

Soon Coming King?

By Ron Smith

We hear many people say that Jesus is coming soon. But in reading the great Puritan preachers of days gone by, none preached that way. Notice what Spurgeon said:

Your guess at the number of the beast, your conjectures concerning a personal antichrist – it seems to me the veriest drivel to be muttering about an Armageddon – forgive me, I count them mere bones for dogs; while men are dying and hell is filling, generation after generation of them have been proved to be in error by the mere lapse of time.

But some will ask, “Doesn’t the Bible say Jesus is coming soon?”

Notice what St. Augustine said:

Luke to show that the abomination spoken of by Daniel will take place when Jerusalem is captured, recalls these words of the Lord in the same context: When you shall see Jerusalem compassed about with an army, then know that the desolation thereof is at hand (Luke 21:20). For Luke very clearly bears witness that the prophecy of Daniel was fulfilled when Jerusalem was overthrown. (vol. 6, p. 170) 419AD Augustine (On Matthew 24:15)

Note what the “Golden Mouthed” preacher said:

375AD 'John' Chrysostom, Homily St. Matthew: (On Matthew 24:15) "For this it seems to me that the abomination of desolation means the army by which the holy city of Jerusalem was made desolate." For He brought in also a prophecy, to confirm their desolation, saying, "But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, let him that readeth understand."(12) He referred them to Daniel. And by "abomination" He meaneth the statue of him who then took

the city, which he who desolated the city and the temple placed within the temple, wherefore Christ calleth it, "of desolation." Moreover, in order that they might learn that these things will be while some of them are alive, therefore He said, "When ye see the abomination of desolation." (Of Matthew 24:1,2)

Some who boast in a literal interpretation of the Bible refuse to interpret "soon" literally. Jesus said that the prophecy of His coming would be fulfilled in that generation (Mat. 24:34) and that some of those standing there would still be alive (Mat 16:28). John is one who remained until He came (John 21:22).

C.S. Lewis says these statements by Jesus and the Apostles are one of the "great embarrassments" to the Church. In his essay on *The World's Last Night* he discusses the problem with the statement by Jesus that His coming would take place in that generation (Mat 24:34).

But there is worse to come. "Say what you like," we shall be told, "the apocalyptic beliefs of the first Christians have been proved to be false. It is clear from the New Testament that they all expected the Second Coming in their own lifetime. And, worse still, they had a reason, and one which you will find very embarrassing. Their Master had told them so. He shared, and indeed created, their delusion. He said in so many words, "this generation shall not pass till all these things be done." And He was wrong. He clearly knew no more about the end of the world than anyone else.

It is certainly the most embarrassing verse in the Bible.¹

Lewis goes on to offer his solution to the dilemma. He says that because Jesus was both man and God, his human side was

¹ C. S. Lewis, *The World's Last Night and Other Essays*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1960, 97-98.

mistaken. The problem with that solution is that Jesus was not giving His opinion; He was prophesying. That would make Him a false prophet. At least Lewis is honest enough to admit the problem is there. The solution offered here presupposes the infallible inspiration of Scripture, and offers the only logical solution the author can see. Perhaps there has been a failure to see that the prophecy *was* fulfilled in the same sense as all the other Old Testament “comings” of the Lord were fulfilled.

R.C. Sproul says Bertrand Russell used these statements of Jesus and the apostles as proof that the New Testament is a false prophecy.² Since Russell was operating out of the nature of the “natural man,” and could not discern spiritual things, this is the only honest conclusion to which he could possibly arrive. Could it be that those who say Jesus is coming soon are operating out of a carnal interpretation also?

For a more complete understanding of this, read Sproul’s book, “The Last Days According to Jesus.”

Other Good Books On This Subject For Truth Seekers

Matthew 24, by John Bray
Days of Vengeance, by David Chilton
The Great Tribulation by David Chilton
Paradise Restored by David Chilton
Before Jerusalem Fell by Kenneth Gentry
The Visions of Daniel by Ron Smith
Apostolic Interpretation by Ron Smith
Last Days Madness, by Gary DeMar
End Times Fiction by Gary DeMar

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² Sproul, R.C. *The Last Days According to Jesus*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998.