

Another Jesus – Matthew 24:23-27

"Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christ's, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Matthew 24:23-27

There are several things which we need to address concerning the above verses. Some of it we have already covered.

Verse twenty three, four and five are a reminder of verse five. This was of prime importance. It was the first thing Jesus said in answer to the disciple's questions. They must be on guard against false Christ's and false prophets who would seek to lead the people astray.

During the time when God performed miracles through Moses, the magicians of Pharaoh's court were able to duplicate the miracles up to a point. (See Exodus 7:10-13 & 19-22, 8:5-7 & 8:18) There was not much difference in the days of Christ and the Apostles. In the days of Moses, God confirmed His word with signs following. The same was true in the days of Christ and the Apostles. (See Hebrews 2:3-4 & Mark 16:20) Satan again stood ready with his deceptions also to draw away disciples after him. There were many who claimed to be Christ who had the ability to perform certain signs and wonders. The staff which Aaron had become a snake when he threw it on the ground. The magicians of Pharaoh's court did the same. In this case however, the miracle of God swallowed up the supposed miracle of the magicians. The magicians of Pharaoh's court could duplicate the miracles which Moses and Aaron did only to a certain point. After this they could do no more. The same was true in the days of the Apostles. Those false Christ's' could only go so far in trying to duplicate the true miracles of the Apostles.

Jesus mentions in our title text that it was not possible for these great signs and wonders of these false Christ's' and false prophets to deceive the very **elect**. One cannot help but think how the elect of God would try those who said they were Apostles and were not. (See Revelation 2:2) As we mentioned, the enemy could only go so far in duplication of the miracles and no further. The great miracle which would distinguish the true from the false would be the resurrection from the dead. Jesus is the resurrection and the life. This is a

miracle which those false prophets and false Christ's could not do. The same holds true today. If any who claim to be Apostles, or Christ's advocate signs and wonders then let us go together to the funeral home or the grave yard to see if they can raise the dead. I have not seen one yet who actually turned out to be an apostle. Most folks today spiritualize the raising of the dead immediately when being confronted with this truth. I feel certain this was the test the very elect of Jesus' generation applied when faced with the signs and wonders of the enemy which are only intended to deceive.

The title text mentions the coming of the Son of man. In this instance reference is made to the claim that Christ was either here or there. The idea is being taught which tells us when this '*coming*' which is under consideration comes to pass it will be out in the open for everyone to see. Not in the desert or in the secret chambers. Just as everyone is able to behold the rising of the sun each day, so would everyone behold or be aware of this '*coming*' of the Son of man. What we will undertake to show next is that this '*coming*' refers **not** to the end of time, but to **the time of the end**.

There is much evidence in the New Testament which we have shown to this point which tells us without doubt God was to take vengeance upon Jerusalem. Whatever method God designed to accomplish this end can rightly be called God's work. Just as when God desired to wipe out the Gentiles of Canaan through the armies of the children of Israel, He could do the same in reverse towards his disobedient children. The children of Israel were only instruments which God used to carry out His judgment upon the disobedient. God used the armies of Rome to execute His judgement upon Jerusalem. When the children of Israel marched against the many nations who walked in disobedience to God, it was said it was God who destroyed those nations. The battle is The Lord's. (See 1 Samuel 17:47) Therefore we can rightly say it was God who destroyed Jerusalem. And the '*coming*' of the Son of man under consideration would be realized through the Roman armies.

Let's look closer at this much mistaken phrase, "**the coming of The Lord**." Almost always when I mention this people automatically think of the '*second*' coming or the consummation of all things. Though this is something the Christian looks forward to with anticipation, the scripture speaks sparingly on this subject. The following scripture is the key to understanding the parables concerning the kingdom of heaven.

"He answered and said unto them, because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given."

Matthew 13:11

This text by no means implies that only those who are given the mysteries are the only ones who live in heaven. This again has reference to the "very elect" of God, or the remnant according to the election of grace. As the text clearly tells us, these people will have the mysteries of the kingdom revealed to them. Others will not have it revealed to them. This principle, of Divine revelation is anchored within the sovereignty of God. It is His right and good pleasure to reveal Himself or His truths to whom so ever He pleases. (See Romans chapter 9 & Matthew 16:13-17 & Romans 10:20) Usually when a person locks on to the phrase "*kingdom of God*" and sees no other interpretation other than "*heaven and immortal*

glory” it is evident a revelation has not taken place. Until such takes place in the Christian life of an individual, inconsistency in reading and interpreting the scriptures concerning the kingdom of God will prevail and will seriously limit his view on the entirety of scripture. He may get bits and pieces but will never be able with consistency be able to put all the pieces together. Again I state, this does not mean he is not a child of God, but rather it states the degree of light which he has. Jesus says;

“Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.”
Luke 11:35

From this text we learn there varying degrees of light which The Lord gives. Those who are given the most light are given the greater responsibility. To whom much is given, much is required. (See Mark 4:24 & Luke 12:48)

Most places where the scripture refers to "*a coming of The Lord,*" or the "*coming of the kingdom*" it is dealing with **an event in time**. Especially when the phrase is used in Matthew twenty-four it is speaking of The Lord's return in the destruction of Jerusalem, of God taking vengeance on Israel. It is God who promised the downfall in AD 70 and said He would do it personally. (See Ezekiel 5:8-11)

The “**coming of the kingdom**” can be rightly understood of a continued manifestation of the truths and blessing of God through Jesus Christ. Although all manifestations are not positive. Some have negative consequences attached to them. This is the reality of the kingdom. Blessings for obedience, chastisement for disobedience. There are several places where this is taught in the Bible. So let us look at a few instances where The Lord has come and the kingdom has been manifested.

The Lord administered the final Passover supper with His disciples before He was crucified. In this service He makes a special promise which would soon see its fulfillment. We read;

“For I say unto you, I will not anymore eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves; For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God come.
Luke 22:16-18)

The above passage speaks of Jesus not partaking of bread and wine until after it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. Of course the bread and wine are symbols of His body and His blood which He gave on the behalf of His people. Jesus says the next time He will partake of these symbols will be in the kingdom of God. This brings us to the time after Jesus' resurrection when Peter and the others had seen The Lord. Peter tells us who saw The Lord and what happened;

"Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead."

Acts 10:41

This clearly shows us the fulfillment of the words of Jesus concerning eating and drinking in the kingdom of God. In Matthew Jesus speaks of drinking it ‘**new**’ with his disciples in the kingdom. (See Matthew 26:29) I certainly think the resurrection from the dead could rightly be termed ‘**new**.’ If this were the only text we knew of to prove the fact of the kingdoms existence it should be sufficient. However I know most people want more proof. Remember He says, in the mouth of two or three witnesses let every word be established. (See 2 Corinthians 13:1) (See also Matthew 16:28)

“And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.”

Mark 9:1

The people who were eye witnesses of Jesus’ ministry and heard Him speak these words with their own ears would experience the coming of the kingdom in power before they would die. Even those who pierced Him. (See Revelation 1:7) It cannot be any plainer than this. Jesus returned in the power of His kingdom to destroy Jerusalem. Now I am not saying He appeared physically, but He was the driving force and power behind the destruction of Jerusalem. He gave the Jews over to the Roman army which moved against the region. And some of the people who had experienced the events in Jerusalem connected to the great tribulation knew without doubt it was Jesus who foretold exactly what would happen to them. They perceived it was the leader of Christians who was the great power of God.

So this is evidence Jesus ‘*came*’ in the destruction of Jerusalem. Yet there are other places in scripture which will show us God's "coming" was not referring to the end of time. Let us look at some Old Testament prophecies which speak of Jerusalem's demise as it is connected to the "*day of The Lord*" and "*the coming of God*." In Matthew twenty-four Jesus draws from Isaiah.

"Behold, the day of The Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine."

Isaiah 13:9-10

(I will deal with verse ten when I come to Matthew chapter twenty-four verse twenty nine. I quoted the entire text to show the connection between Matthew and Isaiah.)

Isaiah was born about 760 BC. He speaks of many things in his prophecies. He sets the time context for his vision in chapter two verse two as “*the last days*.” The subject context can be determined by looking at chapter one verse. His vision was concerning Judah and Jerusalem. So the last days spoken of here are not the end of time, but the last days for Jerusalem and the law. For grace is to be established and is referred to by Isaiah as “*the*

mountain of The Lord's house." As I mentioned earlier, many aspects of the coming of The Lord are positive in their nature, but many are negative and were to be dreaded.

Verse six of the twelfth chapter of Isaiah says:

"Howl ye; for the day of The Lord is at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty."

Isaiah 13:6

Isaiah prophesied approximately two hundred years before the Babylonian captivity and about seven hundred fifty years before Jesus was manifest in the flesh. Jerusalem was destroyed the first time about 586 BC by king Nebuchadnezzar when the Babylonians conquered the city. It was destroyed again in AD 70 by Titus, commander of the armies of Rome. Isaiah's first prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction seems to pre-figure the second. Both times the city suffered the wrath of God for disobeying His commands. Both can be described as "*the day of The Lord.*" As the context will prove, this is not talking about the end of time, but rather the time of the end. When Jerusalem would see its demise. Again we see the phrase "*the day of The Lord.*" We also see a '*coming*' of The Lord.

Many places in the Bible the presence of God is described in connection with clouds. After the children of Israel came out of Egypt God was said to have led them by a pillar of a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. (See Exodus 13:21) When Moses had ascended into the mount to receive the tables of stone and the law, a cloud was said to have covered the mountain where he met with God. (See Exodus 24:15) David said God made the clouds His chariot and He walks upon the wings of the wind. (See Psalms 104:3) Nahum describes the clouds as the dust of God's feet. (See Nahum 1:3) Ezekiel refers to the day of The Lord as a cloudy day. (See Ezekiel 30:3) Each of these expressions or uses of clouds indicates the presence or movement of God to either save or judge the nations of the earth. **They are not literal** representations of God and His work, but are symbolic and figurative of the same. Let's look at an example.

"The burden of Egypt. Behold, The Lord rideth upon a swift cloud and shall come into Egypt..."

Isaiah 19:1

The above verse speaks of the time when God judged Egypt and allowed the kings of Persia, Cambyses II and Ochus come to invade the land in 525 BC. History has well documented this fact. The swift cloud denotes the speed in which God's judgment was carried out against them. God did not literally ride upon the cloud. We must understand sometimes these events are viewed from God's standpoint and not mans. God used '*means*' (the Persian armies) to accomplish this judgment, and He speaks as though it would be done by Him personally. The modern day mindset will not allow the Christian to think The Lord coming on the clouds in any other context than the end of time. Ninety nine percent of the time when I speak to people about The Lord coming on the clouds of heaven they immediately begin to think of the end of time. Although we anticipate the time when Jesus does return the second time in the clouds of heaven it does not justify our mishandling or misapplication of any

scripture which teaches "*The Lord coming in the clouds.*" This further illustrates the point I mentioned earlier which teaches us that the mystery of God's kingdom must be revealed to us or we will become amazingly inconsistent with the whole of the Bible. We might be able to place a few of the scriptures together but the rest we will have to avoid on a regular basis. The mis-informed Christian will also take the same position on the text from Matthew chapter twenty-four which mention Jesus coming with the clouds and become locked into "**the end of time paradigm.**" The above texts quoted from Isaiah have seen their fulfillment many generations ago. Not every time we read of The Lord "*coming on the clouds*" does it mean "*the end of time.*" The above verse is evidence of this. We also see evidence there is more than one "*coming of The Lord.*" And we saw from the above quoted verses there is more than one "*day of The Lord.*" This information will be helpful in discerning Matthew chapter twenty-four.

I challenge the reader who doubts what I am saying to take up his concordance and research the words, "*coming, cometh and come,*" in reference to God. You will be amazed at the multitude of examples like the ones above you will find. And while you are at it look at the phrase, "*the day of The Lord.*" The number of instances you will find overwhelmingly prove our current study.

So when Matthew chapter twenty-four verse twenty seven speaks of the "*coming of the Son of man,*" you will know in context it is referring to the destruction of Jerusalem and not the "*end of time.*"

As Jesus mentions in verse twenty seven, this coming will be like the lightning. It will come quickly. But not without warning. All the signs which Jesus gives in answer to the questions of Peter, James, John and Andrew give them ample warning of the events which would come to pass in their generation. (See Mark 13:3) And as we read these passages today they are for our learning. We can see the reward of chastisement for disobedience towards God. Let us take heed and not fall into the same example of unbelief as the Jews did.

Consider the story told us in the conclusion on the book of John. Remembering history tells us John was the only apostle not to be killed by the persecutors of Christians. John died of natural causes. Once Jesus tells Peter of the path in which the Spirit would lead him, signifying by what death he should glorify God, Peter becomes concerned about John.

"Jesus saith unto him, if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"

John 21:22-23

Notice here first of all John refers to himself as that disciple. In other places in his writing he calls himself "*the disciple whom Jesus loves.*" What I want to call your attention to is the statement which Jesus makes. It was the will of Jesus that John remain alive until he had '**come.**' He did not say John would not die. So we must consider the fact Jesus is not referring

to the end of time in the '*coming*' which He mentions. Could this '*coming*' be Jesus' return in the destruction of Jerusalem? This is the only thing which makes any sense of the above text.

Again be reminded the Bible mentions many '*comings*' of God and also refers to the "day of The Lord" as being more than one incident. If you are looking for this in your study you will be amazed. Not every '*day*' of The Lord is the end of time, and not every '*coming*' of The Lord means the final return of Jesus.