Apostasy Rejection of essential biblical truth and God's power, often while keeping up a pretence of faith.

Memory Verses

- ☺ John 14:3
- ☺ Matthew 24:10 – 12
- ☺ Matthew 24:36