

WORLD CONDITIONS WHEN CHRIST RETURNS

Text: 1 Thess. 4:14 through 5:11

INTRO: It is not uncommon to hear radio & tv preachers talk about “the signs of the times.” By a misapplication of Matthew 24 & parallel passages, they think they see many “signs” that the return of Jesus is imminent. His coming MAY be imminent -- but the Bible, properly applied, does not give us any way to know how near or how distant that return may be. The “signs” in Matt. 24 were connected with the coming destruction of Jerusalem and were fulfilled from 66 to 70 a.d.

Though there are no specific “signs” to tell us when Jesus will return, there ARE certain conditions that will exist when that time arrives.

I. NO ONE WILL KNOW THE TIME HAS COME.

A. When Christ returns everyone will know it simultaneously.
Matt. 24:26-27; Rev. 1:7

B. No one knows or can know the time of the 2nd coming.
Matt. 24:35-36, 42-44; 25:13

But of that day & hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.
(Mark 13:31).

C. In every century since Jesus ascended to heaven, there have been individuals & groups who sought through mathematical calculations & supposed “signs of the times” to set the date for Christ’s return.

1. William Miller, a Baptist preacher, set the date for Christ’s return in 1843. When Jesus did not return then, Miller recalculated and reset the date to 1844. When that date also proved to be wrong, Miller admitted his errors & ceased such speculation -- but many of his followers “adjusted” his speculations to a lesser fulfillment, and continued on as the 7th Day Adventist Church.

2. Charles Taze Russell set the date for Christ’s return as 1914. When that date came and went, he &

his followers insisted that Jesus really did come, but that His coming was secret and would be openly revealed later. Russell's followers at that time were known as Millennial Dawnists. They later renamed themselves "Jehovah's Witnesses." That group has continued to set new dates for the "end of the world," 1925, 1975, etc. (Herbert W. and Garner Ted Armstrong also looked to 1975 as the date of the end.

3. Though Hal Lindsey was not quite as bold in stating his theory in the book, "Late Great Planet Earth," it was clear that he believed "the rapture" would occur in 1988.

D. Most of the speculations have been based on some sort of mathematical formula based on certain prophecies in the book of Daniel. Some speculators cite obscure statements in the book of Ezekiel. All such guesses are futile.

1. Jesus knew the Old Testament.
2. Jesus did not know when the 2nd coming would be.
3. Therefore, the O.T. did not reveal when...

II. ALL THINGS WILL BE GOING ON AS USUAL.

READ MATTHEW 24:36-42

- A. Folks will be eating and drinking.
- B. Folks will be marrying and giving in marriage.
- C. Farmers will be working in their fields.
- D. Housewives will doing their chores.

READ LUKE 17:22-36

- E. Folks will be buying and selling.
- F. They will be planting their crops.
- G. They will be building houses.
- H. Even in the face of total futility, some will persist in their materialism.

I. Some will be sleeping & taking their rest.

III. THE DAY OF CHRIST WILL BE A DAY OF GREAT SEPARATION, MT 24:40-41; LK 17:34-37..

A. These passages do not emphasize WHO will be taken WHERE or who will be left where. They emphasize the separation.

B. These verses do not emphasize a time element -- WHO will be dealt with FIRST. They simply emphasize separation

His winnowing fan is in His hand, & He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, & gather His wheat into the barn: but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. (MT 3:12; LK 3:17)

READ MATTHEW 13:30, 41-43, 47-50
Matt. 25:32
1 Thess. 4:16-17

CONCLUSION: All indications are that Jesus could return at any moment. He may delay His coming for another century, or for another 20 centuries. But He will come. When the world least expects Him, when folks are eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, buying and selling, planting and building, working and sleeping... Jesus will come. He will judge those then living, and He will judge those who have previously lived and died. And we will be there. Are you ready for the judgment day?

La Porte, TX, (1982 ?)
Shiloh, Mexia, TX, October 24, 1994
Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, April 9, 2000
Northside, Greenwood, AR, November 12, 2000 (meeting)
Jonestown, TX, December 17, 2000
Highway 29, Liberty Hill, TX, December 17, 2000
Fairfield, PA, December 31, 2000