

ARE WE THERE YET?

I. Various Scriptures

A. Listen to this quote: "Our Earth is degenerate in these later days; there are signs that the world is speedily coming to an end; bribery and corruption are common; children no longer obey their parents; every man wants to write a book and the end of the world is evidently approaching." **Sound familiar? It was discovered on Assyrian clay tablet from 2800 B.C.**

B. Anyone who has gone on a trip with children or grandchildren has heard the question asked, "Are we there yet?" Whether you're driving to Columbus or to your vacation destination, that question can become increasingly annoying the more it's asked. Since the time Jesus ascended, Christians have been asking about His return, "Are we there yet?" The sad thing is that impatience often gives way to vain speculations. Some wild & crazy people have offered predictions, much to their dismay. But some stalwart men of faith have also done the same. (Here's a few examples...)

* The Mayans predicted December 21, 2012. When that day drew close, Jay Leno quipped: "Are you buying that? When's the last time you even ran into a Mayan?"

* Harold Camping predicted May 21, 2011, then Oct. 21, 2011. There were earlier predictions before those. He passed away in 2013. He now waits more patiently...

* Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) predicted 666 years after the rise of Islam i.e. 1284...

* The oft quoted and oft errant, Nostradamus (1503-1566) predicted 1999...

* Christopher Columbus calculated 1656, then recalculated 1658...

* Isaac Newton, Edgar Cayce, Sun Myung Moon, Jerry Falwell, Lester Sumrall, Tim LaHaye all predicted cataclysms in the year 2000... (*Anyone remember Y2K?*)

* The Shakers said 1792 and then later 1794... (They also quit believing in sex.)

* in 1914 Jehovah's Witnesses predicted 1994; before that they predicted 1941...

* The Seventh Day Adventists led by William Miller (Millerites) predicted 1843, then 1844, then 1874... (*"And it's one, two, three strikes you're out at the old ballgame!"*)

* Hal Lindsey, author of *The Late Great Planet Earth*, and renowned NASA Engineer and Bible scholar, Edgar Whisenant, both predicted 1988...

* Martin Luther, granddaddy of the Reformation, said no later than 1600...

* John Wesley proposed 1836 and did so in writing...

* Puritan Minister, Cotton Mather, predicted 1697, then 1716, then 1736...

* Jonathan Edwards predicted Jesus' 1000 year reign would begin in 2000...

* Jack Van Impe, whose TV ministry linked biblical prophesy with present day events for decades, died this past January 18th. He was 88. When Jesus returns with the Church Triumphant, Van Impe will happily be among our Lord's enterouge...

C. So when? It will all happen when God the Father says 'Now's the time!' Jesus' words in Mark 13:32 (ESV) still hold true: 32 "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (c/f Matthew 24:36) But be assured, the second advent will take place. Two weeks ago I read 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 (ESV) 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words. (Old parting phrase from our youth: "Here, there, or in the air!")

D. So is the time near? The key word we must drill down on is the word, "Near." The return of the Lord has been "Near" for 2000 years. You say that's absurd. I say that's Biblical! This epoch began when Jesus ascended. You say to your kids, "Go to sleep, Christmas will be here in the morning." Your kids can't close their eyes, they think morning will never arrive. You say, "It'll only take 11 hours to drive to Myrtle Beach." Your child says, "That's like forever!" 2 Peter 3:8-9 (ESV) is helpful: 8 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. Peter got that from Moses who penned a prayer with similar words, kept for us in Psalms 90:4 (NLT): 4 For You, (God) a thousand years are as a passing day, as brief as a few night hours.

E. Listen to the following NT authors talk about the "time being near." Were they erring with their words or did they write the word "near" as it relates to God's notion of "near" i.e. "near" as it relates to God's timetable?

1) Peter's up first: 1 Peter 4:7-11 (NIV) 7 The end of all things is near. (Written in the early 60s AD...)

2) The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 13:11-12 (ESV) 11 Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. 12 The night is far gone; the Day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. (Too may beatings or spot on?!)

3) Unknown author: Hebrews 10:24-25 (ESV) 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

4) Jesus' brother: James 5:7-9 (NIV) 7 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. 9 Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! (Was James deceived by his Elder Brother?!)

5) The Apostle John quoting Jesus: Revelation 22:12 (NIV) *12 Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with Me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. (Was John's Revelation genuine or was he on some messed up acid trip?!)*

6) Did the Holy Spirit inspire Peter, Paul, the author of Hebrews, James, & John to inscribe these end time errors? Then God's Word isn't inerrant and infallible!

E. Because of Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension, He can return whenever He wants and therefore every generation of believers can look lovingly and expectantly for His return: for the promised resurrection and for the transformation of all things into the new heaven and new earth.

F. Luke 21:34-36 (ESV) **Jesus says: *34 But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that Day come upon you suddenly like a trap. 35 For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36 But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.***

G. The late Francis Schaeffer asked the question, "*How shall we then live?*" So how do we carry on between the two advents of Christ? J.C. Ryle wisely said: "Live as if you thought that Christ might come at any time. Do everything, as if you did it for the last time. Say everything, as if you said it for the last time. Read every chapter in the Bible, as if you did not know whether you would be allowed to read it again." (B.I.B.L.E. = Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth...**)**

H. Of course it should be noted that the *Great Commandment* and *Great Commission* will be in effect right up to the sound of the last trumpet. And while the time for proclaiming the Gospel actually does have an expiration date, our love for God and our love for one another come with a never ending shelf life.

I. Our attitude in the interim should be one of both expectancy and expediency. Eternal destinies are at stake for those we know and love. Therefore we pray without ceasing for the lost that they be seized by Christ. And we work to those ends as witnesses prepared to testify, as heralds ready to proclaim, as watchmen sounding warnings, as swift messengers with News of hope and rescue.

J. In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis writes about that great and terrible Day of Christ's return. We'll close today with Lewis: "Why is God landing in this enemy-occupied world in disguise and starting a sort of secret society to undermine the devil? Why is He not landing in force, invading it? Is it that He is not strong enough? Well, Christians think He is going to land in force; we do not know when. But we can guess why He is delaying. He wants to give us the chance of joining His side freely. I do not suppose you and I would have thought much of a Frenchman who waited till the Allies were marching into Germany and then announced he was on our side. God will invade. But I wonder whether people who ask God to interfere openly and directly in our world quite realize what it will be like when He does. When that happens, it is the end of the world. When the author walks on to the stage the play is over. God is going to invade, all right: but what is the good of saying you are on His side then, when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something else--something it never entered your head to conceive--comes crashing in; something so beautiful to some of us and so

terrible to others that none of us will have any choice left? For this time it will be God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side. There is no use saying you choose to lie down when it has become impossible to stand up. That will not be the time for choosing: it will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen, whether we realized it before or not. Now, today, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side. God is holding back to give us that chance. It will not last forever. We must take it or leave it.”

*** Close with Prayer...**

(PS- Be sure to check out all the Bonus Stuff: Scriptures, Quotes, Links, etc...)

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Mark 13:32 (ESV)

32 “But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 (ESV)

16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. **17** Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. **18** Therefore encourage one another with these words.

2 Peter 3:8-9 (ESV)

8 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. **9** The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Psalms 90:4 (NLT)

For you, a thousand years are as a passing day, as brief as a few night hours.

1 Peter 4:7-11 (NIV)

7 The end of all things is near.

Romans 13:11-12 (ESV)

11 Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. **12** The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Hebrews 10:24-25 (ESV)

24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, **25** not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

James 5:7-9 (NIV)

7 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. **8** You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. **9** Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

Revelation 22:12 (NIV)

12 Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with Me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

Luke 21:34-36 (ESV)

34 But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that Day come upon you suddenly like a trap. **35** For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. **36** But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.

Quote by J. C. Ryle

"Live as if you thought that Christ might come at any time. Do everything, as if you did it for the last time. Say everything, as if you said it for the last time. Read every chapter in the Bible, as if you did not know whether you would be allowed to read it again."

C. S. Lewis on The End

Excerpted from *Mere Christianity*

"Why is God landing in this enemy-occupied world in disguise and starting a sort of secret society to undermine the devil? Why is He not landing in force, invading it? Is it that He is not strong enough? Well, Christians think He is going to land in force; we do not know when. But we can guess why He is delaying. He wants to give us the chance of joining His side freely. I do not suppose you and I would have thought much of a Frenchman who waited till the Allies were marching into Germany and then announced he was on our side. God will invade. But I wonder whether people who ask God to interfere openly and directly in our world quite realize what it will be like when He does. When that happens, it is the end of the world. When the author walks on to the stage the play is over. God is going to invade, all right: but what is the good of saying you are on His side then, when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something else--something it never entered your head to conceive--comes crashing in; something so beautiful to some of us and so terrible to others that none of us will have any choice left? For this time it will be God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side. There is no use saying you choose

to lie down when it has become impossible to stand up. That will not be the time for choosing: it will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen, whether we realized it before or not. Now, today, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side. God is holding back to give us that chance. It will not last forever. We must take it or leave it.”

- C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, pp. 65–66.

Video Clips & Important Articles

3 Views of the Millennium - Doug Eaton (Fight of Faith Blog)

<https://fightoffaithblog.com/2020/01/27/3-theological-views-of-the-millennium/>

Perseverance - 2 Minute Wonders (The John 10:10 Project)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RN3qWFuMng>

When You Lose People to Bigger Churches - Peter Bogert

<https://foryoungerpastors.com/2020/01/31/when-you-lose-people-to-bigger-churches/>

The Importance of what We Do in Secret - Derek Thomas - Ligonier Ministries

<https://www.ligonier.org/blog/importance-what-we-do-secret/>

Bonus Stuff

Matthew 24:36-44 (ESV)

36 “But concerning that Day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. **37** For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. **38** For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, **39** and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. **40** Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. **41** Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. **42** Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. **43** But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. **44** Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

2 Peter 3:1-18 (ESV)

1 This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, **2** that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, **3** knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. **4** They will say, “Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” **5** For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the

heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, **6** and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. **7** But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. **8** But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. **9** The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. **10** But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. **11** Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, **12** waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! **13** But according to His promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. **14** Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by Him without spot or blemish, and at peace. **15** And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, **16** as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. **17** You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. **18** But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 (ESV)

1 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. **2** For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. **3** While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. **4** But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. **5** For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. **6** So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. **7** For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. **8** But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. **9** For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, **10** who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with Him. **11** Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

Revelation 21:1-8 (NIV)

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. **2** I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. **3** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and

God Himself will be with them and be their God. **4** He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” **5** He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then He said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” **6** He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. **7** He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be My son. **8** But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

Quote from Augustine

"Advent signifies the act of approaching, or of coming. The members of Christ's mystic body, the church, however they may differ in external and nonessential points, yet are they all firmly united in this faith: that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and, consequently, very God, of very God; that He came to visit us, in great humility; that He will come again, in the last day, to judge both the quick and the dead; and that life immortal is obtained for us, and shall be enjoyed by us, through Him only."

Quote from Augustine

"He who loves the coming of the Lord is not he who affirms it is far off, nor is it he who says it is near. It is he who, whether it be far or near, awaits it with sincere faith, steadfast hope and fervent love."

Quote by Martin Luther

"I hope that the day is near at hand when the advent of the great God will appear, for all things everywhere are boiling, burning, moving, falling, sinking, groaning."

Quote by Matthew Henry

"Christ will come when He pleases, to show His sovereignty, and will not let us know when, to teach us our duty."

Quote by C.S. Lewis

"Precisely because we cannot predict the moment, we must be ready at all moments."

Quote by A.W. Tozer

"If man had his way, the plan of redemption would be an endless and bloody conflict. In reality, salvation was bought not by Jesus' fist, but by His nail-pierced hands; not by muscle but by love; not by vengeance but by forgiveness; not by force but by sacrifice. Jesus Christ our Lord surrendered in order that He might win; He destroyed His enemies by dying for them and conquered death by allowing death to conquer Him."

- A.W. Tozer, *Preparing for Jesus' Return: Daily Live the Blessed Hope*.

Quote by Vance Havner

"Some of the saints are SINGING about the Second Coming, but it is one thing just to sing the national anthem during the war and quite another to go into battle. The best

evidence that the Lord's return has really gotten hold of us is when we occupy till He come, do business for God, buy up the opportunities, because the days are evil."

Quote by Vance Havner

"The Christian who prepares for the coming of the Lord may be scorned by all who say, "Peace and safety!" He will be eyed as a curiosity by those who, like people of Noah's day, know not until the flood comes. But when God splits the skies and the stars fall and men cry for the rocks and mountains, that will be his day!"

Quote by G. Campbell Morgan

"To me the second coming is the perpetual light on the path which makes the present bearable. I never lay my head on the pillow without thinking that perhaps before the morning breaks, the final morning may have dawned. I never begin my work without thinking that He may interrupt my work and begin His own. This is now His word to all believing souls, 'Till I come.' We are not looking for death, we are looking for Him."

Quote by Jonathan Edwards

"Resolved, never to do anything which I should be afraid to do if I expected it would not be above an hour before I should hear the last trump."

Quote by D.L. Moody

"I never preach a sermon without thinking that possibly the Lord may come before I preach another."

The Fire

A Parable by Søren Kierkegaard

The Danish philosopher, Kierkegaard, tells a parable of a theater where a variety show is proceeding. Each show is more fantastic than the last, and is applauded by the audience. Suddenly the manager comes forward. He apologizes for the interruption, but the theater is on fire, and he begs his patrons to leave in an orderly fashion. The audience thinks this is the most amusing turn of the evening, and cheer thunderously. The manager again implores them to leave the burning building, and he is again applauded vigorously. At last he can do no more. The fire raced through the whole building and the fun-loving audience with it. *"And so,"* concluded Kierkegaard, *"will our age, I sometimes think, go down in fiery destruction to the applause of a crowded house of cheering spectators."*

- *Resource*, July/August, 1990, Found at Bible.org.