

Q8) When will Christ return?

Answer: Predictions of the time of Christ's return have been made by various cults and each prediction has proven wrong. The Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) movement began with a prediction by William Miller that Christ would return in 1843. This date was revised to the autumn of 1844, after which he abandoned his prediction and admitted he had made an awful mistake.

The Jehovah's Witness movement predicted Christ would return in 1914 and, like the SDAs, ended up with egg on their faces.

On the Benny Hinn TV program during 2003, a guest speaker was interviewed and stated that the Rapture would occur within 6 months. That period has passed and the Rapture has not occurred.

There seems to be a magnetic attraction to date-setting by some preachers who have not learned to *"rightly divide"* the Word of Truth. Sometimes they adopt systems of interpretation such as the "year-day" theory or extraordinary Bible numerology schemes, and these lead them to proclaiming the very day Christ will return. Some claim extra-Biblical revelation received in dreams, visions or ecstatic utterance to justify their predictions, but however they arrive at their determination of the date of Christ's return they ultimately bring disrepute on the name of the Lord Jesus and cause many to avoid any message that relates to the last days.

Jesus made it very clear that

"Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32).

Jesus said that the time of His return was known only to the Father. When Jesus spoke these words it had not been revealed to Him, so it beomes obvious that no man could possibly know the appointed day or hour.

It seems that within the mystery of the Godhead the Father determines the *"times and seasons"*, as we read in Acts 1:7.

"It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father HATH PUT IN HIS OWN POWER" (Acts 1:7).

The greatest unveiling of future events is found in the Book of Revelation, and it was a revelation which the Father gave to the Son of *"things which must shortly come to pass"* (Rev.1:1). The word *"shortly"* simply means in a "brief space of time", and the duration of most of the Book of Revelation is a short period of 7 years.

Michael Wilcock, whose book, *I Saw Heaven Opened*, is considered by some Amillennialists to be the best interpretation of the Book of Revelation, admits that the word "shortly" could well have the sense of "suddenly" and therefore quite validly refer to events which would **suddenly occur** at the end of the age in a **short period of time**. He writes:

"It is true that the word 'soon' (or shortly) could also be translated

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'suddenly', and could therefore be held to mean that when the prophesied events did happen, they would begin suddenly, but that they might not begin to happen till long after John's time. On this view **the greater part of Revelation might still, even today, be unfulfilled**" (Page 32).

What Wilcock has drawn attention to is the very basis of interpretation of the Revelation, and in that interpretation we have **the revelation concerning the last days which was kept in the Father's power but now was revealed to the Son** so that He could shew it to His servants.

The Book of the Revelation has much to say about **the timing of events** during the last 7 years of history before Christ returns. From chapters 6 to 18 we are given a detailed, sequential account, of events in those days. Jesus stated that He would return in glory and power **"immediately after the tribulation of those days"** (Matt.24:29).

We are told that:

1) BEFORE the Tribulation judgments begin to fall 144,000 Jews would be sealed with the Father's name in their foreheads (Rev.7:3; 14:1). Undoubtedly these servants will preach the *"gospel of the kingdom"* *"in all the world"* (Matt.24:14).

2) Two Jewish prophets, possibly from among the 144,000, will prophesy at Jerusalem for **1,260 days BEFORE** they are killed by Antichrist (Rev.11:7-8).

3) This martyrdom will occur at the mid-point of the 7 years which is immediately after the 2nd WOE, which is the 6th trumpet judgment (Rev.11:13-14).

4) At the midpoint of the 7 years Antichrist will move into the Temple in Jerusalem and begin his reign for the second half of the 7 years of Tribulation. **"Power was given unto him to continue forty and two months"** (Rev.13:5).

This therefore concludes the seventieth "week" of Daniel's prophecy, and it is **"immediately after the tribulation of those days"** that Christ returns.

5) The martyrdom of the two prophets in Jerusalem apparently coincides with the death of the 144,000 who are seen around the throne in Rev.14:1-5 before the vial or bowl judgments are announced for the second half of the Tribulation. The divine testimony thereafter is carried on by angelic witness and the *"everlasting gospel"* is proclaimed from heaven (Rev.14:6-7) during the last 1,260 days of the Tribulation. The remainder of the nation of Israel will be protected by God for the second half of the 7-year Tribulation.

"The woman (Israel) fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days" (Rev.12:6).

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From all the above facts it is clear that, once the Jews know the day of the Rapture and/or the day that Antichrist sets up his idol image in the Temple at Jerusalem, then they will know the day that Antichrist's reign will cease. If that coincides with Christ's return, then the Jews will have a fairly accurate knowledge of when Christ will return. Jesus said that when the Tribulation saints

"see all these things (the abomination of desolation), know that it is near, even at the doors" (Matt.24:15, 33; Dan.9:27; 12:11).

If they don't know the exact hour they certainly will be aware that it is imminent. The abomination of desolation occurs *"in the midst of the week (seven years)"* (Dan.9:27).

How then do we explain the words of the Lord Jesus, that nobody knows the day or hour when He returns. If we were to be asked today whether His coming FOR HIS CHURCH will take place this week, this month or next year, we would have to reply that **we do not know** when Christ will call us home or when Christ will come to reign.

However, this side of the Rapture we can see the signs of Israel back in the land, the Revived Roman Empire preparing its constitution for Antichrist, Russia and the Muslims preparing to invade Israel, America and the Arabian Peninsula nations joining in a defense agreement, all of which points to the fact that the Tribulation events must be near. **The unknown factor is, When will the Church will be complete and be called home at the Rapture.**

After the Rapture there will be a number of specific periods of time which must be fulfilled, and anyone who is living on earth at that time and who knows their Bible, will be aware of them. The 7-year period of 2,520 days begins with Antichrist's treaty with Israel and concludes with his demise and Israel's blessing, but until the Rapture nobody will be able to say that Christ will return on any date. We can only say that His coming is drawing close.

The evidence presented above demands that there be a gap of UNKNOWN duration BEFORE the 70th "week" (seven) of Israel's history runs its course. Amillennialist's have no such gap, and therefore they have a gigantic apparent contradiction in Scripture to explain. How can Jesus say that no man knows the day and hour when the number of days during the Tribulation is explicitly given in the Revelation? Only those who believe in a pretribulation Rapture can properly explain these Scriptures.

