It May Not Appear Likely Now, but It Will Still Happen

Forty days after His resurrection, as He concluded teaching His disciples, Jesus began to slowly ascend high above their heads, through the clouds, and out of their sight. The disciples were transfixed in thought gazing skyward when two angels suddenly appeared and promised that "this same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). Since that time the Church's blessed hope and ardent expectation for this sinful world has been the personal, bodily return of Jesus Christ to judge it and establish His kingdom on earth. The New Testament Church emphasized it. Peter urged people to "repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out . . . and He may send Jesus Christ . . . whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things" (Acts 3:19-21). Paul taught that "the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God" (1 Thessalonians 4:16). The New Testament closes with Jesus' promise, "I am coming quickly" (Revelation 22:20). In fact, the second coming of Jesus Christ is the second most prominent theme of the New Testament behind the theme of redemption.

The post-New Testament Church was just as emphatic about Jesus' personal return. One of the earliest pieces of Christian literature extant instructed Christians that there "shall appear the deceiver of the world as a Son of God, and shall do signs and wonders, and the earth shall be given over into his hands . . . Then shall the creation of mankind come to the fiery trial and many shall be lost . . . Then shall the world see the Lord coming on the clouds of Heaven" (Didache, app. 120 AD). The most widely accepted statement of the Christian faith in history states that Jesus "shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Nicene Creed 325 AD). All the major orthodox confessions proclaim it (Augsburg Confession, 1530; Heidelberg Catechism, 1561; Westminster Confession, 1649; London Confession, 1689).

In our own generation evangelists of all stripes warn about it. Prophecy conferences all around the world chart it. Best selling books popularize it. People have quit their jobs and waited on their rooftops for it.

But it hasn't happened.

And this leads some to ridicule it, others to doubt it, and some to strangely deconstruct the meaning of it. This is very dangerous. The Lord Himself warned us about that kind of fallacious thinking, "be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him" (Matthew 24:44). It had never rained before Noah's day. His world scoffed at him for 120 years for preaching such a ludicrous idea as water falling from the sky. But oh how it did rain! In fact, widespread cynicism of Jesus' personal return is a sign to us that it is imminent, "scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their lusts, and saying, where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Peter 3:3-4). Peter gives two good antidotes against cynicism in answering that question.

The first antidote is to remember that "with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8). The reference point of the observer quantifies the duration of events and the intervals between them. So, a 2-thousand year interval between a promise and the actual event seems like an interminably long time to us who live only a few decades. But God is eternal having no beginning and no ending. And God is operating according to His reference own point. In a billion years from now we will all still be somewhere and the few years we lived in this world will seem like no time at all by then. When the Lord promised that He will come quickly we will understand, in a billion years, how quickly it really was.

The second antidote is to appreciate that "the Lord is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). There are millions of people who are very thankful that Christ did not come when they were teen-agers, or young men and women. If He had come, they would not have been ready and would have perished. Forever. The Lord is mindful of that. Yet, we cannot play on God's mercy. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." Though millions slumber in sin and ignorance, denial and rebellion, lust and greed, some day the Lord will come. It really may be today. If you heed Peter's sermon to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ it will be a day of entering into the joy of your kingdom.

The expectation of the personal, bodily return of Jesus Christ from heaven to judge the world and establish His earthly kingdom was the universal and prevalent teaching in the New Testament Church. Peter preached, "repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out . . . and He may send Jesus Christ . . . whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things" (Acts 3:19-21). Paul proclaimed that "the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God" (1 Thessalonians 4:16). The whole Bible concludes with Jesus' promise, "I am coming quickly" (Revelation 22:20). In fact, the second coming of Jesus Christ is the second most prominent theme of the New Testament behind the theme of redemption.

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and the dead; of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Nicene Creed 325 AD). As Augustine, (354-430), universally recognized as a profound philosopher and one of the most important theologians in the ancient Western church, argued that Jesus Christ will return and establish the New Heaven and the New Earth.

Since the close of the first millennium belief in Jesus' personal return has remained just as clear as that first angelic announcement. Sir Isaac Newton, (1642-1727), the father of modern physics and perhaps history's most brilliant scientific thinker, wrote over 4500 pages in support of Jesus Christ's personal, bodily return to earth. All the major orthodox confessions proclaim it (Augsburg Confession, 1530; Heidelberg Catechism, 1561; Westminster Confession, 1649; London Confession, 1689). Even as recently as December, 2006, a poll conducted by Ipsos found that one in four people anticipate the second coming of Jesus Christ in 2007. In fact, the personal and bodily return of Jesus Christ is the most anticipated event in history. Preachers have warned of it. Prophecy conferences have charted it. Books and movies have popularized it. People have quit their jobs and waited on their rooftops for it. But it hasn't happened.

Since the wonderful angelic promise was first made every generation of Christians has expected it within their lifetimes. Preachers have warned of it. Prophecy conferences have charted it. Books and movies have popularized it. People have quit their jobs and waited on their rooftops for it. But it hasn't happened. However you must never entertain the notion that since it hasn't happened that it won't happen. The Lord Himself warned us about that kind of fallacious thinking, "be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him" (Matthew 24:44). In fact, widespread cynicism of it is a sign to us that Jesus' return is imminent, "scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their lusts, and saying, where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Peter 3:3-4). Peter gives two good antidotes against cynicism in answering that question. The first antidote is to remember that "with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8). The reference point of the observer quantifies the duration of events and the intervals between them. So, a 2-thousand year interval between a promise and the actual event seems like an interminably long time to us who live only 72 years. But God is eternal having no beginning and no ending. And God is operating according to His reference point. In a billion years from now we will all still be somewhere and the 72 long years we lived in this world will seem like no time at all by then. When the Lord promised that He will come quickly we will understand, in a billion years, how quickly it really was.

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Every generation has looked for Jesus to return. The church has urged people to be ready for Jesus return at any moment. But it hasn't happened.

How long people have been saying that Jesus Christ will return.

Sound reasons that we should continue to expect Him to return.

With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

The Lord is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish

The Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.

belief in the Second Coming of Christ is important because it is clearly what the Bible teaches. To doubt the reality of the Second Coming is to doubt the reliability and validity of God's Word. Second, the Second Coming is important because Jesus Himself promised it. If Jesus was wrong about the Second Coming, how can we trust anything else He taught? The Second Coming of Christ is our hope and confidence that God is in control of all things and is faithful to His Word and His promises. Titus 2:13, "…while we wait for the blessed hope - the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."

The belief in the personal, bodily return of Jesus Christ from heaven to judge the world and establish His world-wide material kingdom was universal and prevalent in the first church.

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The following eras were just as emphatic that Jesus Christ will return to earth to judge the world and establish His material kingdom.

(http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/02/24/1045935318204) Throughout history