



Why Did Jesus Say He Would Return?

John 14:3: (NASB) *If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also.*



The Golden Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem: In Jewish tradition, this is the gate through which the Messiah will enter Jerusalem. Ottoman Sultan Suleiman I sealed off the Golden Gate in 1541 to prevent the Messiah's entrance.

If you are a Bible-believing Christian, the prophecies about the return of Jesus are not in question. If you are a Bible-believing Christian, you know that the return of Jesus coincides with the End Times, again, not a question. The question is: Why does Jesus return? What is the mission, what is the focus, what is the purpose of his return? As we approach the well-publicized date of May 21, 2011, and its accompanied predictions of rapture, chaos and destruction, we thought we would spend the two Sundays leading up to it in an in depth conversation about the second coming of Christ, so today is the "why" of his coming and next Sunday is the "how."

Matthew 24:1-2: (NASB) ¹*Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when his disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to him. ²And he said to them, Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.*

Jesus is speaking of a dramatic event of startling proportions! Later on...

Matthew 24:3: (NASB) ³*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?*

One key for understanding here - the "these things" the disciples asked about was the destruction of the Temple. They *also* asked about Jesus' return - a *separate* set of questions. We believe that to understand the prophecy of Matthew 24, we must understand that Jesus was answering three distinct questions.

 **The Promised Return of Jesus, 3angelsDVD.com**

- *The world's greatest hope is Jesus' promised return to this earth. The scriptures teach that he will come once all people will have had the opportunity to learn about him and his plan of salvation...the New Testament promises at least 300 times that Jesus will return.*
- Matthew 24:14: (NASB) *This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.*

We want to clarify, however, because that's not exactly what Matthew 24:14 says.



Observations:

- The Good News of a coming kingdom is preached;
- ...Preached, but not necessarily *accepted*. All nations aren't to be converted.
- A testimony to nations, but not necessarily to *every single person*; billions have not individually heard the Gospel;



- By 1861, the Bible Society Reports indicated that the Gospel had been published in all of the nations of the world. The Gospel *did* go out to all nations through the printed word.

So this prophecy seems to already have been fulfilled over a period of time.

Matthew 28:18-19: (NASB) ¹⁸And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit...

Jesus isn't instructing them to make all the nations disciples, but to make disciples of all of the nations - to call people out from wherever they are.

**If we understand the first coming of Jesus,
will we better understand his second coming?**

Why did he come the first time? To provide salvation to ALL:

Hebrews 2:9: (NRSV) *but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

Romans 5:18-19: (KJV) *Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.*

A perfect man died for a perfect man, satisfying God's justice. As we inherited the sin of Adam, we also inherit the redemption of Jesus.

To provide salvation and the privilege of blessing the world to Israel as their promised Messiah:

Genesis 22:15-18: (KJV) ¹⁵And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, ¹⁶And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: ¹⁷That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; ¹⁸And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

Matthew 15:24: (NRSV) *He answered, I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

Jesus came to give the Gospel to Israel first and foremost. Their rejection of him as a nation gave the Gentiles the opportunity. Individuals followed, but not the nation as a whole.

But Jesus was rejected by Israel:

Matthew 23:37-39: (NRSV) ³⁷Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁸See, your house is left to you, desolate. ³⁹For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Jesus essentially casts them off as they cast him off. Just as the nations were witnessed to in our previous segment, so the "nation" of Israel rejected Jesus, yet *all* of his initial followers were Jews. Nations = bigger picture




John 1:10-11: (NRSV) ¹⁰*He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.*

So this special call would now be opened to anyone who would receive him:

John 1:12-13: (NRSV) ¹²*But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.*

It would no longer be necessary to be born into a nation of favor. The calling out to the Gentiles was opened up by the will of God based on the rejection of Israel.

We think it is important to understand all of the reasons for Jesus' return in the first Advent in order to help us to understand all of the many details describing the second.

 **My peace I leave you, *The Gospel of John Movie***

Jesus told his disciples to be ready and to have peace. We need to be prepared and peaceful as well.

Galatians 3:26-29: (NRSV) ²⁶*for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. ²⁷As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.*

This shows inclusiveness.

So the purposes of Jesus' first Advent:

1. To pay the redeeming price for the sin of Adam, and therefore to purchase Adam's entire race;
2. 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.

There is more of a judgment aspect of Jesus being present the second time. It is a broader based judgment than that of the nation of Israel at that time.

He began a work that needed to be finished.

Does Jesus come to take true believers to heaven?

John 14:1-3: (NASB) ¹*Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also.*

Jesus is clear that he is coming back for his followers - those then and now - which should be a message of great comfort.



Christians expect the return of Jesus in many different ways.

Here is a very literal, dramatic perspective:

 **Taking the Believers, *The Great Tribulation*, YouTube**

- *There is a mighty earthquake...the children of God stand in a rainbow...their redeemer and his vast army of angels are coming to take them home.*

The coming of Jesus was not only promised many times over, but we believe it was shown in the progression of the history of the true church in Revelation. There are seven churches for seven stages of history leading right up to our present time.

A quick look at the last four stages of the true church. Remember, these stages cover 2,000 years of time. The promise of a return is always in front of Christians no matter what the age.

<Fourth Stage>

Revelation 2:18,25: (NASB) ¹⁸And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write...
²⁵Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come.

<Fifth Stage>

Revelation 3:1,3: (NASB) ¹To the angel of the church in Sardis write:...³So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.

The warning is, be careful, because you could lose the privilege about knowing.

<Sixth Stage>

Revelation 3:7,11: (NASB) ⁷And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this: ¹¹I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

There is a greater anticipation of his coming at this stage. The warning is to be more on the alert.

<Seventh Stage>

Revelation 3:14,20: (NASB) ¹⁴To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ²⁰Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with me.

At this last stage, Jesus is knocking at the door - he is present! He is here!



Observations:

- Jesus does come for his followers;
- He takes a long time, so he continually reminds those who are faithful throughout the ages;
- His final reminder is actually an arrival - he is at the door;
- His followers must open the door to him.



Romans 8:17-19: (NASB) ¹⁷and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. ¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.

Humanity needs reconciliation to God, and this is one of the reasons Jesus returns.

recap
recap

Does Jesus' return bring perilous times?

- Jesus' return was a prophecy that he himself spoke of in great detail - especially in Matthew 24;
- Jesus' first coming was to pay the ransom price and to call out a people for his name;
- One of Jesus' reasons for returning a second time was to gather his followers to be with him;
- Jesus' return would only happen after the Gospel was made available throughout the whole world;
- This has already happened - as far back as 1861, the Bible Societies reported that the Bible was published in every known language and distributed. For us, this is a quiet fulfillment of this prophecy.

Perilous times predicted

Jesus' return has everything to do with the trouble and distress that comes upon the world:

2 Timothy 3:1-4: (NASB) ¹But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. ²For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, ⁴treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

Luke 21:34-35: (NASB) ³⁴Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; ³⁵for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth.

Matthew 24:21-22: (NASB) ²¹For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. ²²Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.



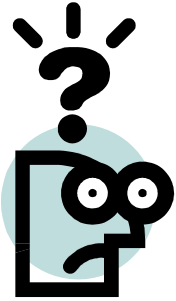
The Vengeance of God, The Great Tribulation, YouTube

- For those left behind, chaos reigns on the earth...earthquakes...gigantic hail...those that survive are killed by the brightness of our Lord's presence. (Jeremiah 35:31-33)

Many prophecies do talk about very dramatic things and can be scary, but we need to understand the process of God's plan. Is that destruction the end of the process or part of the process? We will get back to this.



Jeremiah 25:31-33: (NASB) ³¹A clamor has come to the end of the earth, because the LORD has a controversy with the nations. He is entering into judgment with all flesh; As for the wicked, He has given them to the sword, declares the LORD. ³²Thus says the LORD of hosts, Behold, evil is going forth from nation to nation, and a great storm is being stirred up from the remotest parts of the earth. ³³Those slain by the LORD on that day will be from one end of the earth to the other. They will not be lamented, gathered or buried; they will be like dung on the face of the ground.



Important question:

What if the events recorded in the Bible regarding Jesus' return were not all supposed to happen all at once? What if they were a *process* rather than an *event*?

Example: Jesus' first coming - we say that he came to pay the price, that he came to call out a people for his name, that he began his ministry by going into seclusion for 40 days, that he performed miracles in many places, that he preached in many places, that he was pursued by the Pharisees and eventually crucified. We do NOT say that all of these things were simultaneous. Why do we so often assume that all of these prophecies of the return of Jesus will all happen at the same time? Why would his second coming be that different than his first coming?

Does Jesus' return bring a restitution of all things?

Daniel 2:44-45: (NASB) ⁴⁴In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. ⁴⁵Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.

The crushing of these kingdoms - the removal of the corrupt governments - is part of the trouble in the world at Jesus' return. If we only read that part of the text, it would be a fearsome and troubling event. What we need to understand is the *process*, the necessary process to replace the old sinful way with a new and perfect way. His kingdom endures forever.

 I will give to everyone accordingly, 3angelsDVD.com

- All wicked people will be destroyed at his appearing...those who have accepted him will be taken in the air...and will live in heaven for 1,000 years...

This is another perspective, but we want to piece together context by context what will happen.

Acts 3:20-21: (NASB) ²⁰and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, ²¹whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.



Observations:

- God sends Jesus;
- Jesus comes for the true church;



- He does NOT come UNTIL the period called "the times of restoration;"
- This "time/period" was clearly prophesied;
- Any thorough restoration process requires a dismantling first - it is at the *beginning* of the process, not the end.

2 Peter 2:5: (NASB) *and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;*

So, God "destroyed" the world without destroying the world! He destroyed the order of things. This is an important concept in how God works retribution and judgment, then restoration.

Jesus brings difficulty - "*a time of trouble that never was since there was a nation,*" but he also brings restitution after the trouble.

This shows us both parts of the picture with clarity:

Zephaniah 3:8: (NASB) ⁸*Therefore wait for Me, declares the LORD, For the day when I rise up as a witness. Indeed, My decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out on them My indignation, all My burning anger; For all the earth will be devoured by the fire of My zeal.*

That sounds serious! Does the earth literally burn to a crisp?

Zephaniah 3:9: (NASB) ⁹*For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him shoulder to shoulder.*

Here is an example of the two aspects of the return of Jesus:

- 1) the difficulty, trouble, indignation and judgment; AND
- 2) the restitution.

The context of Jude is also about the convincing of man after the return of Christ:

Jude 14-15: *Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.*

The return of Jesus is a *process* much more than it is an *event*.

What about the Rapture?

Thus far we have seen that Jesus comes to gather his saints, to crush the kingdoms of this world and to restore that which was lost. We have also seen that all of these things are much more sensibly looked at as a process rather than an event...

Therefore, according to Rick, while drama is an effective attention getter, it does not equal effective planning; rather a "*line upon line, precept upon precept*" process builds an everlasting Kingdom.

 **God is warning of Rapture on 5-21-11, May 21, 2011 Warning**

- *The Rapture of the true believers will occur on May 21, 2011.*



- *That will be followed by a period of 153 days, the Day of Judgment, after which on October 21, 2011, this entire cosmos will be destroyed by God Himself.*

This is a radical perspective on the return of Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God,*

Notice, no mention of the myriads of angels with him. They do come later. Remember, we are saying this is a *process*...

and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Here is a straightforward fulfillment of Jesus' own words to his followers. (*"I go to prepare a place for you..."*)

¹⁷*Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up*

We don't look at the Rapture as a physical event. What does the word "*Then*" mean in this scripture in the original Greek? The Greek word is "epeita," which means "Afterward." Rotherham translates it as "After that." Thus verses 16 and 17 actually tell us that the dead in Christ are raised at the return of Christ, and some remain after that, to be later called home to join the others.

There is a sense of *process*, not necessarily limited to a single event. The return is an event that brings a very distinct process. The process includes coming to take his true followers who have died to be with him, bringing destruction to the existing nations and crushing those kingdoms, and finally, giving the people "*pure lips*" and a "*pure language*" and people worshipping God. These things all fit together as part of the return of Jesus.

*So why did Jesus say he would return?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

*And now even more to think about...
only in the **Full Edition** of CQ Rewind!*



A Few Notes on the "Rapture," by David Stein

David Stein, Bible scholar, is a frequent guest on Christian Questions and provides here a brief review of the subject of the Rapture.

Summary of the traditional view: The rapture is the event which occurs when Jesus returns and collects the believing church unto himself in the air. Believers are taken away from the earth to be with Jesus. They disappear from everyday activities and all true believers are suddenly gone.

The main Scripture verse for this view: 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17: ¹⁵*For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up*



together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

However, there are several scriptural difficulties with this view:

1. The first thing we note is that when the Lord returns, we are told that the "dead in Christ" shall rise first. The word "then" in verse 17 has the thought of 'afterwards' (Greek *epeita*, "thereafter"). Notice that the verse does not say, "Then we which are alive shall be caught up" - that would be a physical, visible rapture - but "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up." The churches teach that when the dead saints are raised, the living saints are raised simultaneously. No. Those who are not dead in Christ "remain" and are dealt with, not as a group, but rather as individuals.

This is testified to in Revelation 14:13: *And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow [with] them.*

"from henceforth" would be from the time of our Lord's return. Clearly there is work to be done after his return, thus we have the concept of the second presence. So there is a rapture of saints during the period of our Lord's return and presence. But it is secret, unseen by the world, and it begins with the sleeping saints.

2. Another key word in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 is "together." In the church view this is taken to mean 'together' *at the same time*. Evidently the phrase "caught up together with them" does not denote the time, but rather the *place* of their being together, for in 1 Thessalonians 5:10, the same Greek word *hama* is again translated "together" and clearly denotes place. "That whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." And the context of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 clearly indicates that the "dead in Christ" and the living church are not taken at the same time.

3. The idea of visible rapture overlooks the requirements that every one of Jesus' followers follow his footsteps EXACTLY and finish their earthly course just as he did - to die a sacrificial death. With the rapture interpretation, the last members of the church don't have to die sacrificially! Consider Psalm 82 in this connection which is prophetically speaking about the Gospel Age saints:

Psalms 82:6,7: *I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.*

Each of the saints, children of the Most High Jehovah though they are, must die like men and like their Lord. The princes here are likely Adam, the first King/Prince of the earth, and Jesus, the second Adam, himself a King/Prince of the earth. Both fell in physical, human death.

4. Jesus has the Preeminence.

Colossians 1:18: *And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*

If the church is spared the suffering sacrifice unto death, then they are getting a much better deal than Jesus! They would have a much more preeminent and



dramatic end than Jesus did! But Paul tells us that Jesus has the preeminence and that the experience of each one of the body members would be in parallel but secondary to his great sacrifice unto death.

5. Jesus' Presence - a period, not a single event. This is a separate study in itself. But a period of presence following the return of the Lord implies work to do on this side of the veil. This work would be left to no one if the remaining members of the church are 'raptured.'

A related text found in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 also describes the two parts of the resurrection of the saints. *"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at [during] the last trump."* The word "at" is a poor translation. Rotherham correctly translates it "during." The phrase "the last trump" implies previous trumpets. The only other trumpets in the New Testament are a series of seven trumpets found in Revelation. Some mistakenly believe that the trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15:51 sounds during a "secret rapture" to be followed by a "seven-year tribulation" during which, among other events, the seven trumpets of Revelation literally sound.

However, since the trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15:51 is called the last trumpet, it must correspond with the last of the seven trumpets of Revelation. This would mean the previous six trumpets had already sounded. Evidently the sounding of these six trumpets is not literal, since such a literal sounding would have aroused worldwide attention. Therefore, we can reasonably conclude that the six trumpets are symbolic and are part of the work done by Jesus and his saints during his second presence.

Another Set of Verses Used to Prove the 'Rapture'

A set of verses in our Lord's Great Prophecy is frequently used to prove the instantaneous gathering of the living saints to Christ in the air. It will be seen however, that they have nothing to do with the living saints being taken to heaven.

Luke 17:34-36: ³⁴I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. ³⁵Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. ³⁶Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

This is a classic example of the danger of a partial quotation. Upon the basis of this limited citation, it might be reasoned that the ones that are taken are caught up to heaven, but verse 37 rules out this possibility:

Luke 17:37: *And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles (Greek: eagles or vultures) be gathered together.*

The curiosity of the disciples was aroused by Jesus' statement that two people would be in various situations and one would be taken. They specifically asked where they would be taken. Notice that Jesus did not say they would be caught up together with him at his return. His answer is "wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." Some feel the body here referred to is the body of Jesus. However, Matthew 24:28 specifies that



the body of which the eagles are gathered is a dead body or carcass.

The lesson of the eagle in [Job 39:30](#) corroborates this usage of a slain body. Further, if the body is referring to the literal body of Jesus, then eagles must also be literal and thus would render the passage meaningless. Both the body and the eagles are symbolic. Jesus is evidently basing his lesson on two characteristics of eagles found in [Job 39:27-30](#) - the eagle's ability to see her prey (food) afar off, and her willingness to travel a great distance to secure this food - where the body (food) is, there the eagle will be. The Scriptures compare faithful Christians to eagles in this respect. They have the ability to see or discern spiritual food afar off and they will travel great distances to secure it.

A further proof that the one in the bed, the one in the mill and the one in the field ([Luke 17:34-36](#)) do not picture the living church caught up to heaven is found in [Luke 17:30-33](#): *Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away and he this is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.*

If, as some feel, the living Christians are taken and the rapture takes place instantaneously, then those who are taken have no time to make a choice or do anything else. This is contrary to [verses 30-33](#). When the Son of Man is revealed, the one in the field has the choice of turning back and the one upon the housetop can decide to go down into the house to take his belongings. These verses harmonize with [Luke 17:34-37](#), where, like the eagles, the one in the bed, the mill and the field are gathered to a feast.