

Sunday May 4th 2008
The Promise of His Coming
Part 1

1). 2Pe 3:1 ¶ *Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), 2 that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior; 3 ¶ knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."*

2). It may seem incredible to think that there would arise within the Church a doctrine that would teach that there will be no literal coming of Christ and no literal Millennial Kingdom. That time as we know it will continue uninterrupted, with the Kingdom of God somehow manifesting itself through the actions of the church.

a). Yet such a doctrine is now everywhere within Christendom despite Peter's stirring us up by way of reminder – but, nevertheless, in fulfillment of the prophetic word given here.

b). It also seems remarkable that there would be debate over the timing of the rapture of the church, an event often referred to as the second coming of Christ amongst those who do look for a literal return of the Lord.

c). Pre trib / mid trib / post trib

d). And there is a whole money making industry marketing each of these products. As if God expects us to pick and choose that which we think will best suit us.

e). 2Pe 1:20 *knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,*

3). The fact is, scripture is neither ambivalent nor ambiguous about these things.

a). Am 3:7 *Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.*

b). Either the word of God is true or God is a liar – and there is of course no room for doubt as to which of these statements is correct as scripture is its own commentary - Nu 23:19 *"God is not a man, that He*

should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

c). So when Jesus Himself says - Joh 14:3 *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*

d). We cannot take this to mean anything other than what He says.

e). Likewise when we read - Ac 1:10 *And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 11 who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."*

4). It is the clear evidence of scripture that we look to. It is with the eyes and heart of faith that we understand the time and place in which we live. Anticipating and looking for that which is laid out for us in scripture.

a). Without doubt the events unfolding in the Middle East are extremely interesting. And it would be an obvious truth that all events in world history are inexorably marching towards the conclusion of God's plans and purposes, but again, it is the evidence of scripture that we look to, to understand what is going on around us, not the news media.

b). 2Co 5:7 *For we walk by faith, not by sight.*

5). So let us look at scripture with a view to understanding what is going on around us, especially that which relates to the present condition of the church in general, with respect to the promise of His coming.

6). As we will know, the advent and flourishing of doctrine that directly contradicts the Lord's return does not happen in a vacuum and as we look at what such a message teaches the reason for its inception will become obvious.

a). If there is no second coming of Christ, then there will be no Judgment Seat at which Christians will appear.

b). If there is no judgment for Christians then there will be no possibility of reward or loss.

c). If there is no possibility of loss then we may live as we like here and now without there being any consequences to our actions then and there.

d). And this is the very deception that Satan introduces in the Garden, with which he deceives the Woman - Ge 3:4 *Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.*

e). And this very same lie is the deceptive foundation upon which the challenging of the Lord's return is based – And again it is for the purpose of deceiving the woman, this time those who would potentially be the Bride of Christ, so as to separate them from the last Adam, thereby thwarting God's purpose for the Man and the Woman - their having dominion together.

7). It was of course with respect to rulership that we find Satan in the Garden of Eden in the first place looking to overthrow Adam and the Woman so as to retain his position as the incumbent ruler.

a). We find him at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil contradicting God's word so as to seduce the Woman into eating the fruit of the tree - Ge 3:6 ¶ *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.*

b). Now the Hebrew word for knowledge used here comes from a root word that means 'to understand' and the fact that the fruit of the tree appeals to the Woman's sensory perceptions would suggest that we are seeing something here that is opposition to faith – that which we would understand as walking by sight rather than walking by faith.

c). There is that which we will understand with our natural mind and then there is the truth of God's word – and these two things are always at odds with one another.

d). And so it is with the promise of the Lord's coming – and let's be in no doubt – the deception is the same and the intent is the same as in the Garden.

8). And so as we look at this in more detail let us turn to an OT type – the first generation of the nation of Israel to come out of Egypt. And the reason we look to them? Because of what is recorded in scripture - 1Co 10:6 ¶ *Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. 7 And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." 8 Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; 9 nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; 10 nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.*

9). Let us remember that God had redeemed Israel from the bondage of Egypt for a specific purpose - Ex 6:8 *'And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the LORD.'*"

a). It was a purpose that Israel both knew and understood.

i/ Here is the nation that God has created as a firstborn son and chosen to be His wife being prepared to enter the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob so as to rule with Him as a kingdom of priests within a Theocracy.

ii/ And just as this situation parallels the Woman in the Garden, so we see the same deception in operation.

b). They had seen God raise up Moses to lead them and had experienced the power of God through the plagues in Egypt, the night of the Passover and the Red Sea crossing.

c). They had much reason for trusting God and for relying on Him to fulfill His promises.

10). Despite this however we see an extraordinary event recorded in Exodus 32. But first let us back up to Exodus 24 to set in place the context.

a). Ex 24:12 ¶ *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them."* 13 *So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God.*

b). Moses is to go up to the mountain of God to receive the law and the commandments.

c). Before going however, he issues instructions to those who are to wait behind for his return - Ex 24:14 *And he said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we come back to you. Indeed Aaron and Hur are with you. If any man has a difficulty, let him go to them."*

d). They are to wait in patient endurance for his return, looking for it and expecting it.

e). And while he is gone Aaron and Hur, the leaders of the people have responsibility for them.

11). Moses is gone for a period of forty days and forty nights – 40 being a number of completion, showing he would be away for a complete period of time. In other words he would be gone until God determined it would be time for him to return, but set within specific parameters

12). So with this background in place we come to our event in Exodus 32 – Ex 32:1 ¶ *Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."* [where is the promise of his coming?] 2 *And Aaron said to them, "Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me."* 3 *"So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. 4 And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"*

13). Let us note some things here –

a). Because Moses was gone for a long time the people were not content to watch and wait as they had been instructed.

b). Instead they wanted to advance what they thought was God's agenda by recreating God in the image of the world they should have left behind – creating a golden calf. A symbol straight out of their life in Egypt.

i/ There was the choice to be faithfully obedient to that which God had said through Moses or act according to their own understanding. Pr 3:5 *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;*

c). In verse 4 we read - *"This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"* – The word here used for God is 'Elohim'.

d). What they had made by the works of their own hands they called by the same name as the God who had redeemed them, but they had created an image that they could control and manipulate. Even though they used the same name they had left the service of God and turned to idolatry. Just as with the deception of the Woman, they had made the jump from obedience to God to putting themselves in the place of God.

e). And their idolatry resulted in festivities that scripture describes as childish - Ex 32:5 *So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD." 6 Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.*

f). It is interesting to note that the leader, Aaron, the one who should have kept the people focused on Moses return, chose instead to give them exactly what they wanted. And as a result the people cast off restraint.

g). Ex 32:25 *Now when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to their shame among their enemies),*

h). In other words the people, led by Aaron, followed their own fleshly desires, but called it serving God. They were now walking by sight and not by faith.

i). And were obviously under the impression that there would be no consequences for their actions.

14). Now we will remember that in Exodus 24 Moses said he would return, and return he does – this was never in any doubt. However, upon his return, because of the actions of the people during his absence, judgment comes upon the people.

a). Ex 32:27 *And he said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.'" 28 So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day.*

b). Ex 32:35 *So the LORD plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made.*

c). Ex 32:33 *And the LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.*

d). Verse 33 here is perhaps the most chilling part of this judgment. We are of course not looking at matters relating to eternity for Israel had been eternally saved, but we are looking at the loss of inheritance in the land that was promised – the very purpose for their redemption.

e). And we find almost the same words recorded in respect of Christians in - Re 3:5 *"He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.*

15). Now all of this is a picture for the Church from which we should learn great spiritual truth so as to prevent us from entering into the same sin as Israel.

a). For we also have been redeemed for a specific purpose – Mt 21:43 *"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.*

16). And Christ, of whom Moses was a type, has left to go to the mountain of God and He will remain there for a complete period of time –

Ac 3:20 *"and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, 21 "whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.*

a). Ps 110:1 ¶ <<A Psalm of David.>> *The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."*

17). And before He left He gave instructions to those who were to wait for His return

a). Lu 19:12 *Therefore He said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. 13 "So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.'*

18). But what do we find? Rather than following the instructions given, rather than allowing the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth with respect to His return we find, as we saw in our opening scripture, *"Where is the promise of His coming?*

a). Rather than following the revelation of scripture, the church in a general sense has sat down to eat and drink and has risen up to play, casting off all restraint - Pr 29:18 ¶ *Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law.*

b). 2Ti 4:3 *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;*

c). We see the itching ears of the church and the earrings of the Children of Israel, creating something that goes by the name of God, but is really no more than idolatry. And there is no shortage of teachers to provide a scratching for the itching.

d). And along with this comes the deception – ‘you shall not surely die’.

e). And where, historically, do we find the warnings given to the church concerning this very thing? - At the very beginning of its existence in the fulfillment of that spoken by the Lord in the Matthew 13 parables. Something originally prophesied by Enoch the 7th from Adam – Jude 1:14 *Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, 15 ¶ "to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."*

f). It is right at the point of the church's inception, once Satan had realized what had really taken place in Christ's resurrection, that we find him introducing a contrary message - 1Co 2:7 *But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, & which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

g). This is the work of the apostates, the false teachers – the tares that are sown amongst the wheat – the leaven placed in the three measures of meal - i/ 2Pe 2:1 ¶ *But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. 3 ¶ By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.*

h). And why at this point? – Simply, as we have already seen, because here is the woman, the bride of Christ, called into existence to have dominion with her Husband in Satan's stead – and our enemy's motivation has not changed – he desires to thwart God's purposes in order to retain his position as the incumbent ruler of the earth.

19). As a result of the work of the enemy of our souls at the beginning of this dispensation Christianity has now become packaged, marketed and distributed according to the economics of supply and demand totally enmeshed in the systems of this world. It has become a multi-million dollar business with its various strands competing in the market place for the greater share of the market value. And we can include everything in this from 'Christian' TV, to books, to video, to music, to the organization of denominations and the operation of ministries.

a). And Christian leaders, the very ones who should be keeping the people focused on their preparation for the Lord's return and their appearance at His Judgment Seat, are the very ones responsible for encouraging and perpetuating this idolatry and harlotry within the church, in a disturbing parallel with the religious leaders in Israel at Christ's first coming - Mt 23:13 ¶ *"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.*

b). No matter how difficult it may be we must be reliant, not on what we see, but on how God describes the church of these last days –

Re 3:17b ... *wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked*—

c). We must accept this as the truth, even though it may inevitably include some of those whom we know and love.

20). When Christ leaves the mountain of God, just as we saw with Moses, judgment will come upon His people.

a). 1Pe 4:17 *For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?*

b). 2Co 5:10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

21). It is the one who overcomes the world, the flesh and the devil, particularly the manifestation of these in the church, whose name will not be blotted out of the Book of Life.

a). Ps 24:3 ¶ *Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully. 5 He shall receive blessing from the LORD, And righteousness from the God of his salvation.*

22). As we come to share the Lord's Supper together today let us once again determine that it will be scripture and scripture alone that will shape our thinking and our understanding. Let us by all means watch the events of the world, but keep our eyes on the prize.