

EXECUTED

TO SUPPRESS HIS MESSAGE



The 1st Century Second Coming

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Introduction

Welcome to Volume 7 of *Executed to Suppress His Message*.

In Volume 1 of [Suppressing the Words of Christ](#) we saw how money-funded, institutionalized religions suppress the teachings of Jesus Christ, so they can promote their own particular doctrines and beliefs. And now with this volume, we continue to address these suppressed teachings.

Since the time when Jesus walked the earth 2,000 years ago, Christian prophets have been proclaiming His Second Coming. A Wikipedia documentary [[click here to view the document – then click on "Continue" at top of page to scroll through the pages](#)] lists over fifty such predictions by theologians, preachers, pastors, astrologists and even a musician — many of which were accompanied with dire warnings of how God’s people will be persecuted, tortured and even killed before the Lord returns.

But let’s notice what Jesus said over 1,900 years ago:

“And behold, *I am coming quickly*. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.” (Revelation 22:7)

He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, *I am coming quickly*.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus (Revelation 22:20).

In both of these passages, the Greek translated into the English “quickly” is pronounced *takh-oo*. And it definitely means *quickly, shortly, soon, or without delay*.

But even though eighty generations have passed since the apostle John recorded what Jesus said, institutionalized Christianity continues to insist that today — over 2,000 years later — we are still waiting for Christ’s return.

Now let’s now read Revelation 1:7, where the apostle John wrote something profound:

BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, *even those who pierced Him*; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.

John’s statement seems awfully clear: some of those who crucified Jesus would observe and witness His second coming.

And yet, most Christian pastors, preachers and theologians have concluded that both John and Jesus were wrong.

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## 1 — The Second Coming

### **Christianity teaches:**

That Christians should live in continual fear of a future Great Tribulation, followed by the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

### **But Jesus Christ taught:**

He would return before the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century.



### Doctrinal Confusion

Here's an interesting list of words that Christian theologians use to define different views about Christ's Second Coming:

Advent, Parousia, Tribulation, Millennium, Premillennialism, Amillennialism, Postmillennialism. No Millennialism, Chiliasm, Apocalyptic, Preterism, Full Preterism, Dispensationalism, Rapture, Pre-Tribulation Rapture, Mid-Tribulation Rapture, Post-tribulation Rapture, Pre-wrath Rapture, Partial Rapture, Last Days, The Beast, The Antichrist, The Dragon.

You will find all of these words in Christian literature, as theologians and preachers explain their particular views about the Second Coming. And some of these words describe how Christ will return in the future, while others promote the idea that Christ has already returned in the past.

Then there's another set of words describing the horrific events associated with the Second Coming. And still another group defines how God's people will be raptured to heaven. Finally, there are words that describe the various views on the millennial kingdom associated with Christ's return, the name of an evil end-time prophet and world leader, and a special term for the Devil.

The word "dispensationalism" is used to describe a specific historical progression associated with biblical prophecy. But as you can see from the above list of highly contradictory views on the Second Coming, one church's dispensationalism is another church's heresy. It seems that modern Christians have major disagreements over the time of Christ's return, along with the progression of events associated with the Second Coming.

*But why is there so much doctrinal confusion? And why don't churches simply*

*quote what the Bible says about the Second Coming?*

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### What Happened to the Second Coming?

Any thinking person has to wonder why Christianity keeps foretelling a Great Tribulation and Second Coming, but then hundreds and even thousands of years pass by and Jesus never returns. But some churches try to avoid having to explain this problem by quoting the following biblical passage:

Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation” (II Peter 3:3-4).

After reading this verse, these churches will claim that we simply cannot know when Christ will return. They may also suggest that we’re not good Christians, if we disagree with what the verse says. These churches portray the date of Christ’s Second Coming as God’s “Big Secret” — something that God does not want us to know.

Of course, churches that preach about a future Second Coming never mention how Peter wrote his letter almost 2,000 years ago. And neither do they mention how Peter addressed it specifically to Christians who were alive during the 1st Century.

Also note what Peter wrote just before what is quoted above:

This is now, beloved, the second letter *I am writing to you* in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that *you* should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles (II Peter 3:1-2).

Peter wrote this letter specifically to his “beloved” friends — people he knew personally. And as you can see, there’s nothing in the letter suggesting Peter intended it for audiences that would read it two thousand years later.

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2 — How “Great” Is the Great Tribulation?

Those who predict a future Tribulation and Second Coming never mention how our world has already experienced numerous world-scale tribulations. For example, consider these horrific events:

- The Black Death of 1340–1771 killed 75 million people worldwide;
- During the 18th Century, smallpox killed 60 million Europeans;
- In less than two years, the Spanish Flu of 1918–1919 killed between 50 and 100 million people.

Almost half the world’s population died in these plagues. So should we not categorize them as great tribulations?

And yet, Christ did not return.

World War I and World War II were great tribulations. The first world war killed 37 million people, while 70 million died in World War II, with some perishing in mankind’s first nuclear holocaust. In total, over 100 million people died in these wars.

And yet Christ did not return.

At the end of World War I, an outbreak of influenza killed 20 million people. A few years later, 20th Century smallpox outbreaks killed between 300 and 500 million people worldwide. One-quarter of the world’s population died in these plagues.

And yet, Christ did not return.

Think About This

The historical record proves that humanity has suffered through numerous cataclysmic “great” tribulations, several of which killed hundreds-of-millions of people. And yet, Jesus did not return after any of these events.

So how many people have to die, before God labels a human massacre the “great” tribulation?

Tribulation in the Book of Revelation

Now let’s compare the plagues and holocausts that were just described with

those mentioned in the Book of Revelation. Revelation Chapter 11 describes how one-tenth of a city would fall with 7,000 slain.

Seven thousand?

So how can we even begin to compare 7,000 deaths with a smallpox epidemic that killed 300 million people?

While Revelation Chapter 20 describes how fire came down from heaven and destroyed the armies of the nations Gog and Magog, whose number is “as the sand of the sea.” Ezekiel Chapter 38 describes these two nations. But theologians and biblical scholars cannot agree on who these people actually were. Some have proposed the theory that these are the nations of China and India. And at the time of this writing, China is the most populated nation on Earth, with a military force of 2.3 million. While India is the second most populated, having a military that numbers 4.9 million. And with a total world population of 7.4 billion, the two largest military forces on earth account for about 0.1% of the world’s population.

So if Gog and Magog are China and India, then God must consider the future destruction of 7.2 million soldiers the one and only “Great Tribulation” – while He completely ignores worldwide tribulations that decimated hundreds of millions of people.

Think About This

World tribulations occurring over the last three hundred years have been far more disastrous than the casualties described by the Book of Revelation. When compared against historical events that killed hundreds of millions of people, the “great tribulation” described by the Book of Revelation seems relatively minor.

And yet despite these plain and obvious facts, Christian preachers continue to warn of a future worldwide “great” tribulation, which is followed by Christ’s return.

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### 3 — Second Coming Not Expected

Throughout most of Christianity's history, very few Christians thought their Lord would return in the future. Notice what M. E. Dieter wrote in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, regarding Christians who believed that Jesus would return in their near future:

“Adventism is the belief that Christ's personal Second Coming is imminent and will inaugurate his millennial kingdom and the end of the age. Chiliasm, apocalypticism, and millennialism are cognate (similar) theological terms. Adventism in this general sense has been espoused by many diverse groups throughout Christian history (e.g., Montanists, Anabaptists, Fifth Monarchy Men, Plymouth Brethren and other premillennialists, and Jehovah's Witnesses).”

Mr. Dieter mentions several Christian sects that believed in an imminent (near future) return of Christ. So let's analyze each of these sects. And as we read through the following summaries, try to visualize just how many Christians believed that Christ's Second Coming was imminent:

- Montanists were a small group of 2<sup>nd</sup> Century Christians led by a self-proclaimed prophet named Montanus, who predicted that Christ was about to return and set up a New Jerusalem in the vicinity of the small town of Pepuza in Phrygia, Asia Minor. The movement died out within 200 years.
- The Anabaptist preacher Melchior Hoffman taught the Millennium would commence in 1533. But while Hoffman taught that Anabaptists should peacefully await Christ's return, another preacher (John Matthy) claimed to be the biblical Enoch and staged an armed takeover of the local town and marketplace. Matthy's rebellion lasted until 1534, when the prince-bishop to the state of Munster laid siege to the city and stamped out the movement.
- Fifth Monarchy Men were a group of Christian believers contemporaneous with the English Civil War (1641-1651). These Christians believed that four world rulers had already come and gone according to the prophecies of Daniel 2 in the Old Testament. Therefore, the last world empire was about to be established by the return of Jesus as King of Kings and Lord of Lords to reign with his saints on earth for a thousand years. The movement died out by 1661.
- Plymouth Brethren separated from the Anglican Church in the late 1820s.

Their doctrines spread quickly throughout the United Kingdom and by 1845, the assembly in Plymouth had more than 1,000 people in fellowship. Two of the most prominent members, John Nelson Darby and Benjamin Wills Newton, claimed the Tribulation and Second Coming would occur within their generation. Yet only 20 years later, the group disbanded and split into rival congregations.

- The Jehovah's Witnesses was started by Charles Taze Russell in 1872. And in 1878, he also predicted the Lord's Second Coming.

So now we need to ask: "How many Christians were associated with all these groups?"

Montanists in the first group are described as "small," with most of its members residing in the vicinity of a single town. While the Anabaptists of the second group were stamped out by attacking a single city.

The Fifth Monarchy sect described in the third group was led by preachers Christopher Feake, John Simpson, Vavasor Powell and Morgan Llwyd – all of whom were located in London and Wales, where the collective 17<sup>th</sup> Century population was 1.2 million. And although the Plymouth Brethren of the fourth group had an assembly of only 1,000 people, the sect was said to have spread throughout the United Kingdom.

Finally, the Jehovah's Witnesses of the fifth group had no church organization up until the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. But since their magazine circulation was 6,000, we should assume that at least this many people were exposed to their doctrines.

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So let's make some generous assumptions. First, we'll assume the single-town groups of the Montanists and Anabaptists numbered 10,000 members each. The Fifth Monarchy Men of the third group resided in London and Wales, which had a population 1.2 million people. So we'll assume this sect converted 10% of the population, which amounts to 120,000 people. The Plymouth Brethren of the fourth group had one assembly of 1,000 people. But since this sect spread throughout the United Kingdom, we should assume its membership was larger: say 500,000. And although there were no members of Jehovah's Witnesses during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, let's quadruple their publishing statistics to 24,000, and use that number to represent those who agreed with their doctrines.

Now let's add up our estimates of the worshipers in each of these sects:

|                           |         |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Montanists .....          | 10,000  |
| Anabaptists .....         | 10,000  |
| Fifth Monarchy Men .....  | 120,000 |
| Plymouth Brethren .....   | 500,000 |
| Jehovah's Witnesses ..... | 24,000  |
| Total .....               | 664,000 |

According to these estimates – starting from the beginning of Christianity and up through the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century – approximately 664,000 Christians believed in an imminent (soon coming) return of Christ.

Now let's put this number of Christians into perspective. It's estimated that by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (1899 CE), 200 *million* people had converted to Christianity. And if we use our 19<sup>th</sup> Century estimate of 664,000 Christians who believed in a future Second Coming, this means that 0.33% of all Christians believed Jesus would return in their future – while 99.67% did not.

Naturally, these statistics are only rough estimates. But they do show us that throughout the first 1,900 years of Christianity, very few Christians believed Jesus would return in their future.

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4 — 19th Century: The Turning Point

Throughout the first 1,900 years following the death of Christ, only a small number of Christians believed that Jesus would return in their future. But the situation would rapidly change, as Seventh Day Adventists began to challenge what the Bible says.

Notice how the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* describes an evolution of the Second Coming Doctrine within Adventist churches:

Adventism is most commonly used, however, to denote the movement which sprang up in the 1830s from the teachings of William Miller, a Baptist minister in New York. Miller confidently prophesied the imminent return of Christ and set 1843-44 as the time for the event. The Millerite movement spread rapidly among the churches of the Northeast. When the expected return did not occur as Miller originally had predicted, a reinterpretation of the Scripture set Oct. 22, 1844, as the correct date. The faithful met in their local gathering places on the appointed day worshiping and waiting. The “Great Disappointment” which followed the failure of the prophecy led many Millerites to forsake the movement and slip back into the churches from which they had never formally dissociated themselves. Miller himself acknowledged his error and dissociated himself from the movement and all further attempts to redeem it.

But a series of new signs, visions and prophecies fed the lagging spirits of those who refused to give up their Adventist hopes. As early as the day following the Great Disappointment, Hiram Edson, an Adventist leader, had a vision which confirmed the prophetic significance of the Oct. 22, 1844, date, but indicated that it marked a heavenly rather than an earthly event. On that day Christ had moved into the holy of holies of the heavenly sanctuary to begin a new phase of his ministry of redemption. That ministry was ultimately defined in the Adventist doctrine of investigative judgment; Christ entered the sanctuary to review the deeds of professing Christians to determine whose names should be included in the Book of Life.

Other revelations subsequent to the Great Disappointment came to Ellen G. Harmon, a young disciple of Miller in Portland, Maine. She was quickly accepted as a prophetess and her teachings were accepted as authoritative. The revived movement also adopted sabbatarianism and the belief that the acceptance of the seventh day sabbath was the mark of the

true church. Seventh day observance and Christ's ministry of investigative judgment, confirmed by the prophetic revelation of Mrs. Ellen (Harmon) White, completed the foundations of contemporary adventism.

The Adventist Gospel of Personal Protection

William Miller's claim of imminent danger from a global great tribulation, followed by a promise of divine protection through Christ's Second Coming, proved to be a seductive combination. So Adventist membership grew quickly, as fearful Christians flocked to the only church that promised protection from the prophesied evils to come.

Then when pastors from other denominations observed how Adventist teachings were attracting church members, they began to create and adopt their own Second Coming doctrines – with Jehovah's Witnesses, Evangelicals, and Fundamentalists leading the pack. And now at almost 200 years after Miller's initial prediction of Christ's return, variations of his doctrine have been adopted by evangelical and fundamentalist denominations, along with tens-of-thousands of non-denominational churches.

At the present time, there are over 285 million Evangelical Christians, 20 million Adventists, 15 million fundamentalists, and 3 million Jehovah's Witnesses — all of which ignore the Scriptures you will read in the rest of this volume, as their churches teach some variation of William Miller's doctrine of the imminent return of Jesus Christ.

Think About This

The origin of modern Christian beliefs in the imminent Second Coming of Christ can be traced directly back to the Millerites of the 1830's CE.

So what did most Christians believe up until the 1830's? If they were diligently studying the Scriptures, they believed the teachings of Jesus Christ and His disciples, all of whom stated that Jesus would return within a few decades of His crucifixion.

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## 5 — Misusing and Ignoring Scripture

If you regularly attend a church that promotes a future Second Coming, you've probably heard the following biblical passages, which are said to "prove" that we cannot know the time of Christ's return:

But of that *day and hour* no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone (Matthew 24:36).

But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what *time of the night* the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an *hour* when you do not think He will (Matthew 24:43-44).

But of that *day or hour* no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. "Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come (Mark 13:32-33).

Of course, preachers never point out how in all of these verses, the Lord used time-related terms that denote periods of *days and hours* — while there is nothing about the year, decade or century of Christ's return.

### Think About This

Millions of Christians have concluded they cannot know the century, decade or year of our Lord's return, because they place implicit trust in what they hear at church, rather than checking to see whether the Bible agrees with what their church teaches. And if you are one of these Christians, then get prepared to read numerous biblical passages you have never heard at church.

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### The Apostles Knew When Jesus Would Return

Jesus told His 1<sup>st</sup> Century disciples they would know the general date of His return. The proof is in Matthew 24:32-33:

Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; so, *you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door.*

Now look at Luke 21:28-31:

*“But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”* Then He told them a parable: “Behold the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So *you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near.*”

So even though Jesus did not reveal the exact day or hour of His return, He most certainly did tell the apostles they would know when the event was near.

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### Christian Churches Contradict the Lord

Unfortunately, many Christian preachers openly contradict the above Scriptures, suggesting that Jesus didn't understand basic grammar. They claim that when Jesus said “you” and “your” to the disciples, He really meant “us” in the future. And according to these preachers, the creator of the universe and the inventor of human language didn't know how to use personal pronouns!

So while it's true that the Lord's disciples would not know the day or hour of Christ's coming, it's also true that He told the disciples they would know the general time period (the year and perhaps even the month) when the Second Coming would occur.

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### “Elijah” Arrived Thousands of Years Ago

The prophet Malachi wrote how just before the Day of the Lord, an “End Time” prophet named Elijah would arrive on the scene:

*Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse. (Malachi 4:5-6).*

Many preachers acknowledge that the Second Coming cannot occur until this “end time” prophet arises to announce the Lord's return. But these same preachers always neglect to share how Jesus said the “Elijah” was actually John the Baptist:

*For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, *John himself is Elijah who was to come* (Matthew*

11:13-14).

### Think About This

According to Jesus Christ, Malachi's prophecy was fulfilled almost 2,000 years ago. So why do many modern preachers tell us to look for the Elijah as a sign of the Lord's return?

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#### The Apostles Lived During the Last Times

Pastors that predict an imminent Second Coming usually tell their congregations we are living in the "last times." But how does this compare with what the apostle John wrote 2,000 years ago?

Children, *it is the last hour*; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; *from this we know that it is the last hour* (I John 2:18).

Also notice what the apostle Peter wrote 2,000 years ago:

... but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but *has appeared in these last times for the sake of you* (I Peter 1:19-20).

*The end of all things is near*; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer (I Peter 4:7).

Both John and Peter wrote that they were living in the last or end times. And John explained how these same end times — which occurred almost 2,000 years ago — were the specific times when end-time antichrists would start appearing.

Now let's read what the apostle James wrote:

You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, *for the coming of the Lord is near*. Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, *the Judge is standing right at the door* (James 5:8-9).

And finally in the Book of Revelation, the apostle John shared this:

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, *the things which must soon take place*; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, who testified to

the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; *for the time is near* (Revelation 1:1-3).

And he said to me, “These words are faithful and true”; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants *the things which must soon take place* (Revelation 22:6).

### **Think About This**

The Lord’s most trusted apostles — James, John, and Peter — all believed they were living in the last days. And without any doubt, all three of these men believed the Second Coming of Jesus Christ was in their immediate future.

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6 — Proof From the Words of Christ

The Lord gave us four separate statements by which we can know the Great Tribulation and Second Coming occurred within a few years of His death.

Statement 1: The Apostles Were Told to Flee Persecution

Jesus told His apostles they would have to flee the area around Jerusalem, in order to escape the tribulations preceding His return:

But whenever they persecute you in one city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes (Matthew 10:23).

But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not be [let the reader understand], then those who are in Judea (the area surrounding Jerusalem) must flee to the mountains (Mark 13:14).

*But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. “Then those who are *in Judea* must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; because these are days of vengeance, so that *all things which are written will be fulfilled.*” Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to *this people.* (Luke 21:20-23).*

*But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up *your heads, because your redemption is drawing near* (Luke 21:28).*

But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man (Luke 21:36).

These verses provide a great deal of information, directly from the mouth of Jesus Christ:

- The end-time Tribulation would occur within the lifetime of the 1st Century apostles and disciples;
- The Tribulation would occur in the general area of Judea (the area surrounding Jerusalem).
- God’s wrath would not be against the world in general, but against “this people” (the Jews);

- Those in rural areas away from Jerusalem would not be affected by God's wrath (the tribulation was not world-wide);
- The disciples were told to lift up their heads and watch for Christ's Second Coming;
- Some of the disciples would stand before the Son of Man at His return.

Think About This

Clearly and without any doubt, Jesus told His 1st Century disciples the Tribulation and Second Coming would occur within their generation and in the areas surrounding Jerusalem.

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Statement 2: Some Who Heard Christ Preach Would Witness His Return

In Mark 8:34, Jesus called His disciples and various other people together and spoke to them. Then in Mark 9:1, He said this:

And Jesus was saying to them, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."

And notice how the apostle Matthew related this conversation:

For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will repay every man according to his deeds. Truly I say to you, *there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom* (Matthew 16:27-28).

Then in Matthew 26:63-64, Jesus told the Jewish High Priest He would personally observe His Second Coming:

But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself; *nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.*

Think About This

These are clear and powerful statements directly from our Lord and Savior. And

within these statement Jesus promised that those who heard Him speak would personally observe His Second Coming before they died.

Statement 3: The Apostle John Might Live to See the Second Coming

Let's read through John 21:20-23:

Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved (John) following them; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" So Peter seeing him said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?" Jesus said to him, "*If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!*" Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, "*If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?*"

So if we are still waiting for Christ's return, was Jesus suggesting that John might be alive for over 2,000 years?

Statement 4: Christ Returned During His Own Generation

I've saved the most obvious biblical evidence for last, because many who promote a future Second Coming purposely misrepresent these passages:

And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, *and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.* And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; *so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. Truly I say to you, **this generation** will not pass away until all these things take place* (Matthew 24:30-34).

Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of

righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. *Truly I say to you, **all these things will come upon this generation*** (Matthew 23:34-36).

*Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven. Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door. Truly I say to you, **this generation will not pass away until all these things take place*** (Mark 13:26-30).

Then He told them a parable: Behold the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. *Truly I say to you, **this generation will not pass away until all things take place*** (Luke 21:29-32).

Think About This

Three out of four gospels describe how the tribulation and end time events would culminate in Christ's Second Coming. And in each case, Jesus said that all of these end-time events would occur in "their generation."

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## 7 — Preachers Contradict Christ

The Scriptures reproduced in the previous chapter should have settled any argument over the date of Christ's return. But as we saw in Chapter 4, once churches discovered how they could increase their memberships by claiming to understand future prophetic events, church leaders found the temptation impossible to ignore.

But in order to preach about a future Second Coming, pastors had to direct their congregations away from the Scriptures we just reviewed in the previous chapter. And many accomplished this by referring to the Book of Acts:

*When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power (Acts 1:6-7 — KJV).*

After citing the above passage, preachers would claim that God does not reveal the dates of important prophetic events. And therefore, Christians will never be able to know when Christ would return.

But of course, these preachers expected their listeners to not realize that the above passage asked a specific question concerning the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel. – and not the Second coming.

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### Preachers Redefine Greek Words

xxxxChurches promoting a future Second Coming also encountered problems with Matthew 24:30-34, Matthew 23:34-36, Mark 13:26-30 and Luke 21:29-32 (reproduced in Statement 4 above). In each of these passages, Jesus stated His return would occur within the “generation” of those to which He was speaking — which clearly contradicts a future Second Coming.

So preachers needed another way to interpret these verses. And here is what they did:

- They discovered that the Greek word *genea* (which is translated into the English word “generation” in the above verses) was derived from the word *ginomai*, which means “to come into being or existence”;
- Then they found how the parent word that produces *ginomai* had also been used to mean ‘birth,’ ‘progeny,’ and ‘race’. And since the parent

word could be correctly translated ‘race’, they claimed that *genea* (which is derived from *ginomai*) also meant ‘race’.

So with these fictitious arguments in hand, pastors began to preach that all of the above Scriptures referred to the ‘race’ of the Jews — and that Jesus could not return, as long as the Jewish race existed on planet Earth.

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Of course, there were significant problems with this theological postulation. The most obvious is that languages usually do not create a child word like *genea*, if this new word means exactly the same thing as the parent word. And there was a huge problem with authoritative biblical lexicons and dictionaries, all of which defined *genea* as either “the successive members of a genealogy” or “a particular age in history.”

And finally, there was the fact that when Jesus stated how each of the following events would occur in “this generation” (*genea*), it’s obvious that He was referring to the people who were listening to Him, rather than the Jewish race. For example:

- The *apostles* would have to flee from the area around Jerusalem;
- The *apostles* would see the Abomination of Desolation;
- The *apostles* would witness Jerusalem being surrounded by armies;
- The *apostles’* redemption was near;
- The *apostle John* might live to see the Second Coming;
- The *apostles* were told to pray they had the strength to escape all the things that were about to take place, and stand before the Son of Man.

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### How We Can Prove What *Genea* Actually Means

A pastor or Christian author may claim that *genea* refers to the Jewish race; while many scholars and biblical references state this word refers to a particular segment of human genealogy. So how does the average Christian know which spiritual authority is correct?

This is an especially difficult task, because few Christians have the theological background necessary to know who the biblical scholars are; neither do they know how to locate authoritative Greek references. And therefore, most Christians have no choice, but to trust their pastor or favorite author.

However, it turns out that there is an easy and accurate method by which we can determine what *genea* actually means. All we have to do is read a few passages where the Bible uses *genea* in contexts other than the Second Coming.

For example, in each of the passages cited below, the English word translated from *genea* is underlined:

So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations (Matthew 1:17).

And His mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear Him (Luke 1:50).

"For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay (Acts 13:36).

For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath (Acts 15:21).

Here we have four Scriptures, written by three different New Testament authors. And each passage uses *genea* to refer to the continuing generations of human beings, without a single reference to the Jewish race. All of these passages use *genea* in precisely the same manner as we use our English word "generation."

Now look at how the apostle Paul used *genea*:

... that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints (Colossians 1:26).

Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as when they provoked me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw my works for forty years. Therefore I was angry with this generation, and said, 'they will always go astray in their heart, and they do not know My ways'; as I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest'" (Hebrews

3:7-11)

... which in other *generations* was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit (Ephesians 3:5).

... to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all *generations* forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:21).

And so again, we see the same usage: *genea* refers to the gospel which was hid for multiple generations (periods of time); the generation (period of time) when Moses and the Children of Israel lived; “other generations” (offspring) that did not receive the revelation of God; and all generations “forever and ever.”

So if we allow the Bible to interpret the Bible, there can be no doubt about the meaning of this word: “*genea*” *has the same meaning as our English word “generation.”*



### One Final Proof

There is one final Scripture, that more than any other, proves how the Bible never uses *genea* to refer to a race or family of people. Look at Acts 14:16:

*In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways.*

Here the Greek translated in the English “generations” is our old friend *genea*. While the phrase “all the nations” is translated from the Greek *ethnos*, which means *race* or *tribe* (as in the Jewish race).

So if *genea* referred to a race of people, this passage would literally be stating: “Who in past *races* suffered all *races* to walk in their own ways” – and of course, this makes no sense. The only way this passage could be meaningful, is for *genea* to refer to a generation or age; while the Greek *ethnos* refers to a race or tribe.

(For more information from biblical scholars on the definition of *genea*, see the Appendix in Chapter 11).



## 8 — The Record of Secular History

Secular (non-biblical) history also describes the miraculous events associated with Christ's 1<sup>st</sup> Century return. To set the stage for reading these histories, we need to review our Lord's description of the events preceding up to and associated with His Second Coming:

*“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.” Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.*

*“Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*

*There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken (Luke 21:20-26).*

And now that we have set the stage, let's read several secular histories you probably won't hear at church.

### The Jewish Historian Josephus (CE 75)

Flavius Josephus was a Jewish priest, Pharisee and military commander. He commanded the national resistance in Galilee at the time of Israel's 1<sup>st</sup> Century revolt against Rome. When Josephus was captured by the Romans at Jotapata, his life was spared because he predicted that the Roman general Vespasian would soon become emperor. And when this prediction actually came true, Josephus was commissioned to provide his captors with a history of the Jewish people during the Roman-Jewish wars.

Notice what Josephus wrote in one segment of this history:

*“Besides these [signs], a few days after that feast, on the one-and-twentieth day of the month Artemisius [Jyar], a certain prodigious (stupendous or colossal) and incredible phenomenon appeared; I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve*

such signals; for, before sun-setting, *chariots and troops of soldiers in their armour were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities*. Moreover, at that feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner [court of the] temple, as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, *they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, 'Let us remove hence'*” (Jewish Wars, VI-V-3, emphasis by this author).

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### The Roman Historian Tacitus (CE 115)

Tacitus was a Roman senator and historian who wrote histories of the Roman Empire from the reign of Tiberius to that of Nero (CE 14–68). the following is what he wrote in one of these histories (called *Annals*), about the events following Christ’s sacrifice:

“Prodigies (amazing or unusual events) had occurred, but their expiation by the offering of victims or solemn vows is held to be unlawful by a nation which is the slave of superstition and the enemy of true beliefs. *In the sky appeared a vision of armies in conflict, of glittering armour. A sudden lightning flash from the clouds lit up the Temple. The doors of the holy place abruptly opened, a superhuman voice was heard to declare that the gods were leaving it, and in the same instant came the rushing tumult of their departure*. Few people placed a sinister interpretation upon this. The majority were convinced that the ancient scriptures of their priests alluded to the present as the very time when the Orient would triumph and from Judaea would go forth men destined to rule the world” (Histories, Book 5, v. 13).

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### Eusebius of Caesarea (CE 325)

Eusebius was a Greek historian of Christianity, who served as bishop of Caesarea Maritima around 314 CE. He was a scholar of the Biblical canon and regarded as a well-learned Christian of his day. Here is what he wrote about the events around Jerusalem, immediately after Christ’s death:

“For before the setting of the sun *chariots and armed troops were seen throughout the whole region in mid-air, wheeling through the clouds and*

*encircling the cities”* (Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Ch. 8).

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#### Chrysostom of Antioch (CE 347)

John Chrysostom was the Archbishop of Constantinople and is considered an early church father. Notice what he wrote about Christ’s death and the events that took place immediately thereafter:

And let not any man suppose this to have been spoken hyperbolically (far-fetched); but let him study the writings of Josephus, and learn the truth of the sayings. For neither can any one say, that the man being a believer, in order to establish Christ’s words, hath exaggerated the tragical history. For indeed He was both a Jew, and a determined Jew, and very zealous, and among them that lived after Christ’s coming. I should therefore be glad to inquire of the Jews. Whence came there thus upon them wrath from God intolerable, and more sore than all that had befallen aforesaid, not in Judaea only, but in any part of the world? Is it not quite clear, that it was for the deed of the cross, and for this rejection? All would say it, and with all and before all the truth of the facts itself" (Homily LXXVI).

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#### B.W. Johnson (CE 1891)

B. W. Johnson was the author of several books of wide circulation: *The Vision of the Ages*, *Commentary on John*, *The People’s New Testament* in two octavo volumes, and the successive volumes of the *Christian Lesson Commentary*.

Here is what he wrote about the Great Tribulation:

"21. Great tribulation. The account given by Josephus, the Jewish historian who witnessed and recorded the war, is almost an echo of the predictions of Christ. *Women ate their own children from starvation; the Jews within the city fought each other as well as the Roman army; on August 10, CE 70, the city was stormed and there was a universal massacre; 1,100,000 persons perished, and 100,000 survivors were sold into slavery.*"

### **Think About This**

Each of these secular and ecclesiastical histories are in full agreement with the biblical writings: the Great Tribulation and Christ’s Second Coming occurred

shortly after our Lord's death.

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9 — Christ's Return: A Summary

So let's summarize what we have learned:

- 1) Jesus told His disciples that He would return within their generation;
- 2) The Lord told several people of His generation how they would personally witness His return with their own eyes;
- 3) Jesus told the Jewish High Priest he would personally observe His Second Coming;
- 5) Jesus told His disciples they would know the general date of His return;
- 4) The disciples knew the Day of the Lord was near, because Malachi's Elijah prophecy had been fulfilled by John the Baptist;
- 6) Three of the apostles wrote how they were living in the prophesied "last time" — and that the coming of the Lord was "near;"
- 7) The Lord told His disciples they would be alive and fleeing persecution at the time of His Second Coming;
- 8) Jesus told the disciples to remain watchful, so they could "stand before the Son of Man."
- 9) Secular and church histories also recorded how the Great Tribulation and Second Coming occurred during the 1st Century.

Biblical and secular histories confirm that the Great Tribulation, Day of the Lord, Second Coming of Christ, and the General Resurrection of the saints all occurred within a few decades of Christ's death and resurrection.

While those that promote a "future" Second Coming are spreading humanly-derived fantasies that are in direct contradiction to the teachings of Jesus Christ, His apostles, and the historical record.

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## 10 — What Remains for Christians?

When Christians discover how the Great Tribulation, general resurrection of the dead, and Second Coming of Christ prophesied in Matthew 24, Luke 21, and Daniel 12 all occurred during the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, they may find themselves asking, “So what remains for us today?”

In fact, some Christians might even wonder if they missed out on something good! And if you are one of these people, I want you to read what the prophet Daniel wrote about the last (or end time) days:

*... And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time (Daniel 12:1).*

The Jewish-Roman war and the destruction of Jerusalem that preceded Christ’s Second Coming were some of the most horrible events in Earth’s history. It was a time when unimaginable atrocities were committed. Josephus recorded how the embattled Jews were eating belts, shoes, and the leather stripped off their shields. Then he went on to describe a woman named Mary, who out of extreme hunger killed, roasted, and then ate her son.

One Jewish defector recorded how the valleys of Hinnom and Kidron were filled with 115,880 Jewish corpses; while another estimated that over one million Jews died in the war. And in Luke 21:26, Jesus described these events as “... men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.”

And therefore, modern Christians need to realize how blessed we are to not be involved in the end times, great tribulation, and the first resurrection — and that we do not have to experience such frightful events.

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### Biblical Truth Promotes Freedom

Our Lord and Savior said the following:

*As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him. So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free (John 8:30-32).*

It’s my hope that knowledge of how the Great Tribulation and Second Coming of Christ occurred during the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, most certainly does set us free. As

modern Christians, we are free from worrying about end-time tribulations, along with falsely prophesied wars, famines, and diseases. Knowing the truth, we can live a quiet life of faith and peace, with an absolute assurance that at the time of our death, we will immediately pass on to our heavenly reward.

### **Think About This**

The teachings of institutionalized Christianity lead us into unwarranted fear and emotional distress. While the teachings of Jesus Christ bring us comfort and unspeakable joy.

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11 — Appendix of Scholarly Articles on the Greek Word *genea*

David Brown (1858) — Co-author of the *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Commentary*:

Does not this tell us plainly as words could do it, that the whole prophecy was meant to apply to the destruction of Jerusalem? There is but one way of setting this aside, but how forced it is, must, I think, appear to every unbiased mind. It is by translating, not ‘this generation,’ ... but ‘this nation shall not pass away:’ In other words, the Jewish nation shall survive all the things here predicted! Nothing but some fancied necessity, arising out of their view of the prophecy, could have led so many sensible men to put this gloss upon our Lord’s words. Only try the effect of it upon the perfectly parallel announcement in the previous chapter: ‘Fill ye up them the measure of your fathers. Wherefore, behold, I send you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city ... that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zecharias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation’ ... Matt. xxiii. 32, 34-36). Does not the Lord here mean the then existing generation of the Israelites? Beyond all question he does; and if so, what can be plainer than that this is his meaning in the passage before us? (Christ’s Second Coming, Will it be Pre-millennial?, p. 435)

David Chilton (1996) — Pastor and author of *Paradise Restored* (1985), *The Days of Vengeance* (1987), and *The Great Tribulation* (1987):

“Some have sought to get around the force of this text by saying that the word generation here really means race, and that Jesus was simply saying that the Jewish race would not die out until all these things took place. Is that true? I challenge you: Get out your concordance and look up every New Testament occurrence of the word generation (in Greek, *genea*) and see if it ever means ‘race’ in any other context. Here are all the references for the Gospels: Matthew 1:17; 11:16; 12:39, 41, 42, 45; 16:4; 17:17; 23:36; 24:34; Mark 8:12, 38; 9:19; 13:30; Luke 1:48, 50; 7:31; 9:41; 11:29, 30, 31, 32, 50, 51; 18:8; 17:25; 21:32. Not one of these references is speaking of the entire Jewish race over thousands of years — all use the word in its normal sense of the sum total of those living at the same time. The word always refers to contemporaries. In fact, those who say the word means ‘race’ tend to acknowledge this fact, but explain that the word

suddenly changes its meaning when Jesus uses it in Matthew 24! We can smile at such a transparent error, but we should also remember that this is very serious. We are dealing with the Word of the living God.” (The Great Tribulation, p. 3)

J.C. Fenton (1974) — Author of *The Pelican New Testament Commentaries*:

“Although attempts have been made to interpret this generation to the Jews, or as the human race in general, it is more likely that originally it meant the generation living at the time of Jesus.” (p. 391)

Ezra Gould (1896) — Author of *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*:

“There is general consent now that the prophecy is restricted in time to that generation, v. 30. In general, the historical interpretation of this prophecy is fairly settled.” (Commentary on Mark, p.249)

Henry Hudson — Author of *Echos of the Ministry*:

“Many commentators play around with the word ‘generation’ (genea), and thinking to avoid embarrassment, project its application to the generation which will be alive during the last days immediately preceding the Second Coming of the Messiah. Others, expand its meaning to include the whole nation of Israel, which, in spite of the intensity of the great tribulation, will nevertheless be preserved as a nation right up till the end of the present age. However, if Scripture be compared with Scripture, such verbal games are soon exposed as being nothing but armchair gymnastics (cf. Matthew 11:16; 12:41-45; 23:36; Luke 11:50, 51; Hebrews 3:10). The word is generally used to signify a people belonging to a particular period of time, or more loosely, to a period defined by what might be considered as an average life span of a man.” (p. 32)

“... the whole of the xxivth of Matthew, and particularly the 36th and following verses, relate solely to the destruction of Jerusalem, exclusively of a Second Coming, and of the end of the world.” (p.131)

G.R. Beasley-Murray (1954) — Author of *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*:

"The meaning of 'this generation' is now generally acknowledged. While in earlier Greek *genea* meant 'birth,' 'progeny,' and so 'race,' in the sense of those descended from a common ancestor, in the LXX it commonly translates the term *dor*, meaning 'age,' 'age of man,' or 'generation' in the sense of contemporaries. On the lips of Jesus 'this generation' always signifies the contemporaries of Jesus, but at the same time always carries an implicit criticism. For Mark the eschatological discourse expounds the implication of the prophecy of judgment in verse 2, and so implies the perversity of 'this generation,' which must suffer the doom predicted.

—

Dr. E. Robinson (1843) — Author of *The Parousia: A Critical Inquiry Into the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord*:

"The question now arises whether, under these limitations of time, a reference of our Lord's language to the day of judgment and the end of the world, in our sense of these terms, is possible. Those who maintain this view attempt to dispose of the difficulties arising from these limitations in different ways. Some assign to (*genea*) the meaning suddenly, as it is employed by the LXX in Job v. 3, for the Hebrew. But even in this passage the purpose of the writer is simply to mark an immediate sequence — to intimate that another and consequent event happens forthwith. Nor would anything be gained even could the word (*genea*) be thus disposed of, so long as the subsequent limitation to 'this generation' remained. And in this again others have tried to refer *genea* to the race of the Jews, or to the disciples of Christ, not only without the slightest ground, but contrary to all usage and all analogy. All these attempts to apply force to the meaning of the language are in vain, and are now abandoned by most commentators of note." (Bibliotheca Sacra, Vol. 1 — 1843).

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