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Is Jesus Really Returning? (Part I)

Matthew 24:3 (NASB) *As he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?*



It was about 2,000 years ago when Jesus walked this earth as a man to fulfill the necessary requirements of justice and give his life as a ransom price for Adam and therefore for all mankind. We see his sacrifice as the pivot point of human history - and it was, but Jesus himself assured us that his work to reconcile this world to God was in fact NOT completed at that time. Jesus said that he would come back to finish what he had started and that there would be certain signs in the world to determine when this would happen. So, can we read the signs of his return?

First, the purposes of Jesus' First Advent:

- To pay the redeeming price for Adam's sin and therefore to purchase Adam's entire race. The man, Adam, was responsible for sin entering. Adam brought the human race into sin; Jesus brings the race out of sin.
- To call out a people for his name to be his "royal priesthood" and "ministers of reconciliation" to the rest of the world in preparation for his second advent and the judgment. Not only does Jesus come to begin the reconciliation process, but also he comes to call out "a people for his name," also called "the heavenly calling" and "the true church," which will be his "bride" in heaven for the preparation of the great Day of Judgment.



What will happen when Jesus returns, John Ankerberg talking to a pastor

- *What happens when Jesus does come back? Jesus Christ steps back on the Mount of Olives and that false tribulation temple will be destroyed, because when he steps down on the Mount of Olives that mountain is going to divide in the middle. It's going to start from the west, which would be the Temple Mount, and go to the east so the Temple Mount will be wiped out. The temple will be destroyed. Then Jesus Christ is going to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. He's going to lift it up. It's about eight and a half square miles. That'll be twenty-five hundred square miles. He will put the temple mount up and that will be one square mile, and on top of that he will build a 21-story high temple, the one that he will rule and reign from in that millennial kingdom, and in fact into the future as well.*

That is a very literal perspective. It takes several Scriptures from the Old and New Testament and puts them together. But is that really what is going to happen? There are MANY reasons for Jesus to return. **Jesus returns to restore Israel: Acts 1:6-7 Matthew 23:37-39:** It is not going to stay *desolate*. The re-establishment of Israel is a very big part of the return of Jesus.

Jesus returns to gather his followers: Parable of the Talents Matthew 25:13-14

John 14:1-3: This gives us a sense of Jesus' heart toward his followers. Jesus came the first time pay the price and to call out a people for his name. He paid the price, but whatever he paid for was not received yet. He returns to finish that work.

Jesus returns to cast out Satan: John 12:31

Jesus returns to bring an end to this corrupt world: 2 Peter 3:9-12: There is a lot that he left undone. Many look at the return of Jesus as a monumental singular event, but there are many things that Jesus needs to do.


Jesus returns to establish his kingdom: Parable of the Pounds: Luke 19:11 So, the kingdom of God would appear proving that when Jesus often said the kingdom was among them, he was speaking of the preparation or the developmental stage of the kingdom - not the final phase in full glory.

Jesus returns to bring judgment upon individuals: Matthew 16:27: There is a personal process every individual will need to go through as a result of the return of Jesus.

Jesus returns to subject all things unto him: Philippians 3:20-21



Finally, Jesus returns to subject all things unto God: 1 Corinthians 15:28: This gives us a sense of the magnitude of the return of Jesus. **Major points of understanding regarding the reasons for Jesus return:** 1. Jesus returns to accomplish many things which by nature cannot all happen at once, 2. When we read of his return we therefore must envision a PROCESS and not an EVENT. **Jesus returns with power and glory!** Luke 21:27: Is it just the son of man that they see? It sounds like it is a solo act. **Jesus returns with a shout and a trumpet!** 1 Thessalonians 4:16: But that still sounds like he is coming by himself. **Jesus returns with his mighty angels!** 2 Thessalonians 1:7: It does not sound like it is one dramatic event but rather a gradual revealing. He is with his mighty angels (his truest followers). **Jesus returns as a thief!** 2 Peter 3:10: A thief comes quietly. That is completely different language than what we just talked about. Is it just the day of the Lord that comes as a thief or is it Jesus that comes as a thief? This seems to contradict.

 **What will happen when Jesus returns, John Ankerberg interviews a pastor**

- *After that he goes to the Jezreel Valley. The Battle of Armageddon takes place. He walks from there over to Petra, which is in southern Jordan today. He gathers in the Jews that he has protected in that place provided by him for the last three and a half years of the tribulation period. He comes across the Jordan valley, comes up behind the eastern mountain of the Temple Mount - that would be the Mount of Olives - crosses the Kidron valley, goes through that eastern gate, walks into the Temple, goes into the Holy of Holies and sits down in the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. God told David, "I will let one of your sons build a temple in Jerusalem and he will rule and reign from that temple." Jesus Christ is that son of David that will do that. That's all in the future.*

This speaker lists several things taken very literally about Jesus, but the second presence of Jesus does not work that way.

Jesus - the thief? Matthew 24:42-43: So Jesus is breaking and entering. When a house is broken into in the middle of the night, no one knows it. Satan's domain (here represented by the *head of the house*) does not really belong to him.

Matthew 12:28-29: Now Jesus is binding and removing property...this is not a public event. It is done quietly. **Time out!** How can you return as a thief AND with a shout and a trumpet and with angels? You can't - not all at once anyway - remember that the reasons for Jesus' return were all part of a process? Could his actual return ALSO be a process? Consider this next description:

Jesus' return is as the sun! Matthew 24:27: (KJV) *For as the lightning <796> cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*

How can this be the sun? Doesn't it say lightning? Let's look at Luke's rendering of the same verse: (Please see CQ Rewind Bonus Material for a more comprehensive look.)

Luke 17:24: (KJV) *For as the lightning <796>, that lighteneth <797> 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. This word lightning <796> can mean glare, lightning, brightness, or the gleam of a lamp.*

Two other examples of this word in the New Testament: Luke 11:36: (KJV) *If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining <796> of a candle (a steady light) doth give thee light.*

Revelation 8:5: *And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings <796>, and an earthquake.*

Because it is translated to be both a *brightness* and *lightning*, how can we be sure for its meaning here? The answer is in the second word in the Luke text: **lighteneth <797>**

Only other use of **<797>**: Luke 24:4: (KJV) *And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining <797> garments:*

The answer: Lightning flashes and sunlight shines! Malachi 4:1-2: Since when does the sun have *healing wings*? This is a major key to understanding Jesus' return. Based on what we have seen thus far, the Day of the Lord comes in stages like the sunrise: Faint and imperceptible at first, then growing to a point of being obviously manifest, then rising to the full revelation of its power!



Matthew 24:27: (NRSV) *For as the lightning (brightness) comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the **coming <3952>** of the Son of Man. Wait a minute! Isn't this text talking about the sunrise analogy relating to the COMING of Jesus and NOT his actual presence? Isn't that what it says? Matthew 24:3: (NASB) *As he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of your **coming <3952>**, and of the end of the age?**

Now, a startling detail of these Scriptures that is almost always overlooked:

Coming: Strongs #3952 parousia (par-oo-see'-ah); from the present participle of 3918; a being near; KJV-- coming, presence. From this word: Strongs #3918 pareimi (par'-i-mee); to be near, i.e. at hand

Some examples of coming: 2 Corinthians 10:10: *For his letters, say they are weighty and powerful; but his bodily **presence <3952>** is weak, and his speech contemptible.*

Philippians 2:12: *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my **presence <3952>** only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Okay, if you are not completely convinced, let's compare the "counterpart" of Matthew 24:27 with it: Luke 17:24: (KJV) *For as the **lightning <796>**, that **lighteneth <797>** 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.**

Another analogy would be energy saving light bulbs. When you turn them on, they start out faint and get brighter and brighter.

Matthew 24:27: (NRSV) *For as the lightning (brightness) comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the **coming <3952>** of the Son of Man. For these two Scriptures to agree, coming MUST mean presence. So, does this work? The first phase of sunrise is faint and imperceptible at first: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3: (NASB) It seems that these early Christians were given a good sense of the stages that God's plan had gone through and would continue to go through...To paraphrase: It is already obvious to you that the day of the Lord comes unexpectedly.*

Could Jesus' return REALLY be unnoticed? How long could that last for?

It seems evident that the return of Jesus begins in a way that is, for all practical purposes, unnoticed. Acts 1:9-11:



Observations:

- A cloud took him out of sight. Clouds in the scriptures symbolize trouble. If he was taken up in clouds in trouble, Jesus will return in clouds, in trouble. Jesus tells us there will be a time of trouble...
- Two men - angels - *out of the mouth of two witnesses*. The two witnesses of Revelation 11:3? In the Old Testament law it was always important to have two witnesses to establish something to be true.
- *This Jesus* - Jesus the spirit being raised to immortality. This Jesus is spiritual; expect this Jesus to come in the same way.
- Will come in the same way - not the same form, but the same manner - quietly, with no one but his followers watching. The return of Jesus starts out subtly. God is a God of subtlety. He does not need dramatic.

We know that Jesus' return cannot possibly remain that way. This next text actually shows us a transition from phase one to phase two: 2 Thessalonians 2:8: (KJV) *And then shall that Wicked be **revealed <601>**, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the **brightness <2015>** of his **coming: <3952>** (presence).*

The Lord's return comes in **three basic stages**, as there are three different words used to describe it. **The first stage** was the word for *presence*, which we saw was translated *coming* in Matthew 24 and other New Testament prophecies of Jesus' return but translated *presence* multiple times elsewhere.

The second stage is built upon the first: The return is growing to a point of being obviously manifest. Think of a sunrise on a very cloudy day - you can see the light of the sun, but you cannot see the sun. Several hours after the dawn the dark and stormy sky lightens, so *the sun*



has obviously risen even though you still cannot see it. Why are we adding clouds to the picture? Jesus was taken up into the clouds.

Brightness: Strongs #2015 epiphaneia (ep-if-an'-i-ah); from 2016; a manifestation, i.e. (specially) the advent of Christ (past or future): KJV-- appearing, brightness.

2 Timothy 4:1: (KJV) *I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his **appearing <2015>** and his kingdom;* 2 Thessalonians 2:8: (KJV) *And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the **brightness <2015>** of his coming:* Titus 2:13: (KJV) Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious **appearing <2015>** of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. Those of us who live at this end time have the opportunity to see the manifestations of Jesus' presence. That can give us great hope even though it is through trouble and difficulty.

The **third stage** of Jesus' return is the bright shining - the disclosure stage. Now the sun is high in the sky and will begin to burn off those clouds of trouble so that its rays can begin the healing process. The return of Jesus is in steps, not all at once.

Revealed: Strongs #602 apokalupsis (ap-ok-al'-oop-sis); disclosure; KJV-- appearing, coming, lighten, manifestation, be revealed, revelation.

Root word: #601 apokalupto (ap-ok-al'-oop'-to); to take off the cover, i.e. disclose:

The Judgment Day will be a day of trial and eventually judgment for the world: Romans 2:5: (KJV) *But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and **revelation <602>** of the righteous judgment of God;*

2 Thessalonians 1:6-9: (NASB) *⁶For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be **revealed <602>** from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, ⁸dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.*

The revelation or disclosure is the third stage. This now makes so much more sense in light of all the other events that are a part of Jesus' return. **The sons of God will also be revealed - Jesus' mighty angels from the previous text:** Romans 8:19: (KJV) *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the **manifestation <602>** of the sons of God.*

Jesus will be revealed with his angels, his true church. The church will be revealed and thought of as very special. They will be involved in the reconciliation process of the world to God. This will be in the third stage.

1 Peter 1:5: (KJV) *Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be **revealed <601>** in the last time.* We believe we are now in the second stage. There are manifestations of his presence to the followers of Jesus at this time.

Bottom Line: Jesus having returned is already in the process of taking down the kingdoms of this world and setting up his kingdom of righteousness: Daniel 2:44-45 Zephaniah 3:8-9: Jesus returns to restore that which was lost. What was lost? Perfect human life on earth.

Major points of understanding regarding the manner of Jesus' return:

- With power, glory, angels, a shout, a trumpet, like a thief - too many things for one event
- His return is a process, just as the accomplishments of his return are a process
- The word for "coming" actually means "present" or "alongside"
- His return is likened to a sunrise - faint - there but behind clouds - finally shining

When Jesus returns, it is hidden to anyone but those who are really looking. As time goes on, the manifestation will be seen. There will be a time when the return of Jesus will burn off the clouds of trouble and bring righteousness to the world. That is the ultimate result of the return of Jesus!

*So, is Jesus really returning?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...Think about it...!*