

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA.55:10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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APOSTOLIC EXPECTATION

It is an idea that is constantly declared and repeatedly affirmed that the Apostles of the Lord Jesus, along with all other believers who lived in the first century, were hopefully expecting the second coming of the Lord Jesus within their lifetime. Many texts are cited in proof of these assertions, but as a rule if these are closely examined they are found to say no such thing. 1 Corinthians 1:7 is one such passage. In the KJV rendering of this passage it has Paul saying that the Corinthian believers were "**waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.**" However, the Greek word *apokalupsin* does not mean "coming" and no logical, honest reasons can be given for translating it this way. This word means "unveiling," pure and simple, as its elements clearly reveal. To translate it "coming" is to rewrite the passage and cause it to say something that the Spirit of God did not say when these inspired words were given through Paul.

Many texts such as this one are mistranslated or else separated from their context, then used as proof of the idea that the second coming of Christ was the immediate expectation of the Apostles. Yet if we think carefully upon the idea that the Apostles taught and expected the imminent personal return of Christ in their lifetime, we can come to no other conclusion than that they were false teachers and prophets who come under the condemnation spoken in Deut. 18:22. Furthermore, if they were expecting His immediate return, they were not expecting what the Lord told them would come to pass, and they were ignoring the divine time-table set forth in His words to them.

Some of the difficulties and differences of opinion in regard to this matter are brought about by misunderstanding those passages that do seem to indicate that the Apostles will be alive and very much a part of the action when the great event called the parousia becomes a reality. This is positively clear in Matthew 24. If we consider this portion carefully we can take no other logical position than that the twelve Apostles must be alive and upon the earth when these events take place. What else can one believe when he knows that these words were spoken in private to the twelve disciples (Matt. 24:3)? To them He said: "**Take heed that no man deceive YOU; . . .**

YE shall hear of wars; . . . and shall kill YOU; . . . and YE shall be hated; . . . when YE therefore see the abomination of desolation;" etc. These words, so intently personal could not create any other idea within the minds of the Apostles that they would be alive and directly involved in all these events. Nevertheless, they are all dead, and the parousia described in this passage has not yet taken place. How then can they be alive when it does take place?

The answer is quite simple. These disciples along with millions of others who are the children of God will be raised from the dead and will live for centuries upon this earth before these events come to pass. When the Lord declared in Matt. 19:28 that these twelve Apostles would "sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel," He was speaking of a position that will be theirs upon earth when He governs the earth from heaven. This is long before the advent of the Lord Jesus when He returns to be personally present for a thousand years. See Issue No. **SB129** concerning "The Order of Events."

The basis of true apostolic expectation had to be founded on what they had heard, the promises that the Lord had made to them. The message of John the Baptist was that the kingdom of heaven, that is God's government, was at hand (Matt. 3:2), and the Lord Jesus, after John's imprisonment proclaimed the same message (Matt. 4: 17). Therefore, they had every right to expect the advent of God's government, but it must be noted that He told them how it would come. He said it would be in stages; first the blade then the ear, after that the full grain in the ear, then the ripened grain, and finally the harvest (Mark 4:26-29). Thus all that was necessary to preserve the Lord's promise was for some of them to see that kingdom of God come, like unto the blade stage of growing grain. This they saw in the thirty-three years of the Acts period. They had no reason to expect more.

Later the Lord told them emphatically: "**There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom**" (Matt. 16:28). If anyone of them was careless in hearing and turned His words into a promise that some of them would not taste of death until they had seen the return of the Lord Jesus in a second advent, then they misunderstood His words. This cannot be the meaning of "the Son of man coming in His kingdom," since all of these men are in the state of death and His coming (*erchomaz*) and His personal presence (*parousia*) have not yet taken place. This phrase has to mean something else than His personal return to the earth.

The problem these words seem to create disappears when we get all the facts before us. This same incident is restated in different words in two other places. Consider this display of all three:

Matt. 16:28. "There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death till they see *the Son of man coming in His kingdom.*"

Mark 9: 1. "There be come of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen *the kingdom of God come with power.* "

Luke 9:7. "There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see *the kingdom of God.*"

Since all three of these writers are declaring what the Lord said, they must be saying the same thing in slightly different words. Therefore, we will err if we take the words "the Son of man coming in His kingdom" and make them to mean something more than "the kingdom of God coming with power."

These words are somewhat like those used by Paul in 2 Corinthians 13: 1: "This is the third time I am coming to you." He had come to them once in person declaring an inspired message, which we now call First Corinthians. And now he is coming to them the third time by means of an epistle which we call Second Corinthians.

The coming of the kingdom of God, even in the blade stage, can be called the coming of the Son of man in His kingdom, even though He does not leave His place at the seat of divine government in heaven. This is even as we find it in our Lord's words to His Apostles: "**I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you**" (John 14: 18). Thus, the coming of the Holy Spirit must be looked upon as a coming of Christ; otherwise, He left them without a Comforter and did not keep His solemn promise to them.

If the Apostles gave due heed to what the Lord said to them, they had to live with the reality that death could be their lot at any moment. See Matt. 24:9, John 16:2, Luke 11:49. In view of words such as these, how could it be their expectation to live until the parousia? They fully expected and were entirely submissive to the fact that their days on earth would have a temporary end in death, but they also held firmly to the expectation of another life upon the earth that would begin with their resurrection. We have no record of what happened to any of the Apostles, except James (Acts 12:2), but it seems certain that one after another they were put to death.

There is no need for further questioning about the Lord's promise that some of them would not experience death until they saw "**the Son of man coming in His kingdom.**" The very words "in His kingdom" indicate that this was not to be a coming in person. They had learned from the words they heard the Lord speak to the Pharisees that the Kingdom of God would not "come with observation," that is with outward show, with great display (Luke 17:20). And the Lord also explained what he meant by observation (*parateresis*). No one would point to the skies and say of this kingdom, "**Lo, here it comes!**" or "**Lo, there it is!**" Note this carefully and mark it well. The

kingdom of God does **not** come with the Lord descending, His voice shouting, angels accompanying, trumpets sounding, and saints ascending, as so many are saying today. If it does, then it will come with outward show, and the Lord's words will be found false.

Of course all these things do take place in connection with the Son of man coming in His **parousia**. Remember, He does not come back to earth to govern or to bring a government with Him. He returns to be personally present.

Apostolic expectation must certainly have been in harmony with the promises made in the Old Testament, and all the more so since Paul declares in Romans 15:8: "**Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.**" Among these promises which He must have validated is the one found in Psalm 46:6-10 where it is revealed that at a time when the nations are in turmoil and when the governments were shaken, "**He uttered His voice and the earth melted.**" Those who observe this are then invited to "**Come behold the works of Yahweh, what astonishing things He hath done in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.**"

This is really what the Apostles expected to take place just as soon as the blade and ear stages of God's government had run their full course; this would be the full grain in the ear.

Apostolic expectation was in full harmony with the promises of God that He would cause judgment to be heard from heaven (Psa. 76:8); that He would bring forth judgment to the nations (Isa. 42:1); of a time to come when His judgments would be in all the earth (Psa. 105:7). The apostle Matthew set forth this expectation when he quoted Isaiah in Matt. 12: 18-21, closing it with the words, "**In Him shall the nations trust.**" This truth is repeated by Paul in Romans 15:12, and it tells us why nations will be willing to beat their swords into plowshares, to disarm completely, laterally, bilaterally, and unilaterally.

More than a thousand years before the Apostles, the Psalmist revealed that the Messiah, after His humiliation on earth would return to His proper place on high (Psa. 7:7), judge (govern) the peoples, bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end, and establish the just (Psa. 7:7-9). It was also revealed that the LORD had prepared His throne (the seat of His government) in the heavens (Psa. 103: 19).

While on earth the Lord declared most emphatically to His Apostles that it was to their advantage that He go away (John 16:7). And there was nothing in His words that

would lead them to think that His absence from the earth would be for just a short time. No, they expected Him to govern the nations from His throne in heaven. This was their expectation.

We misrepresent the Lord Jesus if we say that He led them to expect His return to earth in their lifetime. Furthermore, we misrepresent the Apostles when we intimate or say that they manufactured this idea out of wishful thinking, then wrote it into the oracles of God. We should not slander them in this manner.

End Issue No. SB149