



**A**ND when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, *The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: 21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. 22 And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. 23 And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. 24 For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.* (Luke 17:20-24)

There are many 'isms' in the public discourse today regarding the Second Coming of Christ. There is even at least one such 'ism' that teaches a THIRD Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. One of these 'isms' may be right concerning world conditions at Christ's coming, but none have the sole authority to proclaim with certainty the time of our Lord's return. Though the laity and theologians may suffer apoplexy in arguing their point, in a sense, none of those 'isms' really matter.

Christ Himself gave us certain shades and shadows of when to expect His return, but He gave no dates. Perhaps it is because even the Lord Jesus Christ did not know the exact time of His return during His earthly ministry (perhaps by recusal). *28 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: 29 So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. 30 Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. 31 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. 32 **But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.** 33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. 34 For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. 35 Watch ye therefore:*

*for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: 36 Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. 37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.* (Mark 13:28-37)

My mother and father used to go shopping each Saturday and would leave me, my five sisters and brother home with an abundance of chores to keep us occupied and out of trouble; but they never told us exactly when to expect their return. We had to be ready at all times, otherwise there would be some unmentionably tragic experiences for us when they returned to find us galivanting about the neighborhood. This was also the will of our Father in Heaven to keep the return of our Lord Jesus Christ a question in our hearts. Why? So that we would live each day as if this were the day of His return.

Many books and articles of fraudulent authenticity have been written claiming to determine the exact moment of the Lord's return; and there are preterists, pre-millennialist, amillennialists, and post-millennialists who can tell you with full assurance under what terms our Lord's coming shall be. But I would like to ask, "What difference does it make when the Lord will return insofar as our election in Christ is concerned?" I am not being flippant in asking that question, I am simply saying that whether Christ returns today, tomorrow, or in fifty years, of what effect will that have on your security of salvation? Were He to return today, should He not find you ready and willing to go immediately as were the five virgins with a plentiful supply of oil for their lamps?

We may study and calculate to no end to find an exact time proven by Scripture of the Lord's return, and we will be no closer at the end of that study as at the beginning in finding out the question. If you are a chosen and elect Christian, serving the Lord in earnest love and perseverance, you will be ready ALWAYS for the Coming of the Lord.

Why line the pockets of presumptuous tin-horned prophets by purchasing their books, or supporting their opulent lifestyles, who claim to know when Christ will return? I believe it is as I tell my young people of the Church: "No need to project dates and times for the return of the Lord (though we look forward in joy to see it) for the Lord may come for you today when you are on the highway going home from church.

Here is an interesting revelation by our Lord: *Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.* Did the Word of the Lord pass away between the Apostolic Age and the coming of the Reformation, and the profluence of Holy Scripture fostered by the Received Text Bibles? And did scholarly theologians re-discover the Bible that had passed away for centuries in the new and corrupt versions that proliferate in our day? I think not! God's Word is Immutable and Unchanging which reflect the character of the Author of that Word. *For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.* (Mal 3:6), and *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.* (Heb 13:8-9) The itching ears of the modern church have overgrown the body. Every book published claiming to have gone to heaven, or to hell, and returned is gobbled up by households who may never have even read their Bibles, but will eagerly read such spurious literature and gush about it. And what of those who claim the Holy Ghost has appeared to them personally to reveal some profound extra-biblical prophecy? Have we become spiritual dunces to cast aside the proven truths of the Gospel and to believe a lie!

In southern jargon, a person may be revisited by past sins which have been kept hidden until full maturity. Then it is said, "The chickens have come home to roost" in the revelation of the past behaviors. The 13<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew is popularly referred to as the Kingdom chapter for the Lord sets forth many parables that relate directly to the Kingdom of Heaven and the Church. I believe parts of these parables are completely misinterpreted by the modern church. I have heard men boast about how

God is blessing some mega-churches with phenomenal growth and financial prosperity while at the same time a false Gospel of "Name-it-and Claim it" prosperity is being preached from their pulpits. May I suggest that Satan and his minions are attracted by largeness. The enemy of our souls will use filthy lucre, pride, and deceit to gather about him a multitude of false believers who have come to believe a lie and are delusional of their place in Christ.

There is one particular reference that has direct application to the modern, lukewarm church – the Parable of the Mustard Seed. *The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.* (Matt 13:31-32) I believe these birds that have come home to roost in the branches of an overgrown church are the demons of greed, pride, and false Gospel. A mustard plant does not grow into a tree. It may, at most, reach a height of eight or ten feet; but its branches are stalks and not wood. They cannot support nesting birds unless they have grown larger than normal. When the Church becomes something it is not intended to be in size, the demons will come home to roost. In this same chapter, our Lord refers to the "fowl of the air" as demons. If we are contextually consistent, we must admit that the modern churches has attracted the wrong kind of vermin to their nests there.

The Bible is not a book about which we should speculate, and then teach those speculations as fact. It is true, consistent and inerrant.

Our Lord informed us of the maturation of the fig tree as a herald that the time was at hand. And he gave us another perspective on what to expect err His return. *But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.* (Matt 24:37-39) How was it in the days of Noah? *And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* (Gen 6:5) Noah and his sons were ridiculed and jeered at while the Ark was being built. Men were irreverent in the same sense that we see today. Until this recent generation, it was unheard of for men to rape and behead little girls no older than ten years of age. A friend sent me a video clip this morning of a 14 year old girl being beaten and bloodied on the streets of India, and finally having gasoline poured upon her and burned to death by members of the Hindu religion. Her crime? She had attended a Christian church.

So when will Christ return? *42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. 43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. 44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.* (Matt 24:42-44)