What does the Bible teach about the second coming of Christ? Is He coming again? When is He coming? What will He do when He returns? These are all questions which will be answered from the Scriptures in our study today.

Today’s lesson is part two of a study of the second coming of Christ. Last time we dealt with some false ideas about the second coming of Christ, particularly examining the premillennial theory which is so prevalent in the religious world today. However, we noticed that the idea of a literal thousand year reign of Christ, along with the concept of a Rapture, are simply not taught in the Bible. These theories have arisen through the misapplication of figurative passages of Scripture. Revelation 20 has been misused by many to teach the idea of a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth.

However, as we have pointed out, figures of speech are used in Revelation, signs and symbols through which the Holy Spirit revealed these truths to John the apostle. We cannot make a figurative passage of Scripture contradict a clear literal passage, can we? If the Scriptures contradict, they could not be from God. Of course, the Scriptures, properly interpreted, never contradict. And such is the case with the Bible’s teaching concerning the second coming of Christ.

Now, today, let’s examine some specific Scriptures about Christ’s second coming which clearly show that Christ’s coming again will not be to set up an earthly kingdom. Nor will His second coming be known in advance by any signs, as some have erroneously taught. The Bible’s teaching on the second coming of Christ is very simple. First of all, the Bible tells us that Jesus is coming again. The Lord promised His apostles He would return, just before He left them to ascend back to the throne of heaven. In John 14:1-3 we have the Lord’s words:

>“Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

Notice where the many mansions are located. They are in Heaven, where all the faithful will one day live. Jesus told His apostles He was coming back to receive them, and all the faithful, to Himself. Where will that be? It will be in Heaven.

There is no mention of an interim period on earth for 1,000 years before the saints are taken to Heaven. Nor is there any indication of a Rapture before this time. What Jesus taught His apostles in John 14 was to occur when He returned. Now when will that return take place? Over the years, there have been certain ones who have claimed to know when Christ was going to return. However, they have all been wrong in their predictions. Ever wonder why? It is simply because the Bible teaches that only the Father in Heaven knows when the Son will return. Listen to the Lord’s words in Matthew 24: “Watch therefore: for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh” (Matthew 24:42). “Therefore be ye also ready; for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Matthew 24:44). Do not these verses clearly say that man cannot predict when Christ will come
again? Earlier in the same 24th chapter of Matthew, at verse 36, Jesus, speaking of His second coming said: “But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only.” Well, there it is. No one but the Father knows when Christ will come again.

Why is it, then, that so many talk about the signs of His coming? It is because of a misunderstanding of some other matters Jesus talked about, as recorded in Matthew 24. Earlier in the chapter, the Lord’s words about the signs of a coming destruction refer to the city of Jerusalem, which was overthrown by the Romans in A.D. 70. The signs were mentioned by Jesus in reference to that destruction, not to the final destruction of the world. Jesus made a clear contrast between the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world in verse 36, which we have already noticed. However, many people today fail to make that distinction, and they believe the signs refer to the final coming of Christ. You see, Jesus came in judgment upon Jerusalem, figuratively of course, in A.D. 70, when the Roman armies destroyed the city. We must distinguish what Jesus was speaking about in Matthew 24 to avoid serious error about the second coming of Christ.

Now, what will happen when Christ returns? Last time we mentioned 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, where Paul is writing to Christians about the second coming of Christ. Some of these Christians were mistakenly thinking that their loved ones who died as faithful children of God were going to miss being with Christ when He returned. They had the mistaken idea that Christ was going to return immediately, in their lifetime, and when some of them died before this occurred, those still alive were sorrowful, thinking their deceased brethren in Christ had somehow lost their hope of heaven. Paul wrote to correct their error and to comfort them concerning the dead in Christ. Notice what He wrote:

“But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

In this passage, we have some important teaching about the second coming of Christ which refutes the error of an earthly reign of Jesus. Notice Paul said that Christ would come from Heaven and the faithful would meet Him in the air. “And so,” that is, in this manner, “shall we ever be with the Lord.” Where shall we be with the Lord? In the air! The Lord is not going to set foot on this earth again! In fact, He cannot, because now He reigns as both king and priest. The Hebrews writer says if He were on earth, He could not be a priest. Therefore, He cannot set foot on earth again. He is a high priest now, forever, after the order of Melchizedek, the Bible says. But if were on earth, he could not be a priest, because Jesus was from the tribe of Judah, not the priestly tribe of Levi. The inspired writer of Hebrews makes that very argument. Read Hebrews 7:14 along with Hebrews 8:4. The Bible itself makes the argument that Christ cannot be a priest on earth. But we are told
He is priest forever. Therefore, He must be a priest forever in Heaven!

Some also try to see two resurrections in 1 Thessalonians 4, since Paul said the dead in Christ shall rise first. However, all Paul was teaching was that the faithful Christians who had died would be raised before all other Christians were caught up into heaven. That does not mean the unrighteous dead will be raised in another resurrection later. Paul was not discussing the unrighteous dead in these verses. There was no need to do so. However, elsewhere in Scripture, the general resurrection of all the dead at the same time is clearly established. Notice John 5:28-29: “Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.” You see, here Jesus is speaking of one resurrection of all the dead. In Paul’s writings to the Thessalonians, he did not contradict Jesus. He was simply dealing with the problem at hand, which involved Christians, and Christians only. One cannot get two literal bodily resurrections from this passage, or any other passage. As was mentioned last time, the Bible speaks of figurative resurrections, such as the resurrection of the cause of Christ following great persecution. But nowhere in Scripture does one find two bodily resurrections taught.

One final thought on the second coming of Christ. The earth and everything in it will be destroyed when Christ comes again. Notice 2 Peter 3:10: “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.” At the time of Christ’s coming, as we have noted from John 5:28-29, all the dead will be raised and a judgment of all men will take place, with Jesus Christ as judge. The righteous will then go away into everlasting life in Heaven, while the unrighteous will spend eternity in Hell. Now is the time to prepare for the second coming, for we know not the day nor the hour, and if we are unprepared, we will be among those who hear His words: “Depart from me...I never knew you.”