

Jesus Dates His Second Coming

[Mark 8:38-9:1](#)

Most Christians today believe that one day soon (it is always soon, it was "soon" when Jesus said it, and it is still "soon" today), Jesus is going to physically appear in the sky, and immediately all the dead are going to be resurrected and rise to meet Him, and the living Christians will be caught up in the clouds with them to be with Christ.

Many have predicted when Christ's Second Coming was to happen: Mikkel Dahl predicated in *The Midnight Cry* that the present era would end by 1980. Reginald Edward Duncan predicted in *The Coming Russian Invasion of America* that the Millennium would begin in 1979. Emil Gaverluk, of the Southwest Radio Church, predicted that the rapture would occur by 1981.

In 1948 Israel became a nation; many saw this as very significant in Bible prophecy. They believed that within a generation of that time (forty years), the rapture would occur. [Edgar C. Whisenant](#) wrote the book, *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Is in 1988*. Six million copies of his work caused quite a stir among evangelicals in the summer and fall of 1988. Mr. Whisenant laboriously demonstrated why Christ would return to the earth in September, 1988. Regional news reports noted that a number of Christians took his message so seriously that they quit their jobs in anticipation of Christ's imminent return.

Whisenant remarked, "Only if the Bible is in error am I wrong, and I say that unequivocally. There is no way Biblically that I can be wrong; and I say that to every preacher in town." When September of 1988 came to an end and there was no rapture, Whisenant published a new book called, *The Final Shout: Rapture Report 1989*. In this book he said, "My mistake was that my mathematical calculations were off by one year." Guess what? He was wrong again!

Hal Lindsey said:

When the Jewish people, after nearly 2,000 years of exile, under relentless persecution, became a nation again on 14 May, 1948 the "fig tree" put forth its first leaves. Jesus said that this would indicate that He was "at the door," ready to return. Then He said, "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place" ([Matthew 24:34](#) NASB). What generation? Obviously, in context, the generation that would see the signs chief among them, the rebirth of Israel. A generation in the Bible is something like forty years. If this is a correct deduction, then within forty years or so of 1948, all these things could take place. Many scholars who studied Bible prophecy all their lives believe that this is so (*The Late Great Planet Earth*, pp. 53-54).

A Korean group placed newspaper advertisements predicting that the rapture would take place on October 28, 1992. When nothing happened, Kim Tae-jin replied, "We got the message from God wrong. Jesus will be back in several years."

In the summer of 1992, Charles R. Taylor wrote in the *Bible Prophecy News* that Jesus' return would occur in the fall of the same year: "What you are starting to read probably is my final issue of *Bible Prophecy News*, for Bible prophecy fulfillments indicate that Jesus Christ our Lord will most likely return for us at the rapture of the Church before the Fall 1992 issue can be printed."

In his book, *Armagedon: Appointment with Destiny*, Grant Jeffrey writes, "The year A.D. 2000 is a probable termination date for the 'last days.'" Lester Sumrall wrote in his book, *I Predict 2000 A.D.* "I predict the absolute fullness of man's operation on planet Earth by the year 2000 A.D."

What do you think? With all the wrong guesses, you would think that folks would stop making predictions, but they keep on guessing. We don't have to guess, because Jesus told His disciples when He was going to return. If we would just take Christ at His word, all the confusion would be cleared up.

Mark 8:38 (NASB) "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." 9:1 And He was saying to them, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."

When did Jesus say the Second Coming would be? Jesus seems to be saying that He will return in power and glory in His Second Coming before all of those to whom He is speaking have died. That seems to be the plain meaning of His words. Why can't we take Him at His word? It is because our paradigms can blind us from seeing certain truths. If, in your eschatological paradigm, you see the Second Coming of Christ as the end of the physical world, a cataclysmic, earth burning, total destruction of life as we now know it, you will certainly miss what Jesus is saying here. Because life goes on, you can't believe that Jesus returned as He said he would. It just won't fit your paradigm.

Ray Steadman, in his commentary on Mark 9:1, writes, "Some liberal commentators have misunderstood this passage, they have felt that Jesus was predicting the time of His Second Coming predicting that it would come within the lifetime of people who were alive at that moment. Many have been troubled by this interpretation, because obviously His Second Coming did not take place then. Some have even gone so far as to say that Jesus was mistaken as to the time of His Second Coming."

He can't believe that Jesus returned as He said He would. It just doesn't fit his paradigm. Let's look at a verse that shatters the paradigm that views the Second Coming as the end of the world:

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 (NASB) Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him, ² that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

Now, if the Thessalonians believed that the nature of the Second Coming was an earth burning, total destruction of planet earth, how could they be deceived about its arrival? If the Second Coming was, as many view it today, Paul could have written them and said, "Look out the window, the earth is still here, so the Lord has obviously not come." They thought it had already happened, so they must have viewed the nature of the Second Coming differently than most folks today view it. If we can allow a crack in this earth ending Second Coming paradigm, maybe we can understand and accept the simple words of Jesus:

Mark 9:1 (NASB) And He was saying to them, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."

Let's remember the context of these words: Jesus had just told them that He was going to suffer and be killed. The thought of a suffering Messiah was a concept they were not familiar with. They were

expecting a victorious Messiah by conventional means. The Jewish understanding of the Christ (i.e., "Messiah") was that He would bring deliverance through conquest. This title "Messiah" carried overtones of political power, especially in one strand of Jewish hope represented by the Psalms of Solomon, which gave one of the clearest expressions of the Jews continuing hope.

The Psalms of Solomon was part of the intertestamental literature (PSEUDEPIGRAPHA; Greek meaning: "things falsely ascribed") not accepted into the Christian or Jewish canon of Scripture. It was written around 70-40 B.C. The Psalms of Solomon was a Jewish writing of the Messiah as the son of David. Their Messiah was a warrior-prince who would expel the hated Romans from Israel and bring in a kingdom in which the Jews would be promoted to world dominion. Here, Jesus explains that He will bring deliverance through the cross. He would achieve victory through suffering. He would take up the cross, not the crown. The thought of a suffering and dying Messiah must have been disappointing to them. So Jesus says:

Mark 8:38 (NASB) "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

As I said in our last study on Mark, the word "ashamed," which is the Greek word *aischuno*, should be translated "disappoint." According to Scripture, the person who is not disappointed is the person whose trust is not misplaced and who, therefore, is never disillusioned.

In exegesis, usage always takes precedent over etymology. The reason for this is because word meanings change. So what we want to find is usage. The meaning of the Greek word *aischuno* as "disappoint" is unmistakable at several important places in the Bible (Romans 5:1-5, 9:33, 10:11 NASB).

The identity and destiny of Jesus will determine the identity and destiny of His followers. What will the disciples receive in return for following Jesus? If He is going to reign, they will partake in His glory. But if He is going to die, they will partake in His suffering. Jesus' disciples were not going to reign in a physical kingdom with their Messiah. They were not going to help in the overthrow of Rome. But, like their Rabbi, they were going to suffer and maybe even die. This was disappointing news! Their calling was to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Christ in suffering and death.

To encourage them and give them hope, Jesus tells them that before all of them die He will return in glory and power with the angels:

Mark 8:38 (NASB) "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

"**When He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels**" the first thing I want you to see here is that this is clearly a reference to the Second Coming. This return in glory, first mentioned here in Mark, was also spoken of by Him in:

Mark 13:24-27 (NASB) "But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, ²⁵ AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶ "And then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory. ²⁷ "And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven."

We see the same idea in:

[Matthew 25:31-32](#) (NKJV) "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. ³² "All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

In all these texts, we see the Son of man coming in glory, with His holy angels. Just like our text in Mark 9, the text in Mark 13:24-27 has a very clear time statement with it:

[Mark 13:30](#) (NASB) "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place."

Jesus here, very plainly and very clearly, tells His disciples that ALL of the things he had mentioned would come to pass in **THEIR GENERATION**. This includes the gospel being preached in all the world, the abomination of desolation, the great tribulation, and the coming of the Son of man. This is so clear that it greatly troubles those who hold to a futuristic eschatology. Listen to some comments made on this verse.

C.S. Lewis said, "The apocalyptic beliefs of the first Christians have been proved to be false. It is clear from the New Testament that they all expected the Second Coming in their own lifetime. And, worse still, they had a reason, and one which you will find very embarrassing. Their Master had told them so. He shared, and indeed created, their delusion. He said in so many words, 'this generation shall not pass till all these things be done.' And he was wrong. He clearly knew no more about the end of the world than anyone else. This is certainly the most embarrassing verse in the Bible." (Essay "[The World's Last Night](#)" (1960), found in [The Essential C.S. Lewis](#), p. 385)

Because of his physical view of the nature of the Second coming, he felt that it hadn't happened yet, and, therefore, Jesus had been wrong. That would be, in fact, much more than embarrassing, it would be devastating to the credibility of Jesus. If Jesus was wrong, as Lewis says he was, what else might He have been wrong about? Will those who believe in Him truly have everlasting life? Jesus wasn't wrong, Lewis was the one who was wrong. We can count on the truthfulness of what Jesus tells us. Aren't you glad of that?

Others also had trouble with this verse. The *New Jerome Commentary* says: "This is a troublesome verse" (p. 667). W. Robertson Nicholl (1956): "What is said therein is so perplexing as to tempt a modern expositor to wish it had not been there, or to have recourse to critical expedients to eliminate it from the text" (*The Expositor's Greek Testament*, p. 294).

This verse doesn't fit into their eschatology, so they would like to eliminate it. This verse is devastating to a futuristic eschatology, so let's examine it carefully and make sure we understand exactly what Jesus is saying. Let's start by examining the meaning of the word "generation". Generation, in our text, comes from the Greek word [genea](#). In Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the NT, we can see that the "genea." means: "The whole multitude of men living at the same time." William F. Arndt and Wilber Gingrich ([A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT and Other Early Christian Literature](#)) define "genea" as, "basically, the sum total of those born at the same time, expanded to include all those living at a given time. **Contemporaries.**"

If you look at the way Jesus used the word "generation," I think it will be abundantly clear that it always refers to His contemporaries, the Jewish people of His own period. In etymology and usage, "generation" means: "those born at the same time, contemporaries." In biblical thought, a generation is forty years.

Some have tried to twist the etymology of the word "generation" in Mark 13:30 to make it mean "race," and try to make Jesus say that all these things would happen before the "race" of Jews had passed away. By doing this, they think they can expand the time of the Second Coming by thousands of years. There is no biblical or linguistic justification for such a position. Generation does NOT mean race!

C.I. Scofield, in his Bible's reference to this verse (Matt. 24:34), recognized this and actually SWITCHED the definition of the word from that of *genea* to that of *genos*, which is an entirely different word!

Scofield said (p. 1034, old edition, Scofield Reference Bible): "Gr. *genea*, the primary definition of which is, 'race, kind, family, stock, breed' (So all lexicons). That the word is used in this sense here is sure because none of 'these things,' the world-wide preaching of the kingdom, the great tribulation, the return of the Lord in visible glory, and the regathering of the elect, occurred at the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, A.D. 70. The promise is, therefore, that the generation--nation, or family of Israel-- will be preserved unto 'these things'; a promise wonderfully fulfilled to this day."

Scofield used the wrong Greek word with his definition. He did so because of his view of the nature of the Second Coming. Since he felt that these things hadn't happened yet, he had to change the meaning of the word *genea*. The definition he gives is for the Greek word "genos." Genos is not the word used in Matthew 24:34 or Mark 13:30.

What Jesus meant by all those things happening in that generation, including the parousia of Christ, was that they would all happen while some of those folks to whom He preached were still alive, just as He said they would be in:

Mark 8:38 (NASB) "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." 9:1 And He was saying to them, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."

It should be obvious that the man who divided the biblical text into chapters evidently suffered a mental lapse here. The account begins in the closing verse of Chapter 8 and continues through the first verse in Chapter 9. There should be no chapter division here. If we look at the parallel passage in Matthew, we see that Jesus is clearly speaking of His second coming:

Matthew 16:27-28 (NASB) "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and WILL THEN RECOMPENSE EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS. 28 "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

Some thirty years later Jesus quoted these very words again in:

Revelation 22:12 (NASB) "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done."

Now unless Revelation is speaking of a different "RECOMPENSE EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS" from the "render to every man according to what he has done" in Matthew, we must believe the subject to be the same. Revelation, no less than five times, tells us the events under view are imminent.

Matthew speaks of the coming of Jesus to judge every man. Revelation does also. Matthew says Jesus would come in that generation. Revelation says He was coming quickly. They both are speaking of His Second Coming and give us the time reference of when it would happen.

Matthew 16:27 (NASB) “For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and WILL THEN RECOMPENSE EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.”

In the Greek text the first word in the sentence is not "for" but "He is going to come" (*mellei*). The word is listed as "*mello*" in the Greek dictionaries. The verb "*mello*" is used 109 times in the New Testament. The *primary meaning* of this verb is: "ready." The Baur, Arndt and Gingrich Greek Lexicon lists the meanings from order of primary to possible. In that dictionary, "*mello*" is translated as an event that will "certainly take place." Also, as an event "on the point of" occurring or "about to" occur. These verses are all plainly referring to events "about to" unfold on the horizon. They were not thousands of years off.

Our text is clearly speaking of a first century event. This judgment took place in A.D. 70. The destruction of Jerusalem, the coming of Christ, the resurrection, and the judgment are all connected in Scripture. Notice the similarity of our text to:

Matthew 13:40-43 (NASB) “Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ "The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, ⁴² and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ "Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.”

At the end of the (Jewish) age, the Son of Man returns with His angels to judge the wicked and reward the righteous. We see from verse 43 that this is also a time of resurrection. Verse 43 is a quotation of Daniel 12:

Daniel 12:1-3 (NASB) “Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. ² "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. ³ "And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”

Verse 1 speaks of the great tribulation of Mark 13:19-20, which will be a time of deliverance for the elect of God. We see this same idea in:

2 Thessalonians 1:6-8 (NASB) For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷ and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, ⁸ dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Verse 2 of Daniel 12 tells us that at this time the resurrection takes place. Those resurrected are either given everlasting life or everlasting contempt. We see this same idea in Matthew 25. Verse 3 of Daniel 12 is the verse that is quoted in Matthew 13. Thus, the coming of the Son of Man, in Matthew

[25:31](#), is the same as His coming in [Matthew 13:41](#), which is the same event spoken of by Daniel in 12:1-3. This all happened in A.D. 70 and was manifest by [Jerusalem's destruction](#).

[Mark 9:1](#) (NASB) And He was saying to them, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."

If we consider this discourse as being written in the first century, and, further, being spoken in or around A.D. 32 (when Jesus was ministering), then we can locate the audience He was addressing. Some were "standing" there with Jesus in Caesarea Philippi.

Matmor observes: "Some interpreters have understood this to mean that the end of the age would come about during the lifetime of some of Jesus' hearers."

Mathag is more definite when he notes that "By far the most natural understanding of this verse....is that the consummation of the present age and the coming of the eschaton proper with its concomitant blessing and judgment would be experienced within not many decades through the triumphant return of the Son of man."

Commenting on Mathag's words, another commentator writes: "That this didn't take place is absolutely certain from our knowledge of subsequent history." His paradigm won't let him take Jesus at His word.

Carl W. Conrad, Associate Professor of Classics Washington University in St. Louis, in his commentary on Mark 9:1 writes: "More clearly than anywhere else in this gospel, the imminence of the Eschaton is stated: it will come within the lifetime of some who are hearing the prophecy. The precise language underscores the implications so that there is here, as in Jesus' passion-prediction of a few verses above, no missing the time reference."

Jesus is saying here that some of the people He is speaking to will still be alive when He returns in power and glory. The words "**Taste Death**" is simply a euphemism for "dying." What Jesus is saying, then, is that some of those original hearers will be alive when He comes in His kingdom, and some, by implication, will not be alive, but will have died before He comes in His kingdom.

Jesus tells us that not all listening to Him would die until "**they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power**" (Mark 9:1). The kingdom of God coming in power is the same as it coming in glory of Mark 8:38.

In Matthew, two of the disciples ask Jesus to grant them the right to sit on His right and left hand, "**in the Kingdom.**"

[Matthew 20:21](#) (NASB) And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left."

The parallel passage in Mark says they asked to sit with Him, "**in thy glory**":

[Mark 10:37](#) (NASB) And they said to Him, "Grant that we may sit in Your glory, one on Your right, and one on Your left."

The kingdom is the glory of Jesus! Thus, if Jesus came in His glory, He came in His kingdom, and if He came in His kingdom, He came in glory. And as we have already seen, coming in glory is a reference to the Second Coming.

If all this is true, and I am convinced that it is, why is it that so many Christians don't see it? How do people get around the clear time statement of our passage?

Some say He is talking about the **transfiguration** of [Mark 9:2](#). Ray Steadman writes, "But if you link this statement with what immediately follows, it is clear what Jesus is saying. He is referring to the transfiguration, saying that some who were there at that moment would not taste death until they saw this manifestation of the kingdom of God, of his coming, and of the glory of His reign in power."

The problem with this is that the transfiguration takes place only six days later. Christ did not say that all of His audience would still be living, or that even the majority of them would be. To use such language in speaking of an event barely a week away would be overkill, to say the least. The entire reason for using such a phrase as "some of you standing here shall not taste death" would be to indicate that the event in question would happen before they all died. To say that some of them would be alive in a week is poor hyperbole, at best. There would be no reason to say such a thing at all. And the fact that the word for "some" was used indicates the idea that some, even many, of those present would in fact *not* be included in the group that didn't taste death, meaning simply that many of them would in fact die before that event takes place. By its very nature, the language employed by Christ invalidates this possibility.

Did He come in the glory of His Father with His angels and reward each according to his works at the transfiguration? Of course not!

How about **Pentecost**? The *NIV Study Bible* mentions this as a possibility, "It refers to the day of Pentecost and the rapid spread of the gospel described in the book of Acts." The time factor is still insufficient to warrant the language used by Christ. The time between when Christ said these words and Pentecost was still far and away too small to allow for such language. In fact, it would have been in all probability much less than a year between when He made this statement and Pentecost. The idea that only some would still be alive is still extended hyperbole - "Later this year, some of you will still be alive." No, the language is such to warrant still greater time to pass between what Christ said and when it would have to be fulfilled.

Did He come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and reward each according to his works at Pentecost? No! And it wasn't Christ who came at Pentecost, but the Holy Spirit! In [John 14](#), the coming of Christ in verse 3 and the coming of the Holy Spirit in verse [16](#) are two distinctly different comings. In fact, the coming of the Holy Spirit in verse 16 was to help them while they waited for the fulfillment of Christ's Coming of verses [1-3](#)! So it cannot be said that Pentecost represented a coming of Christ Himself.

What are the possible explanations to this verse? I see only three, if you have others, I would like to hear them.

1. There are still some of the disciples alive today. Some even go so far as to say there are those who were present when that was said who are wandering the earth today, not having died but having celebrated a couple of thousand birthdays. I met a man who holds to this view. I don't think I could convince any of you of that one.

2. Jesus was confused or lying. I hope I could not convince any of you of that one.

3. Hang on! Jesus actually did what He said and came in the life time of His disciples. I would like to convince you all of this one. This seems like the simple and clear answer that holds to the inspiration of Scripture. Jesus did what He said He would do. I am very comfortable with that, how about you? Let me ask you a question: Does Scripture contradict Scripture? No! The primary rule of hermeneutics (the science of biblical interpretation) is called the "[analogy of faith](#)." The analogy of faith is the rule that Scripture is to interpret Scripture. This means that no part of Scripture can be interpreted in such a way as to render it in conflict with what is clearly taught elsewhere in Scripture. Another principle of hermeneutics is that the implicit that which is suggested though not plainly expressed is to be interpreted by the **explicit** that which is clearly stated. I don't know how you see it, but to me Mark 8:38-9:1 is explicit!

The coming in question in our text is in fact the ultimate Coming with the Kingdom. This may seem odd to some, but this verse absolutely demands it! It is only for us to understand *how* this is so!

If you are going to believe what Jesus is saying here, you may need to have a paradigm shift. But that's okay, because then your paradigm will line up with Scripture, and that is all any of us really want, isn't it?

So this passage, which began with a statement of His Messiahship, progresses through suffering and ends with a depiction of His glorious appearing as One Who is the Son of the Father, Who will come in glory escorted by holy angels. It is then that His Messiahship will be fully revealed. Tragedy will be followed by triumph.

This message preached by [David B. Curtis](#) on September 24, 2006. [Media #350b](#).

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Berean Bible Church
1000 Chattanooga St.
Chesapeake, VA 23322