

The Lakeview Lamp

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."-Psalm 119:105

September 12, 2004

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Congregations Vote to Discontinue Wednesday Bible Study!
Is Sunday Bible Class Next?□

author unknown

□Following are the results of a vote taken last week at a congregation:

1) Wednesday evening Bible study and devotion: Is the mid-week Bible study and devotion of sufficient value to continue these meetings?

NO 61%□YES 39%□

2)□Sunday morning Bible class: Is it worth the time, effort, and expense to continue conducting the Sunday morning Bible Class?

NO 48%□YES 52%□

3)□Sunday morning assembly: Is the Sunday morning assembly important enough to continue these meetings?

NO 22%□YES 78%

4)□Sunday evening assembly: Is the Lord's Day evening assembly of sufficient value to continue these meetings?

NO 41%□YES 59%

□What methodology was used to conduct this election? Simple! We used "fruit methodology" ("by their fruits ye shall know them," Matt. 7:20). We arrived at the statistics by simply taking the number of members who attended these events excluding those who were really unable to participate. Of course, we are not really going to discontinue Wednesday night study or Sunday morning class. But the question is: How are you voting on these matters?

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□"You are my hope, O Lord GOD; You are my trust from my youth."—Psalm 71:3

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When Is Jesus Coming Back?□

J.S. Smith□

For those who believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, there is no sweeter thought than being reunited with him. In every generation, millions wonder, "When is Jesus coming back?"

At his ascension, "two men stood by [the disciples] and said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven'" (Acts 1:10-11).

Yes, but when?! The question resonated throughout the New Testament. The church at Thessalonica become so convinced that Christ's return -- his parousia - was imminent that they forsook the elements of daily life simply to wait. And they waited and waited while less impulsive brethren felt compelled to feed and provide for them.

Finally, the apostle Paul wrote and disabused them of the notion that Christ's return was definitely imminent. As Jesus predicted, his second coming would be "as a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:2), without the kind of warning events that preceded the fall of Jerusalem (Matt. 24:1-35).

In a second epistle, Paul confessed that the Lord Jesus would be revealed from heaven on the Day of Judgment (1:3-10), but only after "the man of sin is revealed" (2:3-4). The day of Christ had not yet come (2:2); therefore, those idle, hopeful saints needed to get back to work (3:6-15).

When Jesus commented on his eventual return, he contrasted its circumstances with those of the fall of Jerusalem. In the case of his return, there would be no signs, for "of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but my father only" (Matt. 24:36). The wars and rumors of wars and other signs all occurred in the seventh decade of the first century and pointed to the coming Roman desolation of Jerusalem. They have nothing to do with the second coming.

While Scripture sets no date and offers no signs, certain things did have to occur before the second coming even became possible. Essentially, the prophets foresaw a great widespread apostasy, evidenced by a man of sin who is served as if he were God and the presence of antichrist teaching in the church (1 John 2:18-19). Such apostasy is clearly in the world already and antichrist teaching is present likewise.

We sometimes sing, "Jesus is coming soon, morning or night or noon" but in reality we have no indication at all that he is coming soon. The Watchtower folks and other Premillennial thinkers have pretty much given up on trying to set the date after so many notable failures. Their predecessors were off in 1874, the Watchtower missed out on 1914 and dozens of preachers were disappointed by Y2K.

We simply cannot know when Jesus will return. The result is that we must always be prepared to meet him in the clouds (Matt. 25, 2 Cor. 5:9-11).

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"This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it"
(Psalm 118:24).