

# Looking Forward to Jesus

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by Ben Purves

## Yet Another Prediction

Is Christ returning today or tomorrow? Many people are talking about it thanks to yet another group announcing their conjectures based on mathematical gymnastics and astronomical mysticism. As of now, the deadline for Christ's return has been announced as scheduled for sometime between now and sundown on Saturday, September 23 in Israel. If not by then, it is expected by the end of the day at the international dateline.

Originally posted in advance of Harold Camping's failed prediction that Christ would return on May 21, 2011 of that year, I decided to revisit and update this blog post because of this repeated drama.

When it comes to discerning the signs, we know that all of creation is experiencing birth pains and anticipating the return of our Lord (Rom 8:22). We also know that we have been in the last days since the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-18). Yet when we see news stories of hurricanes, floods, and wildfires, like clockwork, religious leaders from the mainline to the fringe invite their followers to join them in hysteria.

## Scripture vs Formulas

Rather than looking to the news, weather, stars, and formula preachers with an elastic Bible, we must set that aside and ground ourselves in the absolute authority and inspiration of Scripture. We must not give credence to imaginations that utilize the Bible as a formula puzzle piece to be manipulated in their calculations.

Rather, let us look to the faithful Word of God. Consider the words of Jesus from Matthew 24:36, and Mark 13:31-32: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

Again in Acts 1:6-7, as the disciples sought answers from Jesus about the arrival of His earthly kingdom, He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority."

Again in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2, the apostle Paul speaks to the timing of the Lord's return, and asserts the impossibility of one being able to mark it out on a timeline: "Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night."

This repeated teaching is explicitly clear and leaves no wiggle room. The Bible has emphatically announced that no one will know the time or the hour, but that the Lord's return will come unannounced as a "thief in the night." While we firmly believe in our Lord's return,

we also firmly believe the testimony of Scripture that it will be impossible for one to predict the day or the hour.

Because of this, I strongly disagree with any prediction or date-setting for Christ's return, not only because of the bizarre nature of the interpretive gymnastics required to arrive at such conclusions, but because such predictions disregard the clear and repeated teaching of the Word of God.

It's unfortunate to hear about people being misled and deceived by these predictions, and the subsequent resignations of careers and giving away of possessions. One can only imagine the crisis of faith experienced when such predictions are discovered to be false.

### **A Right Expectation of Christ's Return**

There is, however, one thing these announcers do get right, and it is that our Lord Jesus Christ will return one day. This is a crucial doctrine for the church. Christ's return is a joyous event for all who have placed their faith in Him, but for those who have not, it will bring His righteous judgment. If Jesus were to return this week, are you ready?

In light of the unknown moment of Christ's return, Scripture instructs us to keep living in righteousness as we anticipate our King's return (1 Thessalonians 5:4-11).

So while some wait for the Lord to return by the end of tomorrow (Saturday, September 23), here at Occoquan Bible we will continue to prepare for Sunday worship. From Sunday School to the pulpit, our teachers will continue to spend hours in the Word as they prepare to proclaim the gospel, teach the truths of God, and encourage the saints. The music team will prepare songs for our congregational singing, and the office will prepare church announcements and our weekly bulletin.

The best way for us to live in expectation of His return is to be faithful in serving Him. Not to keep standing on the mountain looking into the sky, but to busy ourselves with the Great Commission work our Lord has entrusted to us. Think of the many parables Jesus taught about the master and his servants. So let us keep serving our Lord together, be it in the workplace or our homes. Let us be faithful to share the light of Christ with those around us, be it our co-workers, neighbors, or families. May the Lord be glorified in us today, tomorrow, this week, this year, and this lifetime. His timing is perfect, and all His ways are good.

And come join us this Sunday for the joy of sitting under the preaching of His Word, singing His praise, and encouraging one another all the more as we see the day approaching (Hebrews 10:25).

Maranatha!

Pastor Ben