

JESUS IS COMING




SOON

ARAMAIC BIBLE COMPANION
STUDY ON THE
LORD'S IMMINENT RETURN

CHRIST IS COMING

An answer to the Sceptics

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INTRODUCTION SECOND EDITION

We live in the last days of the Gentiles – the final gallant endeavor of human government – the time when men are lovers of their own selves and when Christianity is heaping to itself teachers 2Timothy4.3 who speak what itching ears want to hear; perilous times 2Timothy 3.1. These days have come with a vengeance. At the same time we have now reached the time in history when the gospel has saturated the world. Over 70 satellites carry the gospel to *every country* in the world and in language most indigenous people can understand. Even Arthur Blessit – one man on his own- is on record as having entered every country in the known world on foot with the gospel. Every schoolboy knows that the reach of the gospel affects every corner of the world. The gospel is being carried to earth's remotest bounds by students and travellers and men with the mission of Christ in their hearts. Jesus predicted this day in Mark 13.10 saying "it is essential that this gospel be heralded in all the world for a witness and then shall the purpose come." Such heralding is attached to the message that the King is coming back to take his people home.

PROPHETIC PRINCIPIA

These days require:

(a) Unapologetic teaching of prophetic scripture on the kingdom of God yet to be *fully realised* on earth in the millennium.

(b) Commitment to the prophetic commission of our LORD *within the context* of the Kingdom of God – *received by faith* and *fulfilled in the uniting of the church triumphant and militant at the rapture*-the outpouring of wrath set forth in the Apocalypse-and prelude to the restitution of all things in the millennial reign of Christ.

(c) A return to biblical theology that recognises *the heresy* now propounded that the church replaces Israel and inherits all her promises in God's plan – which is like saying that your promises to your spouse apply to any or every man – it is invalid reasoning.

(d) A fervent expectation of the "out-redemption" or "catching away" of the church by *the rapture*. The next event in the prophetic calendar is not the world-wide rule of Christ-it is the rapture of all who "shall be counted worthy to stand before the Son of Man" at his appearing" Luke 21.36

RELIGIOUS SCEPTICISM

Scepticism that has neither the vision or the courage to give the "big message – that the world is facing judgment – that our time in the world is short – that Christ is coming for the church-the called out ones-that his sceptre and rule will follow and that this world has then an end is not to be applauded! Such scepticism advances on the shoulders of presumptive agnosticism and is ready to dismiss the reality of the return of Christ in its proper setting as impossible. It answers all reference to Christ's coming with "No man

knows the day or hour" and settles down to dangerous mediocrity. It keeps unwelcome truth about what the clock of history is telling us and the warning sign of the mid twentieth century establishment of the state of Israel as far as possible from the mind. Such scepticism – would you believe it – even makes bold to tell us that there is no significance whatsoever in Israel returning to her land-in fact many Christians believe she should give it away post-haste and a huge phalanx of nations desires her to be driven out of it by fair means or foul. Christ told his first Jewish followers "You will be hated of all nations".

NO MAN KNOWS THE DAY OR HOUR

On the flimsy base of this one text that is seen to cover all exigencies concerning the last days many dismiss the mighty body of biblical prophecy that points persuasively to the imminent return of our LORD Jesus Christ. The text is a cure-all for those who seem determined to live agnostic about that coming. My challenge is "How would that attitude have suited Simeon and Anna and the Wise Men and John the Baptist? **The answer is that it is a perfectly good text but was intended to strengthen faith in Christ's word and biblical prophecy not fuel apathy and scepticism.** None of the Old Testament prophets – and certainly not John the Baptist – could ever have operated on this axiom of agnosticism without fuelling widespread scepticism, ignorance and apathy. They spoke wiser than they knew but never demurred. Later in the study I will fully explain this text.

SCEPTICS BEWARE

The stoking up of agnosticism by crying "wolf" and quoting Matthew 25.13 concerning the predicted events that are in

the course of fulfilment and relate to the return of our LORD has allowed an outrageous scepticism of biblical prophecy to emerge in the modern church and the text that is produced as the agnostic's trump card can, I believe, be shown to be a false alibi for sweeping to the side the clear prophetic challenge that faces us in the 21st century and demands urgent prophetic expository preaching.

CHALLENGING THE THEOLOGY OF UNIFORMITY

The theology of uniformity – that Christ will return in a while or after some centuries-whensoever – and *drop his kingdom into this world* as it is and set all wrongs right and rule this planet forevermore is having a field-day – but it is singularly wanting in biblical support and dead-in-the-water. ***It seems happy to keep the Parousia perennially and perpetually at a distance.*** In contradiction of the hackneyed misuse of this single text and its woeful misapplication I will illustrate the converse by a series of prophetic facts illustrated by their context in the original setting of the Greek New Testament. Sceptics armed with this text flee from the lion of ***God's kingdom's realised in the rapture*** and the bridal feast of the Lamb and will meet ***the bear of the tribulation*** but let them not lean on the broken down wall of ***post-millennialism*** to be bitten by the snake of ***woeful judgment.***

THE GOODMAN OF THE HOUSE

Our LORD told a story of the "good-man" of the house or the oikoumene-the dignitary of the worldly church-who was blissfully unaware of the hour of burglary in Matthew 24.43. This authoritative figure would characterise best a world leader of the church in the days when Christ's coming is

imminent. It is however a message for every church leader. In Jesus' story leaders are charged with the duty of (a) preparing the church for Christ's coming; (b) with giving proper sustenance at **proper seasons** and (c) with watching against failure to counsel urgency and falling foul of the manner of the age and culture whilst acting with undue authority. The basic problem of the "Goodman" and many good men today is that we have not factored in the vital concept of the NT thief narratives (Matthew 24, 1Thess.5.2-4, "Peter 3.10 & Apocalypse 3.3 and do not realise what "watch"(φύλακη) we are in. We are now in the fourth watch – and the thief did not come on the watch of earlier saints. We ought therefore to be the more urgent to prepare for the coming of the "thief in the night" namely Christ. The apostles watched, the early fathers watched, the Reformers watched and the church of the latter rain of divine outpouring is watching.

SCEPTICS PREDICTED

Our LORD knew the latter days would produce high scepticism concerning His return.

He warned that just as men disparaged Noah's preparation of the ark over the final 100 years before the deluge so in the generation leading up to His coming men would be equally sceptical in the last days and dismissive of prophetic teaching. Jesus said "As if it were the days of Noah so the "visit" (Parousia) of the Son of Man will be. For just as in those days of the complete purge or wash-out of the flood they were eating and drinking marrying and giving daughters in marriage until the very day Noah entered the ark – and they knew not till the wash away took them every one. So is the Parousia – two will be in the field – one will be received alongside the LORD the other left, two will be

grinding at the mill-one will be received and the other left. Watch – for you do not know at what hour your LORD is coming. (Matthew 24.37 & Luke 17.26). Godless sceptical men doubtless made Noah the butt of their fun. Today even religious men make fun of the Rapture and Parousia. How very foolish!

DESTRUCTION AND ANTI CHRIST GO ARM IN ARM

Jesus called for endurance through a long period of polemathy and a time when "love would grow cold" but He consummated His prophetic caution by reference to the "abomination of desolation" [*βδελυγμα ερημωσις – mmv/h Xwqv the blasphemy that destroys*] Matthew 24.15 in the holy place. Let him that reads Daniel be careful and wise as Daniel. This end-time institution that Daniel referred to is described as "blasphemous" in scriptural literature and is said to be "destructive" at the same time. The emergence of such an establishment within the sacrum that gives no worship to Yahweh or Christ is at once a compelling thought and one that as Jesus said must be expressed with great discretion in the last days. These are the last days.

PETER REBUFFS THE MODERN SCEPTIC

The writing of the apostle Peter lives on as testimony against the scepticism of our era. He warned us long ago that people in the end times would have a lifestyle to their own taste "Where is **the promise of His visit [Parousia]**?" (2 Peter 3:4). The position he is critiquing is that of uninterrupted continuing religious pluralism and uniformity. People will believe that all things have gone along smoothly since the beginning of the human race and no judgment has been visited on man. Peter says that is

willful ignorance because the facts of the deluge are historically in the annals of all nations and in scripture and written in the rocks. Equally the fact of Christ's coming is attested from the days of Enoch-and will interrupt the smooth running of history by subtracting multitudes from the earth in an hour and subtracting multitudes more by a judgment associated with great distress that will follow (Apocalypse 9.18) My personal judgment is that in the wake of these two events if they were to occur within the next decade only one third of the present human race would survive on earth. Such solemn rebuke to *order-of-the-day sceptics* whether inside or outside the church stands within scripture and as such provides a warning against the growth of scepticism among Christians.

SIGNIFICANT SIGNS

In Luke 21 25-36 Jesus teaches about his return. He speaks of ultimate signs of an astronomical nature – what He calls "splendid or outstanding things" in respect of Sun moon and stars. Previous to these there will be international distress touching every nation in some way – this is called "a tightening of the belt"(συνοχη) alongside "a failure to pay debt "(αφορια). This is the precise situation in which we are caught and will continue to be enmeshed. Jesus said there would also be "under sea roaring" (ηχουσης) with sea "swelling"(σαλου) which is the precise equivalent of Tsunami. He predicted that there would be seismic action of a widespread nature in the end times. Seismologists tell us shocks have gone up by 1000 per cent since records began. We could say many of these signs are facts which we are living with today.

ISRAEL VIS A VIS THE CHURCH

The gospel of Luke is especially apt for the Gentile world as it was written by the only Gentile among NT writers. In Luke 21 our LORD Jesus gave us five promises and seven exhortations in connection with the significant signs above. These promises are:

- (1) Your "out-redemption" (απολυτρωσις) is very near.
- (2) Dramatic Israeli and international development and population growth – "putting forth branches" (προβαλωσιν)
- (3) The harvest is near (θερος) – the time when the LORD will separate the wheat from the chaff.
- (4) The **Kingdom of God** in its realised form is very near (21.31)
- (5) Truly I say to you that this generation (γενεα) will definitely not (ου μη) pass away until all these things happen though the heaven and earth will pass away-these words will definitively stand.

The most intriguing promise Jesus makes is that those born to the Jewish family at the time of the end will remain alive in large part to see all these promises realised. That entails Jews being present in Israel – where the Lord establishes his golden era rule; it entails Jews being present at the "out-redemption" and participating in the end time development of their nation; it entails them being part of the gospel harvest as is so today; it entails Jews being preserved through tribulation to greet the Christ as Zechariah predicted in Zechariah 13.6 & 14.3. We might say that the last generation of the church harvested in the rapture is the signal for Jacob's trouble and the count down to Christ's kingdom. Taking the biblical peace treaty which endures for 3 or more years biblically with the 3 or more years of war

and trial that follow before the inception of the Kingdom of Christ it is easy to see that Jewish children born in these days will see the entirety of God's plan for His millennial kingdom from the Rapture to the Kingdom and onwards into its blessings.

THE PROMISE TO A GENERATION OF JEWS

More particularly to highlight this extraordinary promise we need to look again at the context with which Christ is dealing. Our LORD is handling two quite different topics which are threaded promiscuously through the narrative. However we only need to separate the state of Jerusalem during the earlier judgment under Titus and the state of Jerusalem of the end-times. The former was to be "taken stone from stone" v.6 and surrounded with armies v.20. Jerusalem in the last days was to be "trodden down of the Gentiles" until the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled. Today we have fair notice of the end of these times just as the Amorites had fair notice through the armies of Israel massed on their borders under Joshua. The people and parliament of Israel legally are now masters of Jerusalem. **This has been historical fact since 1967.** Whether we like it or not the Jewish clock has struck the hour the world was waiting for over centuries and two millennia. It is so ill to the taste that the nations are trying by every device to turn this fact on its head – to divide the land – and satanic powers are intent on throwing Israel out or even annihilating Israel. None of this makes sense and none of it will ever happen.

PEACE TREATY AND THE COMING TOGETHER OF THE AGES

The priority of politicians is a peace treaty of historic proportions with Israel and the Arab nation within her borders as signatories and the United Nations as the guarantor. The stakes are very high. The treaty must come either to avert war or by its breach to create war-but come it will. The war I speak of is that annotated at length in Ezekiel 38-39. The breach of treaty I mention is that of Daniel 9.27. All these events are inter-related. The emergence of the latter day "covenant" or "treaty" may well enable the building of a Jewish temple in the adequate space where it used to stand right opposite the "golden gate" or the Eastern gate as we now know it. This covenant could be an engagement current political leaders are contemplating as of now. The end of the church age and the beginning of the Theocratic Kingdom age are mutually exclusive so the Rapture is an event of some imminence supposing we stand on the threshold of an historic covenant that enables the building of the Fourth Temple.

HISTORY PAST- MONTHS LEFT

In the mid section of the seven parts of the Apocalypse at 10.6 we read "There shall be time or delay no longer" The word is actually *χρονος* and the significance is "There will not be **chronology**" as previously reckoned. Time of the Gentile government era will be reckoned in mere months – 42 months and 42 months. The remaining events before Christ comes put a period to on-going Gentile history and Common Era(A.D.) history will thence forward when that point is arrived at be reckoned by the judgments of the Apocalypse.

The day and hour of Christ's coming puts an end to so much that men and nations will be absolutely aware after that coming as to where they stand. Fear will grip leaders and events will run their predicted course with inexorable precision.

THE TEXT THAT SCEPTICS MISUSE

Let us now look in depth at the text which seems to have frightened many away from biblical prophecy and made many more into confirmed sceptics. “No one knows the day or the hour, not even the angels in heaven but only the Father...keep watch for you do not know on what day your LORD will come” (**Matthew 24 36**) & 42,44 & 50 “the unexpected hour”); (**Mark 13.32 which adds “the Son”**), Matthew 25.13; Luke 12 40 & 46 “an hour you do not expect”)

First, note that there are six instances of “urgency” and “watchfulness” accompanying this expression that is recorded by Matthew and Mark

Second, note that it does not invalidate a single biblical sign nor is that ever the LORD’S intent. Quite to the contrary this saying is meant to galvanise watchfulness.

Third, and most importantly this text is not meant to differentiate Father and Son in the matter of general omniscience. Let me illustrate.

IS CHRIST’S OMNISCIENCE TO BE DOUBTED?

(a) Peter recognised the omniscience of Christ when he said, “Lord You know all things, You know that I love You.

(b) Jesus knew what was in man – he could read the human heart – he did not need men to tell him their thoughts.

(c) Jesus knew the woman at Samaria had had five husbands and was living with a man to whom she was not married

(d) Jesus knew that Peter could find coinage in the mouth of a fish under the sea.

(e) Jesus knew what would happen to Peter and what death he would die

(f) Jesus predicted he would meet John again before he died – “If this man (John) tarries till I come what is that to thee” wee his exact words on the matter to Peter. The LORD fulfilled this promise in Apocalypse 1.1.

(g) Jesus knew that Jerusalem would be sieged by armies. We cannot doubt He knew that would be a Roman siege. He also knew that in the end times it would cease to be trodden down by Gentiles or that Israel would regain mastery of the city.

The question therefore *about the limitation upon the knowledge of the Son of God* is not of general significance at all. The entire Apocalypse majors on the events of the last seven years before Christ comes and the thoroughness of the material set out there does not give us grounds for limiting the general omniscience of Christ or indeed of the Holy Spirit. The truth is the converse is a fact – Christ is the Pantocrator – the Almighty. There simply is no such limitation. Of that there is no doubt.

What then shall we say about the “Son of God” when He himself stated as recorded by Mark (though not Matthew) that He did not know the day and hour of His own return in the Parousia? The answer is given after the Resurrection as the last lesson Christ left with his disciples in Acts 1.7. We read there, “He spoke epically to them ‘It is not οὐχ to belong to you to know (to be acquainted with so as to make known) once for all the “times” and “seasons”. Jesus refers to what in Hebrew would be ת[and ד[^{wm} which speaks (a) about “*fitness of time*” “happy times” or “*grossly unhappy times*” – a term is often used in connection with

“events” – and (b) about “appointed meetings” such as the week long festivals of Israel were-also ***“appointed meeting with a spouse”*** and ***“appointment of judgment”*** – which the Father has himself set or made to stand in His own power ἐξουσία – a word which curiously means “derived authority” because the three persons of the Godhead are equal in power in wisdom and presence – so that what is within the ambit of each is respected by the other according to one will and purpose. The Hebrew word used here is not “authority” per se as EXOUSIA itself may stand alongside other EXOUSIAS. It is the word לִמּוּד in Hebrew-Aramaic which means both “absolute authority/dominion” and “similar/parabolic teaching” and it has to do with two radicle ideas - the second can refer to making a bride like Christ or even issuing parables to signify what stands in one’s power to demonstrate. ***What I believe is being said is that the Father holds this teaching initiative and will through the Holy Spirit declare necessary truths at appropriate times.*** The LORD then directed that the Holy Spirit of Revelation would be granted and “absolute authority” **δυναμις** to enable world-wide witness and obviously sustain biblical revelation as we now have it in the complete New Testament. Christ gave enough reason to satisfy the apostles why the Father in the Triune counsels placed this counsel in his authority but the Holy Spirit who searches the deep things of God like Christ is not mystified by this counsel and is able to prompt the Church by parable and ***comparison of scripture with scripture*** לִמּוּד on our understanding of the Father’s will. As it delighted Christ that the exact commencement of judgment and the exact bridal reunion moment were in safe hands – in the hands of the Father who “so loves” it should delight us too. But that

does not throw prophecy into turmoil or create enigmas – it merely bids us work more lovingly, pray more fervently and think more clearly. This is the manner in which this great text should be understood-as a reason why we should be “looking up” every day and ever watchful as students of the history of God’s dealings with Israel and the world. The conclusion must be that the “given times” are known to Christ as God not in his interest or power to reveal to us.

THE IRRECOVERABLE GENTILE LOSS OF POWER

Jerusalem is Jewish. That is a fait accompli. But how long is a generation? How long is a piece of string? However one useful measure may be to take the 42 generations of Matthew 1 which represent 2160 years and divide them by 42 to find the generation factor of 52 years or to divide the 4000 years since Adam by the 77 biblical generations and find again the same generation factor of 52 years. By taking notice of the re-instatement of Jewish authority over Jerusalem as the most significant modern sign of the Restitution of all things -a matter that James spoke of in the first Christian Council – we can come to some understanding of where we now are in God's plan. Fifty two years from the re-establishment of Jewish authority takes us to 2019AD. This date compared with the years of peace and war that must ensue before the "Restitution" would demand the year 2012AD as a *tempus ex quo* as the first cut-off point for the Rapture based on the average age of a generation. The known life-expectation of a generation today which is in the region of 76-78 would take us to 2045AD thus advancing the date for Restitution and equivalent cut-off point of Common Era history. If we were to take Christ's words to mean that a residue of the

generation like Joshua and Caleb in their times will still live then we might project the Restitution to years in the region of 2067AD. Current history is now fast moving *like horses hurdling* through a short history of expectation of the LORD'S return but at which of the hurdles it shall fall is not certain – but the “generational prophecy” must come to pass. What remains to say is that our LORD has given us reason to be urgent that we are approaching a most critical time in human history and approaching it with awesome proximity. The long suffering of the LORD with Gentile nations has been monumental – but do not forget that through the tribulation and into the millennium faith that works by love remains valid though a number of judgments also issue amid tribulation and nations are judged as the Millennium opens.

THE OTHER FACTOR The means of deciding between these situations that present from the elasticity of the concept of a generation is the peace treaty or covenant which Daniel was told was to be signed in the latter day. That treaty may be imminent or it may be years away. We shall see. It is not to the events themselves that I draw your attention supremely but to Christ to whom we all must answer and before whom every knee shall bow.

THE RAPTURE

Ultimately the rapture is the hinge of everything. When God blows the trumpet the church triumphant and the church militant shall be united and we shall meet our LORD in the air. No man knows on which day that will happen – or at what hour. But we are not agnostic of the circumstances and setting of this great divine event and they have been playing round us like flames of fire for some time. Let us then study

the seven admonitions of Christ in the light of where we are eschatologically.

WHAT MANNER OF PERSONS OUGHT WE TO BE?

Jesus said in Luke 21

(1) Turn your attention to one another προσεχω The term is used in connection with bringing a ship safely to land and into harbour. Our first priority is to seek the welfare of our fellow men spiritually – to purchase the opportunities of evangelizing and turning men and women to God

(2) Let not your heart become heavy even once Βαρυνθοσις This bidding in effect advises us that there is no place for a "hard heart" among the disciples of Christ. Our first priority is "to forgive" to keep no account of hurts – to be open to others – to be most gracious and understanding.

(3) Avoid profligate living κραιμαλη In the world of today too many are subject to "sick headaches" consequent upon very wrong indulgences in alcohol and drugs. Christ demands "clear headedness" and total discipline of mind.

(4) Avoid the hardening of drunkenness μεθη The word is our "inebriated"-brought into darkness by passion for alcohol. This was among Gentiles characteristic of the time of Christ and it was also linked with the time of Noah and so transposed in prophecy to the end-times by our LORD. It is linked with the companion passions of sex and over-eating.

(5) Do not be weighed down by life's anxieties μεριμνας Βιωτιμας so that that day come upon you suddenly as the north wind-unwelcome and chilling you to the very core. Be ready and praiseful-be close to Christ and roll your burdens on Him

(6) Do not be a simple spectator totally at home on the earth
καθημαί επιεισερχομαι Don't be someone who is
watching from your armchair – and just content to be at
home here with a good house and live entertainment. The
coming of Christ will be a "snare" to such as are worldly
and it will trap many in the snare of the devil, the world, the
flesh.

(7) Watch and always pray that you may be counted "very
worthy" καταξιωω to escape and stand before the Son of
Man in the bridal feast of the Lamb. Christians are not
appointed to wrath but to "escape" (1Thessalonians 5.9) but
Christ is saying "aim for the best" – “Keep in touch with me
daily.” Let your life be one of steady prayer and be intent on
the things of Christ αγρυπνῶ sleeplessly so.

This then is the Master's advice in 2011 and every year till
you stand before the Son of Man – "Be very worthy" in His
merit and by your works of love to stand before the Son of
Man in that wonderful and fast approaching Day.

MARANATHA
– EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS!

Bob Coffey
Aramaic Bible Companion

