

Why Jesus Has Not Yet Returned

'You must know this; that scoffers will come in the last days who walk after their own desires and say, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the forefathers died, all things have continued exactly as they did from the beginning of creation" ... The Lord is not slow concerning His promises, as some consider slowness, but He is patient toward you, not desiring that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance ... Regard the patience of our Lord as salvation' (2 Peter 3:3, 4, 9 & 15).

So what is delaying Jesus' return? There are three main reasons. The easiest of the three to explain is this; God does not want any person to go to a lost eternity. In His wisdom and foreknowledge, God knows exactly who will accept Him and who will reject Him – and He is waiting until the very last Gentile person, that He knows will accept salvation and be saved, has come into the Kingdom of God. 'A hardening has befallen part of Israel that will last until the full number of the ingathering of the Gentiles has come in (to the Kingdom of God), and so all Israel will be saved ...' (Romans 11:25 & 26).

The Lord is going to return to earth as our King – one day. When Jesus was on earth, even He did not know the day He would return. 'Of that exact day and hour no one knows, not the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father' (Matthew 24:36). Of course Jesus would now know the exact day of His return, but He did not know then. We do not know the exact day Jesus is coming, but He did warn us to be ready. 'You must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him' (Matthew 24:44). He is waiting for the last of the Gentiles to be saved, and we must be ready for His sudden appearance.

The second reason He is delaying His return, is He is waiting in heaven until the restoration of all things that the prophets foretold. That literally means all things. 'He may send Jesus Who was ordained for you, Whom heaven must receive and retain until the time for the restoration of all things that God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from the most ancient time' (Acts 3:20 & 21). God will fulfil His prophecies no matter how many people try to stop it. The two 'things' to be restored is Israel and the Christian church. When we look at Israel, we can see that the Jews are returning home in droves, so the nation of Israel has already been given back to the Jewish people, and is being restored, populated and governed by Jews. The scriptures tell us that Israel will be one nation instead of two. It will not be Israel and Judah; just Israel and they will have one leader (now called the Prime Minister) (Ezekiel 37:22). That has already happened. The Lord will bring judgement on the nations that have divided Israel. The Israeli government is being pressured by unsaved earthly rulers to carve up the Lord's land – which is also fulfilling prophecy (Joel 3:2).

When God set Israel apart, He set them apart as a nation, not as individuals. When God forgave them and reconciled with them, He reconciled with them as a nation (Jeremiah 31:33 & 34). God has reconciled with them in the exact same land as He once disowned them, then once in their own land, they will appoint themselves a head, or in modern language, a Prime Minister, which they have done. Israel will have a big population of Jews. 'Yet the number of the children of Israel will be as the sand of the sea which cannot be measured or numbered; and instead of it being said to them, "You are not My people" it will be said to them, "You are sons of the Living God." Then will the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together and appoint themselves one head ... and great will be the day for the reborn Israel' (Hosea 1:10 & 11; Romans 9:26). The Lord said, "In the latter days you will understand this" (Jeremiah 30:24). That makes it clear, these prophecies are about the latter days, which is now. Then He says, 'Hear the word of the Lord O you nations, and declare it in the isles and coastlands far away and say, "He Who scattered Israel will gather him and will guard him as a shepherd guards his flock" (Jeremiah 31:10). That verse is a message from God to all nations, islands and people all over the earth. God is telling the whole earth, He is gathering His people to Israel. This prophetic scripture is being fulfilled in our time. Despite all the pressure, opposition, wars and struggles, Israel will continue to be populated by Jews in their own land. God has decreed it, spoken it and is performing it, and there is nothing anyone can do to stop God's plan for His people.

Jesus said, "Surely I tell you, all these things will come upon this generation (the generation who were there when Jesus was on earth). "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I would have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not! You refused! Behold, your house is left to you forsaken (destroyed). I tell you, you will not see Me again until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'" (Matthew 23:36 to 39). When Jesus said the house is forsaken, He meant the temple. The Hebrew word for temple is 'bayit' (pronounced by-eet) which translates as house. He said their 'bayit' would be destroyed, and in 70 AD, in that generation, the temple was totally destroyed. Not one stone was left on another when the Romans came in with battle-axes and crowbars and pulled the temple to pieces. All that was left standing is what we see now – the Western Wall. Jesus said He would not come back until the Jewish people could say of Him 'Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord'. In other words – to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. The Jewish people have to be made ready to welcome Him back, and God preparing Israel for that great event.

The way the Lord gave the land of Israel back to the Jews, and the ongoing gathering of the exiled Jewish people back to their own land is nothing short of a miracle. Our Jewish Messiah will one day return to the Jewish capital Jerusalem, and note: Jerusalem does not and never ever did belong to the Arabs. Moslems do not want the Messiah to come again because He would prove their religion to be false, and so they are resisting the return of Jews to Israel, and they are resisting the return of Jesus. Anybody who resists the regathering of the Lord's people, resists the return of the Messiah. It is the spirit of antichrist that is resisting Jesus. We will look at scriptures to confirm that later in this study. (This is God the Father speaking), "For behold, the days are coming when I will release from captivity (exile) My people Israel and Judah, and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they will possess it" (Jeremiah 30:3). All of Jeremiah chapters 30 & 31 tell us all about the return of the Jews to Israel, which precedes the return of the Lord Jesus. The regathering of Israel is one of the main themes of Biblical prophecy. The above scriptures are just a few, but there are dozens more following the same theme. In order for the Jews to receive the Messiah, they have to have the Gospel preached to them. At this present time in Israel, there are hundreds of dedicated, born-again, Spirit-filled Christians, working tirelessly to share the Gospel and show God's love to His people. When we speak of sharing the Gospel, we need to bear in mind, the centre of God's salvation is Israel where the salvation message began. Our salvation has come from the Jews (John 4:22).

The Jews have been exiled into many different nations around the world for over 2,000 years, yet by a miracle, they have remained Jews. If we took a Minoan family and exiled them to far away lands for only two hundred years, their bloodline, culture, religion and beliefs would assimilate into the country where they lived. However, the Lord has kept His chosen people, the Jews, as they are and they have always remained Jews in spite of terrible persecutions and vast distances. They are still a distinct people with their own customs, feasts, language, culture and music. That in itself is an amazing miracle. Another amazing miracle is their return to the land promised to Abraham about 4,000 years ago. Israel is like a melting pot, blending the new arrivals into one people with one culture, one language with their own unique holidays, feasts and celebrations.

Zechariah talks about what will happen to Israel when they finally realise their ancestors once rejected their Messiah. For 2,000 years God has spiritually blinded many Jews to the truth about Who Jesus really is so the Gospel could go out to the Gentiles. After the Lord pours out a Spirit of Grace and supplication, the whole of Israel and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will wake up to what their ancestors did by agreeing to Jesus' crucifixion by the Romans, and they will grieve and mourn with overwhelming sorrow because they have also rejected Jesus for so long. 'They (Israel and Jerusalem) will mourn for Him as one mourns for their only child and will grieve for Him as one grieves for his firstborn' (Zechariah 12:10 to 14). That is when they will say, "Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord." Israel will realise their ancestors were complicit in the crucifixion and rejection of their Messiah, and that will cause much mourning – overwhelming grief, family by family, but it will also reconcile Jesus with His people forever.

We must stress one important fact: the Jews did not crucify Jesus – the Gentile Romans did. It was illegal in the Roman Empire in those days, for any nation to crucify anyone without the expressed permission of the authorities. However, some Jews were complicit in the murderous act – the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin wanted Jesus out of the way because too many Jews wanted Him to be their King; but it was before His time. Even Pilate knew Jesus was innocent and washed his hands of Him. But Jesus had to die so salvation could come and He used the Romans to do it, with some Jews' knowledge and permission. Jesus was crucified by both Jews and Gentiles and with His blood, He has saved both Jews and Gentiles.

We can see how events in Israel are fulfilling prophecies, but the church will also have to be restored to its former glory. If we read about the early church, we can see the modern church falls far short of the activities and the commitment of the early church. The early church was wholly Jewish, and when the Gentiles came into the Kingdom, they fully embraced the Jewish people and Israel, something few Christian people do today. In fact the overall attitude of most Christians, ranges from being indifferent and passively anti-Semitic to openly hostile towards the Jews and Israel. Some 'Christians' are pushing for a Palestinian state to be created. That is totally opposite to what God is doing. Their attitude puts their very salvation at risk and that is something some Christians refuse to heed.

The church has to improve and become more committed before the Lord returns and that is a huge challenge! It is a challenge, mostly because some Christians have hardened their hearts and do not like to be reminded, that if their righteousness is not more than the religious people (modern day Pharisees), they will never enter the Kingdom of God (Matthew 5:20). If we study Matthew chapter 25, we can clearly see that Jesus was speaking to believers. The ten virgins were all believers. Five were wise and were filled with the Holy Spirit. Five were foolish enough to refuse to be filled with the Holy Spirit even though they knew about it, and they were shut out of the Kingdom of God. The three men with the talents were believers who knew the Lord. Two of the three were welcomed into the Kingdom but the man who refused to serve the Lord was cast out. Then there are the Christians who will be separated into the group of 'sheep' who love and support Israel, literally, "My brethren", that is the Lord's biological family, the Jews. The other group are the 'goats' who will be shut out because they refused to support Israel. They were thrown into the lake of fire! Jesus said when we refuse to support the Jews, we are refusing to support Jesus Himself. When we help the Jews,

we are helping Jesus Himself (Matthew 25:40 & 45). That message is very, very clear; we will be judged according to our attitude to the Jewish people. In these three parables, the believers who were rejected by God were not unrighteous nor did they shake their fist at God. They committed the sin of not doing what they knew was right (James 4:17).

Jesus warned Christians they could lose their salvation if they remain carnal, that is to refuse to purify themselves by clothing themselves in righteousness, the appropriate wedding garment (Matthew 22:11 to 13; Revelation 19:8). Matthew chapter 13 speaks about genuine believers (wheat) growing up along side weeds, tares or darnel (false believers). They were in church right beside the 'wheat', yet were rejected because they refused to accept the whole truth and be made fit for the Kingdom. Jesus warns us, not every church member will go to heaven. They will cry, "Lord, Lord, did we not do all these things in your name?" (Matthew 7:16 to 23). Jesus will reject them and say He never knew them, just as He did to the five foolish virgins, and He will say, only those who do God's will, will enter the Kingdom of God. Doing the will of the Father, is embracing Israel and the Jewish people, just like the early church did. That cannot possibly be more clear, yet modern churches consistently refuse to heed the warning Jesus spoke out so clearly, so many times. In fact Jesus even calls those people who refuse to listen, "Stupid" and "Foolish" (Matthew 7:26; 25:2). In the early church, their 'first love' was the expansion of Judaism amongst new Christians. Jesus said He held it against the church for abandoning their first love (Revelation 2:4).

Most church leaders refuse to teach what Jesus said we have to do, to enter the Kingdom of God. Jesus said we must believe, repent, be born-again, baptised in water and be filled with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 4:17; 25:1 to 12; John 3:3, 5 & 7; Mark 16:16), or He will say He never knew us. After believing, repenting, being born-again, baptised in water and filled with the Holy Spirit, then we must listen to Him (Matthew 17:5; Mark 7:9; Luke 9:35), we must use our talents to serve Him (Matthew 25:14 to 30) we must embrace, help, support and pray for Israel (Matthew 25:31 to 46), we must do the Lord's will and obey every commandment (Matthew 7:21; John 14:15) and we must preach with signs following (Mark 16:17). Very few churches exercise all of the nine gifts of the spirit as clearly described (1 Corinthians 12:7 to 11). They exercise some of them but not all. Very few churches accept the five ministry gifts as outlined (Ephesians 4:11), but major almost solely on having one head pastor or minister. Holiness, righteousness, purity, obedience to the directions written within the scriptures for Christian conduct are largely ignored, as is the command to love one another. We are told to bear one another's burdens, but many Christians care little about those who are suffering; the wealthy care little about the poor. Materialism takes precedence over giving. The sick and the elderly are not cared for by the church – but by the state, even though that is the responsibility of the church (James 1:27). Many modern Pentecostal churches care more about how much loud noise they can make with their rock music and the amplification, than they care about how uncomfortable that noise makes the sick or elderly feel. The noise is literally driving, or keeping people out of the church. How can that be called good Christian behaviour? There really are Spirit-filled believers who go to a pub on a Saturday night, then attend church on Sunday morning. Some Christians miss prayer meetings during the week to attend freemason meetings instead. That is not doing the Lord's will, and Jesus said hypocrites like that will not get into heaven (Matthew 24:48 to 51). We are not trying to bring people into condemnation, we are attempting to help people enter the Kingdom of God by revealing the severity of the words of Jesus. If we refuse to listen to the words of Jesus, we are rejecting God Himself. Jesus said, "Whoever listens to you listens to Me. Whoever rejects you rejects Me. Whoever rejects Me rejects Him Who sent Me" (Luke 10:16).

We need to see the huge difference between being involved in church as a member, just for the sake of social activities in a social organisation, and being a righteous disciple of the Lord Jesus. Church members, who are committed to the church, but are not committed to the Lord are the ones in danger of being rejected, as are the hypocrites. Church membership is outside of our assignment as born-again believers, and we were never instructed to make church members; we were told to make disciples. They give a false impression to the unsaved of what Christianity is supposed to be. Christianity is not being a religious church member. If we have a church full of members who are not disciples, then we try to make them disciples, they will not be accustomed to being disciplined and there will be problems. Many church denominations will not allow a person to serve in the church unless they sign a document of commitment first. That is totally unscriptural. There is a church group who will not accept new people unless they are prepared to financially support their church building program! That has nothing whatsoever to do with salvation. We all have to pay heed to the warnings Jesus gave to believers: He said to be disciples, not church members who attend church for social interaction. Sadly, many Christians who do not listen to the warnings Jesus spoke out so very clearly, will be lost. That is the challenge to church leaders; listen to the small voice of the Holy Spirit Who is telling people through the scriptures, that they need to teach the full Gospel of the Kingdom to the flock. It is a powerful Gospel message – not a weak one. Pastors need to explain to their flock, that there will be a divine judgement for carnal behaviour – even if his words are unpopular.

So far we have looked at two reasons why the Lord has not yet returned; He is waiting until the last of the Gentiles have come into the Kingdom; He is waiting for both Israel and the church to be completely restored; and the third reason is: He is waiting for His people to obey His commands before He will bring about the end of this present age. 'This Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come' (Matthew 24:14).

When Jesus said 'This' Gospel, He meant the Gospel of power – not the watery, weak, wishy-washy, pious, humanistic, monetary-driven religion droned out of some churches today. We need to restore the message of the Gospel and teach what the full Gospel is: it is not just the Gospel; it is the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. It is a Spiritual message with Spiritual signs following. It is the message that God is going to take over the government of the whole human race and the appointed Governor is Jesus. We have tended to think of the Gospel as simply believing in the death and resurrection of Jesus and by believing, we will be forgiven, we will receive eternal life and go to heaven when we die. That is all true as long as we meet His conditions, and it is wonderful, but is only the first part of the Gospel and it is not the end of the message. The Gospel takes us out of the kingdom of darkness and places us into the Kingdom of God. The Gospel is designed to make us kings and priests; not just in heaven, but right now here on earth. Jesus said, "This Gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world as a witness to all the nations and then the end will come." He made very careful provision that we never water down or reduce the content of the Gospel, and right up to the end of this age, that same message is to be proclaimed and preached in all the world as a witness to all nations.

Jesus clearly and very decisively spelt out what He expected of us; 'As you go, preach, saying, "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons"' (Matthew 10:7 & 8). That is the Gospel Jesus was talking about and that is the Gospel we should be preaching. 'Repent and believe the Gospel (Mark 1:15). 'Preach the Gospel to everyone (Mark 16:15). 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of salvation for everyone who believes' (Romans 1:16). 'Now let me remind you of the Gospel ... by which you are saved' (1 Corinthians 15:1 & 2). 'Look for and eagerly long for the coming of the Lord Jesus, hastening the Lord's coming ...' (2 Peter 3:12). How can we hasten the Lord's coming? By diligently preaching the full Gospel of the Kingdom, not a watered down Gospel. During the days of the early church, Asia and in fact the whole world heard the Gospel (Acts 19:10; Romans 1:8). History has proven that to be correct. That generation heard the Gospel – and now we have to get the Gospel out to this generation in all nations all over again.

We are told to: 'Preach the Word! Be urgent, whether the opportunity seems to be favourable or not, convince them, warn them, urge them, reprove, rebuke and exhort, with all patience and teaching, for the time is coming when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but having ears itching for something pleasing they will gather themselves teachers after their own desires and will turn aside from the truth and will turn to myths and fables (man-made false teachings). As for you ... do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry' (2 Timothy 4:2 to 5). Paul and Silas were beaten, chained up, put in stocks in a dungeon, then around midnight they began praying and praising God so loudly, the other prisoners could hear them (Acts 16:22 to 25). They were not complaining about being in prison, in stocks and chains; they were praising God. If they could praise God in that situation, how much more should we praise God in our free countries, for the freedom we have to preach the Gospel!

'Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go then and make disciples of all nations, baptising them into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you, and behold, I am with you always, to the very close of this age"' (Matthew 28:18 to 20). 'Jesus said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every person. They who believe and are baptised will be saved, but those who do not believe will be condemned. These signs will accompany those who believe; in My name they will drive out demons, they will speak in new tongues, they will pick up (if they are accidentally bitten by) snakes and if they drink anything deadly it will not harm them, they will lay their hands on the sick and they will recover' (Mark 16:15 to 18). The obligation of the church is stated succinctly in the four Gospels and those are the orders of the Lord Jesus. They are not recommendations, they are not suggestions, they are commands and these commands must be carried out until the Lord returns. The Lord will not accept the excuse, 'I did not know or understand' nor will He accept laziness on our part, which He considers to be wickedness (Matthew 25:26 to 30). We are to prepare ourselves for action (1 Peter 1:13). When Jesus said to preach to all the world, He meant literally all the world. When He said to preach to everyone he meant everyone – with Spiritual signs following.

Any person or religion who attempts to hinder the coming of Jesus, or refuses to believe He is the Messiah Who is coming soon, is following an antichrist spirit. 'Little children (new Christians), these are the end times and you heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists (false Messiahs) have arisen. By this we know that it is the final hour ... Who is the liar but those who deny that Jesus is the Messiah? They who deny the Father and the Son are the antichrist' (1 John 2:18 & 22). 'By this you know the Spirit of God; every spirit who confesses that Jesus has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit who does not confess that Jesus has come in the flesh is not of God, and this is the spirit of the antichrist of whom you have heard about, and it is in the world already' (1 John 4:2 & 3). 'Many deceivers have gone out into the world. Those who do not confess that Jesus came in the flesh is the deceiver and the antichrist' (2 John 1:7).

An area we need to recognise is apostolic outreach. Elders were always appointed by apostles and the church was never intended to function without apostles. Jesus said to go into all the world, preach the Gospel to the whole human race. An apostle is a man with a passion to go and spread the Gospel of the

Kingdom. He is a man who cannot settle down into the standard procedures of modern Christianity because he has a vision outside of the church. A vision that goes beyond the boundaries of the local church, out to the outside world. Something deep within him says 'Go'. Church people often do not understand him; he gives up privileges; he gives up positions; he gives up possessions; he gives up comforts; he has a deeper understanding of the scriptures which younger or weaker Christians find too much of a challenge, so they reject him, but something burning deep inside keeps driving him on. He preaches this Gospel of the Kingdom. He goes to the people who have not yet been reached even to the point of risking his life for the Gospel. He is a man who has the signs following. There are people who have followed God and given up their comfortable western lives, often to the ridicule and misunderstanding of the church. Many women have the same Spiritual burning deep within, and they also go to reach the lost for Jesus; not being content to sit quietly and do nothing while the world perishes.

New Testament apostles always operated in teams, never as individuals. The only time we read about apostles being alone was when they were in prison. The apostolic teams and the local church leaders, between them, share the God given responsibility of the leadership of the church of Jesus. In the New Testament there was no human over those two types of leaders. They were directly answerable to Jesus Himself, as Head of the church. They were mutually responsible for one another and their well-being. Neither was independent of the other. God shares the responsibility between the two groups, not between two individuals. The first Apostle and High Priest was Jesus and He was very mobile; He is our pattern to follow. He is the Head of the church and the church was mobile before it was resident. We are not committed to residing in one place; we do not go to where the church is; we are the church. The church is where we are. This demands a mental revolution. It is time for the church to be what God has designed His church to be. Sometimes we have to break out of church constraints so we can be free to do the will of God. We need to remember we are serving the living God, not the church.

We need to look at the Old Testament for guidance. Whenever God sent a messenger, He always authenticated His involvement with supernatural signs following and that has not changed. The supernatural signs, change people's attitude to the Gospel, so we cannot give people a bland Gospel. It has to be accompanied with God's power. Our assignment is this – go to the entire world. Jesus has all authority so He can give the orders. He can clear the way and He can make sure we are able to do whatever He has commanded us to do. He said go and make disciples of all nations. He did not say make church members or support building programs. There certainly are numerous deeply committed believers around the world, who live as close to the New Testament as they can and we are grateful for them, but there are too many hypocrites who need to repent, who are leading countless numbers of innocent people astray.

Jesus said He would be with us until the end of the age. When we 'go' He will be with us always. We are to follow Him; we are to teach others what Jesus has taught us. If we look at the Lord's prayer, we can see it is the will of God for His Kingdom to come to earth. The whole of history is leading up to that one major event. We are looking for the establishment of the Lord on earth. The world has no other hope. No government or scientist on earth has the answer for the world's problems. The more the world learns through science, the worse humanity's problems get. The more mankind invents, the more power he has to destroy himself. There is already in existence on earth, enough nuclear power to destroy ourselves 50 times over. Is that progress? Does that give hope? The whole of society is disintegrating because of the way society has turned its back on God. When God chose Abraham to be the father of a nation, it was because God knew Abraham would teach his family about the Lord and His statutes (Genesis 18:19). That is why Abraham's family is blessed above all other families on earth – because Abraham followed God and commanded his family do likewise. If every family on earth followed God, we would have very few problems.

There is much to do before Jesus comes. The church is a mess and it is time it got its act together, obeyed the scriptures and stopped wasting time with endless programs. The church has a long way to go before it will be ready for the return of the Lord. That is why the Lord is shaking His people. Many Christians are being shaken by severe circumstances to purify them and make them ready for His coming. When will Jesus return and the end come? Not until this Gospel of the Kingdom has been proclaimed in the entire world as a witness to all the nations. The scripture makes it absolutely clear that the Lord will not come until the church has fulfilled its obligations in the world. For us to see the return of the Lord, first Israel and the church have to be completely restored; the full Gospel of the Kingdom has to be preached right up until the very last Gentile is saved – then the end will come. There is so much yet to do, so we need to get busy preaching the full Gospel of the Kingdom, sharing what we have, purifying ourselves to ensure the restoration of the church, and helping Israel to become completely restored!

Amen and God bless you.

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