

The Signs of Jesus Christ's Second Coming

There have been many attempts in the course of Christian history to use the “*signs*” mentioned in the Christian Bible to calculate the date of the return of Jesus Christ.

What should be our attitude towards these “*signs*” in scripture?

There are reasons for us to be cautious in our approach to these “*signs*.”

Christ's return will be unexpected –

Malachi 3:1 [NIV] *“See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty.*”

This is **not** a message “*to be aware of Christ's return*” but as John the Baptist's message was, to be in a state of repentance and acceptance of what Jesus Christ had done for all humanity at His first coming.

Matthew 24:42-44 [NIV] *“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”*

We have to watch ourselves not outward “*signs*” to ensure we are in a spiritual condition that will be acceptable to the returning Jesus Christ.

Luke 21:34-36 [NIV] *“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”*

We are not to allow the physical “*needs*” of our body, to make our lack of alertness our downfall.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 [NIV] *“Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “Peace and safety”, destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.”*

The key is to be walking in the light of God's Word the Christian Bible, applying it to our everyday life.

Revelation 3:3 [NIV] *“Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.”*

This warning is for all Christian churches **not** just the church at Sardis.

Revelation 16:15 [NIV] *“Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and **keeps his clothes with him**, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.”*

The “*clothes*” is referring to our being clothed in Christ’s righteousness [Romans 13:14] preparing for the church’s marriage to Jesus Christ at His second coming [Revelation 19:7-8] by performing righteous acts of love towards other human beings.

In the light of these scriptures it seems to be futile to use the “*signs*” to try to create a timetable for the final days leading up to Christ’s second coming.

To add to the unexpectedness of Jesus Christ’s second coming the Christian Bible tells us directly that the disciples of Jesus Christ through the years to the present day will be ignorant of the time of Christ’s return.

Acts 1:7 [NIV] *“He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.”*

Only the Father knows the time He will send His Son back to this earth.

Matthew 24:36 [NIV] *“No-one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”*

Even Jesus Christ at that time as the Son of Man, did not know the time of His own second coming.

What makes this confession of Jesus Christ the Son of Man more surprising is that it comes in this context of unparalleled consciousness of His divinity.

If Jesus Christ with His unique knowledge of the Father and His will, admits being ignorant of the time of His second coming, what other human dare to claim knowledge of the date of His second coming?

What then should be our approach to these signs?

Should we just, because of the complexity of the issue, put the whole subject on one side and get on with our job of Christian living?

Luke 17:20-25 [NIV] *“Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you.” Then he said to his disciples, “The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. Men will tell you, ‘There he is!’ or ‘Here he is!’ Do not go running off after them. For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.”*

Jesus Christ did **not** encourage a “*signs of the times mentality*.” Referring to His return as a ruler of the Kingdom of God, the created family of God, was **not** to be “*observed*” because its beginning was already being formed in the minds, human spirits and lives of humans who accepted Him as their Saviour and become His disciples.

Matthew 12:38-40 [NIV] *“Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, “Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you.” He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”*

Jesus was very reluctant to give signs to authenticate His ministry, considering it to be wicked to ask for such signs.

Mark 8:11-12 [NIV] *“The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. He sighed deeply and said, “Why does this generation ask for a miraculous sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to it.”*

This request for “signs” caused Jesus Christ mental pain.

On occasion Jesus Christ did rebuke the Pharisees for **not** reading “signs” correctly.

Luke 12:54-56 [NIV] *“He said to the crowd: “When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, ‘It’s going to rain,’ and it does. And when the south wind blows, you say, ‘It’s going to be hot,’ and it is. Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don’t know how to interpret this present time?”*

The Jews were looking for a Messiah, yet failed to recognise Jesus Christ as the Messiah they were looking for.

Luke 21:29-33 [NIV] *“He told them this parable: “Look at the fig-tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. “I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”*

The problem the people had was to look for “signs” from heaven and **not** the person who had come down from heaven with a message for all humanity from God the Father.

Jesus was only prepared to perform signs and give evidence of the importance of His ministry to those who were prepared to alter their lifestyles by becoming His disciples.

The Pharisees and any other “sign-seekers” are **not** prepared to face up to the implications of the claims that Jesus Christ made.

Such “sign-seekers” interest is really only one of detached curiosity.

In fact, unless we are very careful, this whole “signs of the times” interest can be harmful rather than helpful influence in our Christian lives.

Matthew 24:45-47 [NIV] *“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.”*

The servant disciple that was commended by Jesus Christ was the one who was at His return was fully occupied fulfilling the commission that Jesus Christ had given to His disciples at the end of His first coming.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 [NIV] *“In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone’s food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, labouring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “If a man will not work, he shall not eat.” We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right.”*

Paul said some very condemning things about Christians who were **not** doing the work that Jesus Christ has left us to do.

To ensure we have a balanced view of events that are predicted to happen before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ we should have in the back of our minds certain statements made by Jesus Christ and His apostles.

We are as Christians to be watchful of our own attitudes to life but also to world events that tell us of the desperate need for the return of Jesus Christ to save all humanity for its own selfish, rebellious and loveless nature.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 [NIV] *“Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for [that day will not come] until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God. Don’t you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendour of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.”*

The return of Jesus Christ will **not** be totally unpredictable without a warning. **Paul is concerned that Christians should have some general awareness of the need for Christ’s return and its associated events on the world’s human stage.**

2 Peter 3:1-10 [NIV] *“Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Saviour through your apostles. First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.”*

In this part of the apostle Peter’s letter he points out that God’s timetable is entirely different from ours.

Therefore we should hesitate before committing God to our human timetables as though it places Him under any kind of obligation.

God’s purposes will never fail. Jesus Christ is destined to rule over this earth, and all the universe eventually, in eternal glory.

Of these facts we need have no doubt whatever.

But how and when in human time God will bring this about and how it relates to our measurement of time is quite another matter.