

Christ's Second Coming: When? How?

- I. Jesus Christ has promised to come again. **MAT 24:30; ACT 1:11; HEB 9:28.**
- A. Various things such as resurrection, judgment, rewards, etc. are associated with His coming.
 - B. A correct understanding of the Second Coming should settle the heart. **JOH 14:1-3; 1TH 1:9-10.**
 - C. A denial of the Second Coming is an open door to hedonism. **1CO 15:32; 2PE 3:3-6.**
 - D. A corruption of the Second Coming can unsettle the heart (**2TH 2:1-2**) and misdirect thought and action.
 - 1. Example: The *time* of Christ's coming is not known (**MAR 13:32-37; 1TH 5:1-2**). Over the years some have presumed to know the time of Christ's coming, leading others astray and into disillusionment.
 - 2. Example: The *nature* of Christ's coming includes bodily resurrection (**1TH 4:14-18**). Denial of this can overthrow faith. **2TI 2:18.**
 - 3. Example: The *purpose* of Christ's coming is to *end* things on earth (**2PE 3:10; 1CO 15:23-24**). The notion that His coming is the *beginning* of another season on earth has been the basis for misdirected evangelical and political thought.
 - E. The keys to proper interpretation of all things pertaining to Christ's Second Coming are:
 - 1. the plain statements of Scripture by their words and grammar rule over the ambiguous or difficult statements of Scripture. Reference texts are not proof texts. **2PE 1:20.**
 - 2. the words of Christ and the apostles determine the proper interpretation of all prophetic utterances, including anything predicted by the O.T. **2PE 1:19; 1JO 4:6.**
- II. Among professing Christians, there are various schools of thought relative to the Second Coming and associated events. Here is a summary of some:
- A. Amillennialism (sometimes called *interadventual* millennialism, *present* millennialism or *realized* millennialism) affirms that Christ co-reigns with His saints in the church throughout the entire period between the First and Second Comings. His Second Coming will be personal for perfecting the salvation of His elect, for the destruction of the present heavens and earth, for universal judgement, and the creation of a new heavens and earth.
 - B. Preterism affirms that the Second Coming occurred spiritually/figuratively in 70 A.D. All prophecy about Christ's coming and future resurrection has been fulfilled. We have been in the new heavens and earth since then.
 - C. Postmillennialism affirms a personal return of Christ after a millennium of gospel domination of this world that produces maximum human peace and potential, a *golden age*. At the end of this millennium, Satan will be loosed to stir up trouble and Christ then returns in judgement. The resurrection occurs and the new heavens and earth created.
 - D. Historic Premillennialism affirms a present spiritual kingdom of Christ which ends in great apostasy and tribulation. Christ then personally returns to consummate His kingdom visibly, resurrect the righteous and establish a calendrical millennium: a *golden age* of world government on earth during which Satan is bound. Satan will be loosed at the end of the millennium to foment a massive rebellion which Christ will terminate in final judgment and a second resurrection. After this will be the creation of a new heavens and earth.
 - E. Dispensationalism is a relatively new form of premillennialism. It bears similarities with historic premillennialism but it affirms that Christ returns in two stages (invisible, then visible) to set up a *golden age* world government for a calendrical millennium on earth which will end with Satan's loosing and subsequent judgement. This system, though,

differs from historic premillennialism in many respects, having its own unique twists.

- III. As touching world government of a carnal, political nature, Jesus Christ repulsed the notion.
- A. He rejected it when Satan offered it to Him. **MAT 4:8-10.**
 - B. He hid from intentions to make Him an earthly king. **JOH 6:15.**
 - C. He spoke of the kingdom of God in contra-political terms. **LUK 17:20-21.**
 - D. He said His kingdom was not of this world. **JOH 18:36.**
 - E. He left us with a warning that all such world government attempts are of Satan. **REV 17:10-11.**
 - 1. Rome was the sixth world government, preceded by Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece.
 - 2. In the days of the Roman Empire, God smashed the world government system apart by His own kingdom. **DAN 2:44.**
 - 3. Ironically, premillennialism (particularly dispensational premillennialism) affirms that the eighth satanic kingdom is its messianic world government.
 - a. It affirms that Satan will set up an Antichrist world government (which would be # 7).
 - b. It then affirms that a messiah will overthrow that system and set up his own world government (which would be # 8).
 - c. Many Christians (who should be the foremost opponents of political world government) are, wittingly or unwittingly, providing the spiritual and political grease to skid the eighth into place.
- IV. Here is a summary of dispensational *eschatology* (the department of theological science concerned with ‘the four last things: death, judgement, heaven, and hell’):
- A. There are seven arbitrary *dispensations* (“a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God” [*Scofield Reference Bible*]). They are often distinguished as: innocency, conscience, human government, promise, law, grace, and the kingdom.
 - B. The true promised seed whom God told Abraham should spring from him and be blessed above others to receive the Abrahamic promises are natural Israel.
 - C. The Church is not the true Israel nor does the Christian inherit “distinctive Jewish promises” of a land, king and kingdom.
 - 1. The gospel of grace and the gospel of the kingdom are not the same.
 - 2. The gospel of grace pertains to the church.
 - 3. The gospel of the kingdom pertains to natural/national Israel and was discontinued after the Jewish rejection of Messiah.
 - 4. The gospel of the kingdom therefore anticipates a future Jewish messianic reign.
 - D. Natural Israel awaits its greatest exaltation as God's earthly people.
 - E. National Israel has never yet possessed the whole land of Palestine according to the Abrahamic covenant. Thus, those promises await fulfilment in a future kingdom-age.
 - 1. O.T. promises of Israel repossessing the land are relegated to the future kingdom age.
 - 2. The restoration of Judah and Jerusalem following the Babylonian captivity are not to be construed as the fulfilment of the restoration promises.
 - F. The kingdom prophesied by John and Jesus as being “at hand” was postponed until a future time.
 - G. The Church is a mystery dispensation which is only parenthetical and typical of God's true kingdom yet to appear. The church age is an interruption of prophecy, not a fulfilment of

- it.
- H. The throne of David is presently unoccupied and will not be occupied until Christ returns in glory to reign on the earth.
 - 1. Christ is not the King of the church, but the Head of the church.
 - 2. Christ is (the coming) King of the Jews.
 - I. Christ returns in two stages: the Rapture (an invisible approach), and years later the Revelation (a visible approach).
 - J. Christ will return to *secretly* rapture the Church out of the world, and return again seven years later to establish the Millennial kingdom. This is known as the *pre-tribulation rapture*.
 - 1. After the rapture a Jewish remnant will take the place of the church as God's agent on earth for the conversion of Israel and the Gentiles.
 - 2. Between those events, the Jewish temple will be rebuilt and animal sacrifices will be restored under a covenant that natural Israel will make with Antichrist.
 - 3. Antichrist will break his covenant with Israel halfway through the seven years and great tribulation ensues. This is the tribulation prophesied by Daniel, Jeremiah and Christ (Olivet Discourse) and is the "...time of Jacob's trouble..." (**JER 30:7**).
 - 4. Christ returns with the raptured saints, resurrects the tribulation period martyrs, the battle of Armageddon occurs, the nations judged, Antichrist destroyed, Satan bound, Israel restored to Palestine fully and the Millennial Kingdom commences.
 - K. With the establishment of the Jewish Millennial Kingdom, the temple will (again) be rebuilt and animal sacrifices made. Christ shall personally rule from the Davidic throne in earthly Jerusalem over all nations. Humanity will enjoy its *golden age*.
 - L. At the end of the Millennium, Satan will be loosed to deceive a huge confederacy of nations to overthrow the kingdom.
 - 1. Christ will quash the rebellion.
 - 2. The wicked dead will be resurrected.
 - 3. The judgment of the wicked men and angels, and their destruction with the devil in the lake of fire ends earth history.
 - 4. The new heavens and new earth begin.
- V. Here is a summary of what we believe about Christ's advents and associated issues.
- A. Jesus Christ established the prophesied kingdom of God at His first advent: the church, which is what the O.T. prophets spoke of, will endure forever, and is God's true program. Elect Gentiles by Christ are made partakers of God's covenant promises to His Israel. The N.T. makes clear that many O.T. prophecies of Israel and the kingdom are fulfilled spiritually, not naturally.
 - B. Jesus Christ presently reigns on the throne of David in heaven by virtue of His death, burial, resurrection and ascension to glory. Church saints reign with Him on earth until His Second Coming. This is the "millennium" of **REV 20** during which Satan is bound, yet sin and sinners coexist with the saints.
 - C. Jesus Christ will return once to resurrect all the dead, perfect all the elect in resurrection glory, judge and destroy Satan, Satan's cohorts, the unsaved and the earth itself. This return will be visible, audible, tangible and universally known (nothing secret), and Christ will form a new heaven and new earth free of sin and corruption.
 - D. The *golden age* (if it can be so called) is the new heaven and new earth in the presence of God for eternity.
 - E. The Olivet Discourse (**MAT 24; MAR 13; LUK 21**) prophesies of two distinct events: the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. for which there would be advance markers, and the

Second Coming of Christ in final judgment for which there will be no markers. The “great tribulation” (**MAT 24:21**) came upon the generation to which Jesus spoke.

- VI. Following will be an examination of certain commonly affirmed pillars of Dispensational Premillennialism (including the pre-tribulation rapture theory).
- A. The footnotes of the Scofield Reference Bible (SRB) are the standard presentation of the theory but are not the exclusive nor the universal beliefs of the theory’s supporters.
 - B. Dispensationalism interprets Scripture through an artificial template that is more important to the dispensationalist than the words, grammar and logic of Scripture. That template consists of a series of faulty premises and it overlooks or dismisses information which condemns those faulty premises.
 - C. A word to the wise: contending with an ardent dispensationalist will probably be like catching a feather with an air bellows: every puff of truth you make will only relocate the feather.
 - D. Another word to the wise: when contending for Christ, do not let the opponent bury his position(s) with his *reasons for* his position(s). Demand a simple, clear statement of the position(s), not all the reasons.
- VII. Dispensationalism affirms that Jesus Christ came to offer a natural, political kingdom of God to Israel but they rejected and crucified Christ so the kingdom offer was withdrawn and set aside until a future dispensation (the millennial kingdom age near the end of time). In other words, the crucifixion only happened because Israel rejected the offered kingdom.
- A. The converse of this demands that if the Jews had received Christ as their Davidic king, the cross would never have occurred.
 - 1. The prophesied kingdom was to last forever (**ISA 9:7; LUK 1:32-33**) and its King likewise last forever. **PSA 89:35-36; JOH 12:34.**
 - 2. Where would the cross ever come into play? If God had ordained that the Jews should receive the kingdom offer, their obedience to that ordinance would forever forbid the cross: Moses’ Law and the temple system would have continued.
 - 3. This implies that men could be saved by Law and animal sacrifice (which would have continued under the wonderful kingdom order). This conveniently takes away the offense of the cross for the Jews. **1CO 1:23.**
 - B. An earthly, political kingdom of God with a Davidic king was what the carnal Jews wanted. If that was the kind of kingdom that Jesus was offering them, they would have received Him and it. **JOH 5:43.**
 - C. If Jesus Christ was indeed intent on establishing himself as an earthly king, it would have been an act of insurrection against Rome. Dispensationalism justifies the crucifixion.
 - D. Jesus Christ did not come to offer them the kingdom of God but to take it away from them. **MAT 21:43.**
 - E. NOTE: Dispensationalism builds its straw house from the O.T. Practically all texts upon which the claim is based that the Jews are to return to their own land and enjoy special privileges are taken from the O.T. and (errantly) applied to a future state.
 - 1. Their theory finds little straw in the N.T. The light is too bright and blinds them.
 - 2. For example, Paul dedicates **ROM 9-11** to the future of the Jews but never mentions a future Jewish Messianic superstate in Canaan.
 - 3. Paul instead prayed for their conversion to his gospel. **ROM 10:1-2.**
- VIII. Dispensationalists commonly affirm that it is wrong to assign a spiritual fulfilment to O.T. prophecies. Those prophecies are to be understood literally, not spiritually: Israel must always

mean Israel (never the church); Zion must always mean earthly Zion (never heaven); Jerusalem must always mean earthly Jerusalem (never heavenly Jerusalem), etc.

- A. Literal v. spiritual is a false distinction. The issue is whether a prophecy is fulfilled in a *natural* sense or a *spiritual* sense.
 - 1. There is literally a spiritual heavenly Jerusalem, Zion, Canaan.
HEB 12:22; 11:10, 16.
 - 2. There is literally a spiritual Israel and spiritual seed of Abraham.
ROM 9:6-8; GAL 3:29; 6:16.
- B. Christ and the apostles commonly assigned spiritual fulfilments to O.T. prophecies.
 - 1. Christ taught that John the Baptist was the prophesied Elijah.
MAL 4:5-6 c/w MAT 17:10-13 c/w MAR 9:13.
 - a. indeed: In actual fact, in reality, in truth; really, truly, assuredly, positively.
 - b. Scofield denied this (SRB, p. 1023). Who is right: Christ or Scofield?
 - 2. James declared that the rebuilding of David's tabernacle (**AMO 9:11-12**) referred to the gathering in of Gentiles to the church. **ACT 15:14-17.**
 - a. Scofield contrarily said that this passage refers to the *future gathering in of Israel* (to her expected national glory in the kingdom age to come)! (SRB, pp. 1169-1170)
 - b. Who is right: the Holy Spirit or Scofield?

IX. Dispensationalism affirms that Israel never completely possessed the promised land; hence, that will be fulfilled in the future kingdom age when Christ personally rules from David's throne in earthly Jerusalem. (SRB, pp. 250, 1206)

- A. God promised Abraham and his seed a Canaan land for an inheritance.
GEN 15:18-21; 17:8.
- B. Natural Israel DID possess all the land in fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant.
JOS 11:23; 21:43-45; 23:14 c/w NEH 9:7-8.
- C. Who is right: the Holy Spirit or Scofield?

X. Dispensationalism denies that Jesus Christ is presently on the throne of David. They say Christ will one day yet sit on David's throne *on earth* to fulfil **2SAM 7:12-16; PSA 132:11.** (SRB, pp. 362, 990, 1334, etc.)

- A. Peter taught that Christ is on David's throne because of His resurrection. **ACT 2:25-36.**
- B. Paul taught (**ACT 13:32-34**) that Christ's resurrection fulfilled **PSA 2:6-7.**
- C. The Messianic throne of David was to be established in heaven, not earth. **PSA 89:35-37.**
- D. Christ is the head of the church (**COL 1:18**) and Head = King. **1SAM 15:17; ISA 7:1, 8-9.**
- E. Who is right: the Holy Spirit or Scofield?

XI. Dispensationalism denies that Jesus Christ at His first advent executed judgment and justice in fulfilment of **JER 23:5-6**, so this must only refer to the supposed future Jewish millennium.

- A. Contrast this with **JOH 5:30; 12:31; 9:39.**
- B. Who is right: Jesus Christ or Scofield?

XII. Dispensationalism draws a distinction between "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God." Scofield deems the *kingdom of heaven* (a phrase unique to what they call Matthew's Jewish gospel) to be the Jewish, Messianic, Davidic superstate that should have begun at Christ's first advent (SRB, pp. 996, 1003)

- A. This distinction was made because it is obvious that the *kingdom of God* came in fulfilment of **DAN 2:44** (c/w **LUK 16:16**), which opposes a "postponed kingdom" theory.

1. Such a distinction (if true) “might” account for the fact that after the ascension of Christ, the disciples preached “the kingdom of God” for the present age.
 2. But it would not account for the utter failure of the rest of the N.T. to refer to the future proclamation of “the kingdom of heaven.”
- B. **DAN 2:44** said, “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom...”
1. This would obviously be the *kingdom of the God of heaven*.
 2. The “ark of the covenant of the LORD” is the “ark of the covenant” and the “ark of the LORD” (**JOS 6:6-8**), speaking of the same singular ark.
- C. Scripture uses “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of heaven” synonymously.
MAT 19:23-24.
- D. Who is right: the Holy Spirit or Scofield?