

The Better Way

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SPRING CHURCH OF CHRIST

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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY

Bible Study.....9:00 a.m.
Worship.....10:00 a.m.
Afternoon Worship.....1:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Bible Study.....7:30 p.m.
(via Zoom Meetings)

ELDERS

David P. Brown
Ken Cohn
John West

DEACONS

Bret Bailey
J. D. Gunter
Eric Paluka

EVANGELIST

David P. Brown

SECRETARY

Sonya West

THE LAST DAY

Roy H. Lanier, Sr.

There has been more speculation on the last day and the things which are to occur on that day than on any other subject in the Bible. Men have been guessing when it will be, have been setting dates, but they have missed every time. But in spite of this people still put their faith in such men and are looking for the last day and the coming of the Lord at any moment. But some one is ready to say that the Bible teaches that the coming of Jesus is at hand. If it teaches that now, it taught it 1800 years ago when it was first written. But if it taught 1800 years ago that the last day and coming of Christ were at hand, it taught what was not true. The fact that the Lord has not come yet proves that His coming was not at hand 1800 years ago. And all the fanciful interpretations of prophecy mongers from the first to the last cannot overthrow or get around that patent fact.

But another says the apostles confidently expected the Lord to come during their lifetime. Well, if so, they were disappointed. And if they expected the second coming of Christ in their lifetime, it is certain the Holy Spirit did not lead them to that conclusion. The conclusion was false. The Holy Spirit taught the truth. Therefore the Holy Spirit did not teach the apostles to expect the Lord to return in their day. But Peter did not look for the Lord's return in his day, for the Lord showed him in what manner of death he should die (John 21:19). And he wrote letters telling people how to live so they would have such teaching after his death (2 Pet. 1:13-15). Neither did Paul look for the Lord to come in his lifetime (2 The. 2:1ff). The subject is far too big to be covered thoroughly in such short space, but we will suggest six things which are to happen on the last day, and things not in the realm of speculation.

THE RIGHTEOUS WILL BE RAISED

“No man can come unto me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day” (John 6:44). Some one is to be raised the last day. Who? Those who come unto Jesus, so the righteous. This is one thing that is going to happen on the last day just as surely as the Lord told the truth.

WICKED WILL BE JUDGED

“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). Some one is to be judged the last day. Who? Those who rejected Jesus, and received not His sayings. This was addressed to the people who lived in the time of our Lord; so the Lord is on record as saying that the wicked of His time will be judged on the last day—the same day on which the righteous will be raised. Surely the Lord will judge no one in absence. The courts of our land will not conduct a trial and condemn a man in his absence. This necessitates the resurrection of the wicked before they are judged, so we conclude that the wicked will be raised.

WICKED WILL BE RAISED

Yes, the wicked will have to be raised either on or before the last day if they are to be present for their judgment. But where is the scripture proof? **“The hour cometh in the which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they have done good, unto the resurrection of judgment”** (John 5:28, 29). The hour cometh. An hour is a fractional part of a day. In that hour all, all, shall come from their tombs. Who are included in that word all? The good and the evil. So according to Jesus both the good and the bad shall come forth at the same time. The good are to be raised on the last day (John 6:44). Therefore the wicked will be raised on the last day, since they are to come forth on the same day as the righteous.

But some one says there is to be a thousand years between the resurrection of the wicked and that of the just. And where does the Bible say so? They are still hunting for the passage. But just suppose there is a passage somewhere that says the wicked are to be raised one thousand years after the righteous. What then? In the first place it would prove that Jesus did not tell the truth when he said all that are in their tombs shall come forth at the same time. These are plain positive words of the Lord. His meaning is not couched in symbols doubtful of interpretation. It is even difficult to misunderstand them. Now if a passage is found in which a number of symbols are used, the meaning of which is at best obscure, we must not give that passage an interpretation which contradicts this plain statement of our Lord.

But if such passage is found that teaches a thousand years period between the resurrection of the good and evil, the second thing it would do is to prove that Jesus did not know what He was talking about when He said the righteous would be raised on the last day. If there are a thousand years after the resurrection of the good, there will be 365,000 days after their resurrection. Jesus said they are going to be raised on the last day. But if the theory is true, this day on which the righteous will be raised will not be the last day, not by 365,000 days. Did Jesus tell the truth when He said the righteous will be raised on the last day? Will the day of their resurrection actually be the last day? Or will there be a thousand years after it? The veracity of Jesus is at stake here.

JESUS IS COMING

The fourth thing to take place on the last day is the coming of the Lord.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left,

shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord (1 The. 4:16, 17).

The dead in Christ are the righteous dead. But here Paul says they are to be raised when the Lord comes. Jesus said they will be raised on the last day (John 6:44). If they are raised on the last day, and Jesus comes that day, it follows that Jesus will come on the last day.

In this passage many think they have proof of the resurrection of the righteous a thousand years before the wicked are raised. **“The dead in Christ shall rise first.”** First, before what? Paul is talking of two classes of people. First, those who have died in Christ; second those who are alive in Christ at the time of His coming. Now, he says the dead in Christ shall rise first, that is, before the living in Christ are caught up to be with the Lord. The wicked are not mentioned in this passage of scripture; only those in Christ, the living and the dead.

But someone is ready to say, I know there is to be a period of a thousand years on this earth after Jesus comes. And I ask, How do you know it? The Bible nowhere teaches that such is to be! But suppose such a passage would be found, what would it do? It would prove that Jesus did not know what He was talking about when He said the righteous would be raised on the last day. For if there is to be a thousand years after the resurrection of the righteous, the day Jesus comes again, that day cannot be the last day. Next, it would prove that Paul did not know what he was talking about. Paul should have known, and I am sure he did know, that Jesus said the righteous would be raised the last day. Now he says Jesus is coming on the same day the righteous are raised. That is equal to saying that Jesus is coming on the last day, for it is the day the righteous are to be raised, which Paul evidently knew was the day on which Jesus said the righteous will be raised. Since Paul put the coming of the Lord on the same day as the resurrection of the good, and Jesus said their resurrection will be on the last day, it follows that there can not be a thousand years after His coming.

THE JUDGMENT DAY

The wicked are to be judged on the last day (John 12:48). Jesus says, **“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all the nations”** (Mat. 23:31ff). He continues to describe the judgment of the good and the bad. The good are put on his right hand and are given their rewards; the bad are placed on His left hand and sentenced to eternal suffering. Jesus says this will

take place when He comes in His glory. So the wicked are to be judged when He comes. Since we have learned that the wicked are to be judged on the last day, and this is the final judgment of the wicked, we must conclude that this judgment is to be on the last day.

But some one says, this is the judgment of the people living on the earth at the time of the coming of the Lord. Well, that is a guess; the Lord does not say so. Is there any evidence that others will be in that judgment? The evidence is plentiful.

First, **“The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation”** (Mat. 12:41). The men of Nineveh represent a generation 850 B. C. They are to stand in the judgment with the generation in which Jesus lived. The queen of the south will be in the same judgment with that generation (Mat. 12:42). She represents a generation 1,000 years before Christ; she lived in the days of Solomon.

Next, Jesus said it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for people to whom He talked (Mat. 11:21, 22). They lived about 330 B.C. And it will be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment than for those people to whom Jesus talked (Mat. 11:23, 24). They lived about 1900 years before Christ. Yet the two generations will stand up in judgment, and it will be more tolerable for one than for the other. Here are five generations separated by long periods of time, from five different nations, that are to be in the judgment in the day of judgment. If these five generations from 1900 B.C. to 30 A.D. are to be in the judgment, who can say that all the generations from Sodom to Christ will not be there?

If all the generations from Sodom to Jesus are to be in the judgment, who can say with any show of reason that all the nations of earth will not be there? Since Jesus says **“all nations”** shall be gathered before Him, and since He names five nations over a long period of time that will be in the judgment, we are forced to conclude that He meant what he said—**“all nations.”**

Paul also says both the wicked and the good are to meet the Lord in judgment when He comes (2 The. 1:6-10). First, he says God will recompense affliction to them that afflict the saints, and He will give rest to the saints, **“at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven.”** This was addressed to the saints of Thessalonica for their comfort in persecution. So the wicked who persecuted the saints there will be afflicted in the day the Lord comes. This necessitates their resurrection as well as their judgment on the day the Lord comes, which is the last day.

Drawing a parallel between the judgment scenes as given by Jesus and Paul, we have first, both the

good and wicked in the judgment. Second, this judgment is to be when Jesus comes the second time. Third, the righteous are to be rewarded for their labors and suffering. This reward consists of eternal life. Jesus represents them as **“going away into eternal life.”** They go from the judgment into their eternal state of bliss and happiness; they are not represented as staying here with Jesus for a reign of one thousand years. Fourth, the wicked are said by both Paul and Jesus to be sentenced to eternal punishment in that judgment which is to be held on the day the Lord comes, which is the last day. Jesus says to them, **“Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels”** (Mat. 25:41). And Paul says they **“shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints”** (2 The. 1:9, 10). This last expression tells us in no uncertain terms when those who afflicted the brethren at Thessalonica are going to receive their punishment.

Now, if all the righteous are going from the judgment into eternal life, and if all the wicked are going away from the judgment into eternal fire to be with the devil and his angels, how can there be a reign of one thousand years on this earth? Who will be here to do the reigning? Christ and His saints will be enjoying eternal life in the presence of God. The devil and all the wicked will be suffering the tortures of hell. How can it be?

HEAVENS AND EARTH DESTROYED

The sixth thing to occur on the last day is given us by Peter.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up (2 Pet. 3:10).

This looks like the destruction of all that is temporal; **“the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain”** (Heb. 12:27).

But one comes forward with the explanation that as the world was destroyed by water, yet remained for people to live upon; so it is to be destroyed this time by fire, but will remain; it will be purified not destroyed. Peter said the world (*kosmos*) was destroyed by water. The word *kosmos* does not refer to this earth. But Peter says this earth (*gee*) is to be destroyed. The word *destroyed* is from *katakaio*, is used eleven times in the New Testament, and means “to burn up; to consume by fire” (Thayer). Will burn up the chaff (Mat.3:13); The tares are to be burned (Mat.13:30,40); The books were burned (Acts 19:19); Animals were burned

without the camp (Heb. 13:11). These passages show the use of the word by inspired writers. The earth is to be burned up, consumed by fire.

But notice too that the **“works that are therein”** are to be burned up. The verb “burned up” occurs but once, but both the earth and the works are to be burned up. Whatever the word *katakaio* (burned up) means with reference to the works in the earth, it means with reference to the earth. What are the works mentioned here? They can be nothing but the works of men and the devil. Certainly they are not going to be given a good scorching and made respectable. They are going to be consumed by fire. Therefore, since the word means that with reference to the works in the earth, it follows that it means the same thing with reference to the earth.

But when is this all to be? Peter says it will be the **“day of the Lord.”** In speaking of the second coming of Christ Paul called it the day of the Lord (2 The. 2:2). He called it the **“day of Christ”** (Phi. 2:16). So the day of the Lord is the day He comes the second time. Therefore the earth and the works therein are to be consumed by fire the day the Lord comes again. How can there be a reign of one thousand years on this earth after the coming of Christ if the earth and the works therein are to be consumed by fire the day He comes? Common sense and scripture teach us it cannot be.

From what we have learned about the last day, here is the picture at a glance. The Lord shall descend from heaven with the trump of God; both the good and the wicked are to be raised, and the righteous living shall join with the righteous dead and go to meet the Lord; the judgment is set, and all nations gather before the Lord who divides them the one from the other as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; the righteous are rewarded for their labors and suffering by being sent away into eternal life; the wicked are punished for their lack of obedience to God by being sent away into the eternal fire with the devil and his angels; and all things material will melt with fervent heat and be consumed by fire.

Peter concludes the lesson with this practical admonition:

Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for any earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Pet. 3:11-13).~

Deceased

THOSE TO SERVE

SUNDAY, MARCH 17, 2024

Announcements	Ken Cohn
Scripture Reading	Zack Nero <i>Rev. 11:1-14</i>
Song Leader	Bret Bailey
Prayer	Steven Johnson/Andrew Paluka (AM) Eric Paluka/Joshua West (PM)
Speakers	David Brown
	Lord's Table (AM) (Luke 23:44-48)
Joshua West	Bret Bailey
Zack Nero	Eric Paluka
	Lord's Table (PM)
J.D. Gunter	Ben Gunter
Audio/Video Monitor	Joshua West
Camera/Door Monitor	Andrew Paluka

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20, 2024

(via Zoom Meetings)

Announcements	Bret Bailey
Speaker	David Brown
Bible Class Teacher	David Brown

FOR MARCH

Prepare Communion	L. Paluka
Lock Buildings	Nero
Prepare Bulletin Board	TBA

IN NEED OF PRAYERS

Maddie & Cohen Young, Edith Young, Bob Terry, Glenda Hackworth, Zack Nero, Cynthia Jackson, Elnora Oxendine, Bernice Hastings, Charles & Ann Nero, Nathaniel Rimmer, Chuck & Nancy Verkist, Freda Smith, Noah Hackworth, Orlinda Chumbley, Carmen Hardy, and Roelf & Janice Ruffner.

TEST YOUR BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

How many nations did Israel drive out of Canaan?

Answer to last week's question:

Plain of Moab; Numbers 33:49

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- **Tuesday, March 26th:** Ladies' Bible Class
- **March 29th-31st:** Spanish congregation lectureship.