

## Why Jesus Has Not Yet Returned

'The Lord is not slow concerning His promises as some consider slowness but He is patient toward you, not desiring any should perish but all should come to repentance ... Regard the patience of our Lord as salvation' (2 Peter 3:9 & 15). 'A temporary hardening has befallen part of Israel that will last until the full number of the ingathering of the Gentiles has come in (to salvation) and so all Israel will be saved' (Romans 11:25 & 26). 'Those who endure to the end (of this age) will be saved. This Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached throughout the entire world for a testimony to all the nations and then the end will come' (Matthew 24:13 & 14). 'He will send Jesus Who was ordained for you, Whom heaven must receive and retain until the time for the restoration of all things God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from the most ancient time' (Acts 3:20 & 21).

These verses above say God does not want any person to perish so He is patiently waiting until the last Gentile, who chooses salvation has come to the Lord. By 'perish' it means God does not want the soul of any person to go to eternal damnation. So what is delaying Jesus' return? There are two main reasons. The easiest reason to explain is this; God does not want any person to be eternally lost. In His foreknowledge, God knows exactly who will accept Him and be saved and who will reject Him and be lost forever in eternity without hope, and He is waiting until the very last Gentile person whom He knows will accept salvation has turned to God. There definitely is spiritual life after this earthly life and Jesus came to save our souls not our bodies of flesh. One day, the Lord Jesus is going to return to earth as our King. 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 holy 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). We do not know who the very last Gentile is, where they are nor do we know when they will give their life over to Jesus but God does know and He is waiting for the last of the Gentiles to be saved and we must be ready for Jesus' sudden appearance, which will usher in the end of this age and all Jewish people on earth will be saved.

The second reason Jesus is delaying His return, is He is waiting in heaven until the restoration of all things as the prophets foretold. The two 'things' to be restored is Israel and the Christian church. When we look at Israel, we can see how rapidly Israel is being restored. The Jewish people are returning home in droves from all over the globe. 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 Israel will be one nation instead of two. It will not be Israel and Judah, just Israel and after settling in their own land they will appoint themselves a head, or in modern language a Prime Minister, which they have done (Ezekiel 37:22). That has already happened. 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, Israel. 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 it will be said to them, "You are children of the Living God." Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel will be gathered together and appoint themselves one head ... great will be the day of Israel' (Hosea 1:10 & 11). These prophecies are about the latter days, which is now. God said, 'Hear the Word of the Lord O you nations and declare it in the islands 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, "I tell you, you will not see Me again until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord'" (Matthew 23:39) or in other words – to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. The Jewish people have to be made ready to welcome Him back and God is 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. Anyone who tries to resist the regathering of the Lord's people to Israel resists the return of the Messiah. God said, "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 I gave to their forefathers and they will possess it" (Jeremiah 30:3). All of Jeremiah chapters 30 & 31 give us details 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. The centre of God's salvation is Israel where the salvation message began. Our salvation has come solely from the Jews (John 4:22) and there is no other way anyone can be saved. The only way of salvation is through Jesus our Jewish Messiah. The Jewish people 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 look at a Scottish family who left Scotland and moved to a distant country, after only two generations their former lifestyle would diminish as they assimilate into the country where they live. They would no longer be regarded as Scottish but would

take on the identity of their new country. However, the Lord has kept the Jewish people as they are and they have always remained Jews in spite of terrible persecutions and vast distances. They are still a distinct people back in their own land with their own customs, feasts, language, culture, cuisine, ancient traditions, religious beliefs, calendar, celebrations, holidays and music. That in itself is an amazing miracle. Another amazing miracle is their return to the land promised to Abraham and his descendants about 4,000 years ago. Israel is blending the new arrivals from various countries into one nation. Israel is being restored rapidly, just as the Lord said.

Zechariah wrote about what will happen within 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. When Jesus returns, the whole of Israel and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will wake up to Who He really is and they will grieve and mourn with overwhelming sorrow because they have rejected Jesus for so long. Israel will realise their ancestors rejected their Messiah and that will cause much mourning – overwhelming grief, but it will also fully reconcile Jesus with His people forever. ‘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.” We must stress one important fact; the Jews did not crucify Jesus – the Gentile Romans did as they were inspired by the devil, which was prophesied by God when Adam first sinned. God said to the devil, “I will put enmity between you (the devil) and the woman, and between your (wicked) offspring and her Offspring (Jesus). He (Jesus) will bruise your (the devil’s) head and you (the devil) will bruise His heel” (Genesis 3:15). The devil used the Roman soldiers to ‘bruise the heel of Jesus’. Jesus ‘bruised the devil’s head’ by triumphing over all the forces of darkness. ‘He (Jesus) has taken it (the curse of spiritual death) out of the way, nailing it to the cross, having stripped the principalities and the powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them on the cross’ (Colossians 2:14 & 15). It was illegal in the Roman Empire in those days for any nation to crucify anyone without the expressed permission of the Roman authorities. However some Jewish leaders, Pharisees and the Sanhedrin were complicit in the murderous act – they wanted Jesus out of the way because too many Jews wanted Him to be their King (John 12:13) and they were jealous (Acts 5:17) but it was before His time to be crucified (John 7:6). Pilate knew Jesus was innocent and washed his hands of Him (Matthew 27:24) but Jesus had to die so salvation could come and God used the Gentile Romans to do it. Jesus was crucified by Gentiles and with His blood He can save all people who accept Him, 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, its Scriptural ‘first love’. 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. Initially, the early church was wholly Jewish and when 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 many modern 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. There are 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 will be thrown into the eternal 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 and Israel. Jesus warns us not every Christian will go to heaven. They will cry out in dismay, “Lord, Lord, did we not do all these things in Your name?” (Matthew 7:21 to 23). Jesus will reject them and say He never knew them and He will say only those who do God’s 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. In the early church, their ‘first love’ was the expansion of Judaism amongst new Christians. Judaism is the foundation of Christianity and Christianity is an extension of Judaism. Jesus said He held it against the church for abandoning their first love (Revelation 2:4). 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 God Who sent Me” (Luke 10:16). We all have to pay heed to the warnings Jesus gave to believers. The Christian church needs to be restored to its former glory and embrace the Hebrew roots of Christianity.

God 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 He is waiting for Christians 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 (of this age) will come’ (Matthew 24:14). When Jesus said ‘this’ Gospel of the Kingdom, He meant the Gospel of power not the watery, weak, wishy-washy, pious, humanistic, materialistic, monetary-driven religion droned out of some churches today. We need to restore the Spiritual message of the Gospel and teach what the full Gospel is; it is the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. It is a Spiritual message with Spiritual signs following. It is the message informing us 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. The Gospel takes us out of the kingdom of darkness and Spiritually 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 (Revelation 5:10). Jesus made very careful provision 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. Freely you received (the Gospel and salvation) so freely give (the Gospel of salvation)"' (Matthew 10:7 & 8). That is the Gospel Jesus was talking about and that is the Gospel we should be preaching. 'Jesus went to Galilee preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God saying, "The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand! Repent and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:14 & 15). 'Go around the world and 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 powerful Gospel of the Kingdom, not a watered down Gospel. During the days of the early church, Asia and the whole known 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 to 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 ... The disciples went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the Word by the signs that followed' (Mark 16:15 to 18 & 20). The obligation of the church is stated 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.

An area we need to recognise is missionary 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 missionary with a passion to go and spread the Gospel of the Kingdom. They cannot settle down into the standard procedures of modern Christianity because they have a vision outside the boundaries of the local church, out to the outside world. God's calling from deep within them says 'Go' and it keeps driving them on. They preach Jesus' Gospel of the Kingdom. They go to the people who have not yet been reached even to the point of risking their own life for the Gospel. They have the signs following. There are people who have followed God and given up their comfortable lives, often to the ridicule and misunderstanding of the church. Regular church people often do not understand them as they give up privileges, positions, possessions, comforts, they have a deeper understanding of the Scriptures which younger or weaker Christians find too much of a challenge, so they reject them. Many missionaries have God's calling burning deep within, and they go to reach the lost for Jesus, not being content to sit quietly and do nothing while the world perishes. Obviously not everybody is able to travel away to preach but those who stay at home and support missionaries and serve the Lord within their capacity receive the same rewards as those who go (1 Samuel 30:24). We can support missionaries through prayer, helping pay for their necessities, taking care of their vacant home or elderly parents. There are many things a 'stay-at-home' missionary can do to serve the Lord.

New Testament apostles/missionaries always operated in teams or married couples, 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 and we do not go to where the church is because we are the church. The church is where we are. We might be called on to go to various locations or the Lord may allow us to support His work from one location. 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 hierarchy. We need to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength (Luke 10:27). We have never been called to love the church. We are called to fellowship with one another (Hebrews 10:25) as we share the full Gospel. We need to look to the Scriptures 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 to 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 (Matthew 28:20). When we 'go' He will be with us always. We are to follow Him and teach others what Jesus has taught us. If we look at the Lord's Prayer, we can see it was the will of God for His Kingdom to come to earth (Luke 11:2). The whole of history was leading up to that one major event and it happened when Jesus came (Luke 10:9). 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 many 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 obeyed God and commanded his family do likewise. If every family on earth obeyed God, we would have very few problems.

There is much to do before Jesus comes again. 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 His Gospel of the Kingdom has been proclaimed in the entire world as a witness to all the nations. The Scripture makes it absolutely clear the Lord will not come until the church has fulfilled its obligations in the world. For us to see the return of the Lord, the church has 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 Israeli's return home as Israel is becoming completely restored! 'Lord, You have been favourable to Your land. You have restored the fortunes of Jacob. You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people. You have covered all their sin' (Psalm 85:1 & 2).

Amen and God bless you.

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