

Is The Return of Christ Near?

Sunday Evening Bible Study

March 20, 2016

Review of the Seven Semi-Related Questions

1. Do Muslims and Christians worship the same God?
2. What is an evangelical voting block?
3. Are we losing religious freedom?
4. Should I carry a gun?
5. How can I love immigrants?
6. Is socialism biblical?
7. Is the return of Christ near?

Q1: How are these questions related?

A1: In two ways: 1) These are some of the issues being raised by the presidential election of 2016; 2) These issues reflect a *global* unrest marked by massive cultural shifts, fear, uncertainty, and persecution of the church.

Q2: Are these “signs” of the times that alert us to the return of Christ in this generation?

A2: In every preceding generation, many believers thought so, and they were wrong. Respond to this question with humility and caution because, 1) Even Jesus, in his human nature, did not know (Mt. 24:36); 2) Almost all prophecy in the Bible was not very clear until *after* it was fulfilled.

Q3: Do Christians agree on the order of events preceding the return of Christ?

A3: No. There are four main views:

Amillennialism: Jesus reigns from heaven right now and will return suddenly; there is no future millennium.

Church Age	Return of Christ, Resurrection, and Judgment	Eternal State- New Heaven, New Earth (Rev.
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Postmillennialism: Jesus returns *after* (post-) the millennial kingdom.

Church Age is Millennium	Return, Resurrection, and Judgment	Eternal State
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Historic (Classic) Premillennialism: Jesus returns *after* the great tribulation and *before* (pre-) the millennium.

Church Age	Tribulation, Resurrection, Rapture-believers; Return of Christ	Millennium	Resurrection and judgment- unbelievers	Eternal State
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Dispensational Premillennialism: Jesus returns before the great tribulation and *before* (pre-) the millennium.

Church Age Acts 2	Resurrection Secret Rapture Of Believers 1 Th. 4	7 years of tribulation Dan. 9	Return of Christ Acts 1:11 Zech. 14:4	Millennium Rev. 20	Resurrection, judgment of unbelievers Rev. 20	Eternal State New Heaven New Earth Rev. 21,22
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What We Might Agree On:

1. The abomination of desolation has *already* occurred *locally* when the Roman general (son of Emperor Vespasian) destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD, serving to foreshadow a future, greater abomination.
2. The abomination of desolation has *not yet* happened *globally* when a Titus-like ruler who is the “anti-Christ” (1 Jn. 2:18) [a.k.a., the “man of lawlessness” (2 Thess. 2:3), “the beast” (Rev. 13)] will exercise unprecedented political-religious power to persecute the people of God (elect) who are on the earth.

Noteworthy News:

1. Unprecedented *global* rejection of created order and acceptance of homosexuality (Ro. 1).

- 1.1 Cultures that broadly accept and rationalize homosexuality are already under the wrath of God.
Global acceptance=global wrath.
- 1.2 U.S. Supreme Court redefines marriage to legitimize homosexuality (2015).
- 1.3 Chik-Fil-A banished from UNeb. due to “corporate values and discriminatory policies.” (2.23.16).
- 1.4 LGBT coalition demands NCAA cut Christian schools who seek Title IX exemption (3.15.17).

2. Unprecedented *global* persecution of the church (Mt. 24:9,21,29).

- 2.1 Christians are most persecuted religious group in the world
- 2.2 On average, 189 Christians are killed for their faith each month.
- 2.3 Christians in more than 60 countries face persecution from their governments.
- 2.4 North Korea is one of the worst countries for persecuting Christians
- 2.5 In 41 of the 50 worst nations for persecution, Christians are persecuted by Islamic extremists.
- 2.6 In 2014 Hobby Lobby narrowly wins SCOTUS decision (5–4)
- 2.7 The year 2015 saw the “most violent persecution of Christians in modern times...In every continent in every country...the levels of exclusion, discrimination, and violence against Christians is unprecedented, spreading and intensifying.” (Open Doors).
- 2.8 Early 2016 ISIS burns Bibles and Christian textbooks in Mosul (Nineveh).
- 2.9 February 12, 2016, Associate Justice Antonin Scalia dies.
- 2.10 Mainline denominations *and* evangelicals defect in large numbers from sound doctrine.

3. Unrelenting attention on Jerusalem, surrounded by enemies.

- 3.1 70 AD, Rome destroys Jerusalem and the temple.
- 3.2 691 AD, Arab Muslims complete the Dome of the Rock mosque on temple mount.
- 3.3 1099 Christian crusaders capture Jerusalem and convert Dome of the Rock to a church.
- 3.4 1187 Aladin retakes Jerusalem and converts Dome back to a mosque.
- 3.5 May 14, 1948, modern Israel becomes a nation.
- 3.6 Iran writes “Israel should be wiped off the earth” on test missile, March 2016.
- 3.7 Syrian civil war draws in Iran and Russia as allies of Syrian regime (2015).
- 3.8 Ted Cruz calls for moving U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem (2016).
- 3.9 Jews leave France to move to Israel in record numbers in 2015.

4. The Islamic Prediction of Jesus’ Return Popularized by ISIS

- 4.1 Qu’ran predicts an apocalyptic end of the world in final judgment (81:1-2; 82:3-4; 56:4-6)
- 4.2 Qu’ran predicts Jesus will return and slay the false Messiah (anti-Christ, *dajjal*): (4:157–159).
- 4.3 ISIS believes:
 1. “Rome” refers to infidel/Christian armies.
 2. Rome’s armies will meet Muslim armies at Dabiq (Near Aleppo, Syria) and be defeated.
 3. The caliphate will then expand to Turkey and then cover the entire earth.
 4. An anti-Christ (*Dajjal*) will rise up from eastern Iran and kill many caliphate fighters.
 5. Only 5,000 caliphate fighters will remain and be cornered in Jerusalem.
 6. Just when *Dajjal* is about to finish off the Caliphate fighters, Jesus will return to earth.
 7. Jesus will spear *Dajjal* in Jerusalem and lead the Muslims to victory.
 8. Jesus will die (since he didn’t before) and later be resurrected with everyone else.
 9. The caliphate will then cover the entire earth (a global caliphate); all will submit to *Allah*, live under *sharia* law, and be at peace (*islam*) in paradise.