



**SOLID
BREAD**

Don't Miss Him the Second Time
Special Lesson: Dec. 24, 2023
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I. Background:

- A. From time to time, depending on various events and other significant issues, I present a "Special Lesson" for the sake of timeliness and relevance.
- B. It seems appropriate on Christmas Eve to do the same thing. All around town, churches are promoting a Christmas-themed message, and today we're no different.
- C. Well yes, I guess we are. Today, I'd like to present a Christmas lesson based on some prophetic issues. I'm pretty sure that's not the angle most churches are taking today.
- D. The fact is, Jesus Christ's First Coming was a matter of detailed prophecy, the same way His Second Coming is also a matter of detailed prophecy.
- E. But just to compare the two, we need to understand that for every prophecy in the Old Testament about Jesus' First Coming, there are eight about His Second Coming.
- F. That disparity is a significant issue within the divine intentions of God's Word. It means we need to pay much better attention to what is still to come than we do.

NOTE: Today, I want to compare the two timeframes of Jesus' First Coming, and His Second Coming. I want to look at a few prophecies with each by addressing the standard questions: "Who? Where? What? When? How?"

More specifically, I want to look at the postures and attitudes of those individuals and institutions preceding both of Jesus' arrivals. I want to compare the two and see what we can learn by doing that.

II. Starting with Jesus Christ's First Coming:

A. WHO? (By this question, I mean, who was Jesus Christ expected to be the first time?)

1. The Bible says in *Isaiah 53* that He would come as a "suffering servant." It is not difficult to see that Jesus fulfilled this role precisely.
 - a. He came the first time in 'humility' according to *Isaiah. 61:1*
2. *Isaiah 42* also says He would come as a 'light to the Gentiles.' The Gospels affirm this point quite clearly.

3. Once again, in **Isaiah 53**, we are told Jesus would be despised and rejected, that he would come as a lamb that does not defend itself, as one who would bear our sins, and as one who would die with the wicked. All of these prophecies were fulfilled in great detail.
4. There are hundreds of prophecies concerning “Who was Jesus expected to be the first time around?”
 - a. But here’s the kicker, the ‘religious establishment’ of that day (‘organized religion,’ and ‘the leaders of ‘institutional worship’) missed it all.
 - b. They saw it all taking place exactly as it was all prophesied to be, but they didn’t grasp the truth that was right in front of them.
 - c. In fact, they were so blind to the truth, so obstinate against what the Scriptures had declared in great detail, that they became active participants in Jesus’ death.
 - d. They rejected Jesus Christ as the cornerstone according to **Psalm 118**.

B. Let’s now look at WHERE? ‘Where was Jesus expected to arrive, or to be from?’)

1. Again, the Bible is clear. In **Micah 5:2**, Bethlehem was prophesied to be the birthplace of the Messiah.
2. In fact, Herod inquired of the religious leaders of that time where the Messiah was to be born. They answered him accurately in **Matthew 2:4-6**. They told Herod, “*In Bethlehem, in Judea, for this is what the prophet has written.*”
3. The “Where?” question is fulfilled in even greater detail in **Hosea 11:1** where it says: “*...out of Egypt I called my son.*” Recall that Joseph and Mary had to flee to Egypt when Herod tried to kill Jesus as a baby.
4. So, once again, Jesus fulfilled the “Where?” prophecies precisely. There is no detail about his birthplace or his rearing that was not fulfilled exactly as the Scriptures had foretold.
5. However, once again, despite even KNOWING Jesus’ prophesied birthplace, and despite telling the specific prophecies to King Herod, the religious system and leaders of that time rejected Jesus.
 - a. They knew what to look for and WHERE to look. And still – when it all took place just as it was foretold, they refused to see Jesus Christ as they most needed to.

C. Now let’s look at HOW? – This is a large and comprehensive issue. (By it, I mean, “How did Jesus Christ prove he was the one the Old Testament prophecies were about?”)

1. At His birth, Jesus Christ fulfilled some very specific prophecies:
2. He was born of a virgin according to **Isaiah 7:14**

- a. His name was “Emmanuel,” meaning “God with us.” That was prophesied in the same verse.
- D. Within the context of His crucifixion, Jesus Christ fulfilled multiple and very specific prophecies. Many of these are detailed in ***Psalm 22***.
 - a. There it says Jesus would cry out that God has forsaken Him.
 - b. We also read that His clothes would be divided, that He would be poured out like water, that he would be given gall and vinegar, and that all his joints would be out of place.
 - c. It was prophesied that He would be surrounded by evil people, that He would be pierced, that He would be mocked and insulted, and so on.
- E. Within His earthly ministry, Jesus fulfilled many specific prophecies:
 - a. We see in ***Psalm 78*** that He would speak in parables.
 - b. In ***Isaiah 53*** it was prophesied that He would heal the blind, deaf, lame, and mute.
 - c. In multiple places in the Old Testament it is prophesied that He would be as a ‘shepherd.’ This is likewise affirmed in multiple New Testament passages.
- F. Again, all these details that came to pass precisely as they were prophesied were seen by the religious institution of that day.
 - a. Each prophetic detail of Jesus’ life on earth was: watched, debated, challenged, and scorned by the most learned religious men of that time.
 - b. By far, the Bible makes the case that most of the religious leaders of that time refused to see Jesus as they should have done.
 - c. We already know by this point that they understood the prophecies. They could even point other people to them.
 - d. Despite all that, they refused to acknowledge the first coming of Jesus Christ as they most needed to.
- G. **This is why I now want to look at WHAT? (Here, I want to look at: ‘What was the condition of the religious institution during the time of Jesus’ First Coming?’)**
 - 1. The corporate religious system of Jesus’ time was ruled by the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Scribes.
 - a. Each division of leadership saw various things a bit differently, very similar to how denominations act today.
 - 2. More importantly, this religious system was focused on the PAST. They were obsessed with the Mosaic Law and all its nuances and intricacies.

- a. In the debates with Jesus, the fixation of theirs on the PAST comes up over and over. They talked about Moses, about Abraham, and about their favorite past issues and past perspectives.
 - b. To their past obsessions: they had added layer upon layer of traditions and systems that had very little to do with anything truly righteous or proper.
 - c. Rituals were a big deal to this religious system. Certain things needed to be done a certain way, even though none of that found its basis in Scripture.
 - d. None of these things were a part of the Law given to Moses. However, they had become part of the identity of this religious system, and these religious leaders did not want to give any of that up.
3. The religious leaders of Jesus' time failed to see themselves as Jesus saw them.
- a. Put another way, they failed to see themselves as they needed to, as they really were.
 - b. Jesus called them "*whitewashed tombs*" in **Matthew Ch. 23**. What Jesus was saying is they looked good on the outside, but inside they were spiritually dead and unclean.
 - c. The pride of these religious leaders is evident in multiple New Testament passages where Jesus takes issue with their postures and statements.
 - d. They were utterly failing in their ministry to the common people. Jesus underscores this specific point in His conversation with Nicodemus, a Pharisee, in **John Ch. 3**.
 - e. It is clear in studying the religious system of Jesus' time that it was a system that was out of touch with the truth, out of touch with Jesus Christ, and out of touch with their own need to repent and get right with God.
 - f. If anything, the real message and person of Jesus Christ was a threat to who they most wanted to be and how they most wanted to be seen.

IN SUMMARY:

The religious system, and its leaders during Jesus' time, missed Jesus Christ entirely. They were too focused on the past to see current events as they needed to. They diminished those prophecies which should have arrested their attention, as they would have told them what was going on. They failed to anticipate Jesus Christ as they most needed to.

Instead, the religious system of Jesus' time became obsessed with rituals, with their system of worship, and with how they were personally perceived. Their 'culture' became

more important to them than 'the truth.' They did not see themselves accurately, and any accountability concerning their choices was perceived as a threat.

III. **Now, let's move on to Jesus Christ's Second Coming** (Once again, I'll move through the same "Who?" and "What?" questions):

A. WHO? (Again, the question is there to ask: 'Who is Jesus Christ expected to be the Second Time?')

1. Let's start with "King of kings and Lord of lords" in **Revelation 19:16**: he is returning in that chapter with an ultimate display and right of authority.
 - a. In fact, in **vs 12** of that chapter, his authority and Kingship are underscored with His eyes of *'blazing fire and His many crowns'*
2. Jesus Christ is coming back to judge and to execute justice
 - a. He will *'make war'* in **Revelation 19:11**, He will *'rule with a rod of iron'* in **vs. 15**, He will *'strike down the nations'* in **vs. 15**, and He will show *'fury and wrath'*
 - b. Jesus Christ will return a Second Time in *'vengeance,'* in *'great glory,'* and in *'destruction'* as spelled out in **2 Thessalonians 1:7-10**
3. All said, Jesus Christ is returning once more in strength, power, and might. He is returning as a furious Avenger and as a Righteous Judge.
 - a. Again, as I stated before, there are hundreds of prophecies concerning "Who is Jesus expected to be the second time around?"
 - b. But here's the kicker: the 'religious establishment' of this day ('organized religion,' and 'the leaders of 'institutional worship') are missing it all.
 - c. If they chose to, they could see everything taking place exactly as it was all prophesied to, however, they do not grasp the truth that is in front of them.
 - d. Many of them will MISS Jesus in His Second Coming just as many within 'organized religion' missed Him the first time.

B. Now, as before, let's look at WHERE? and WHEN? I'll deal with both together here. (These are pretty straightforward: 'Where is Jesus expected to arrive, and when is that to take place this second time around?')

1. First, the Bible is clear: He is returning in the air for the Rapture.
 - a. This will be when His faithful followers are caught up to be with Him in the clouds.
 - b. It is a supernatural event. While we do not know that time precisely, we are called to be watchful for it and to know the season of it.

2. Second, the Bible is equally clear that at His physical Second Coming, there will be a campaign of war upon His arrival.
 - a. We've studied this matter in this class at length so I won't repeat it here.
 - b. Jesus Christ will return to earth in a series of battles, and He will fight and become spattered with blood.
 - c. Following all that, the Bible says in **Matthew Ch. 24 and Revelation Ch. 1** that *"every eye will see Him."* Jesus Christ's Second Coming will be very public.

3. As to the "When?" question, we do not know when the Rapture will take place. However, we are instructed to *"know the season"* of it, and to be watchful, alert, and ready.
 - a. We would not be instructed these ways if we were not supposed to recognize the significance of the times we are living in.
 - b. All indications are we do not have much time left before our *'blessed hope'* (**Cf. Titus 2:13**) takes place.
 - c. The "when" question is easier to answer concerning Jesus Christ's Physical Second Coming, for we know it is at the end of The Tribulation.
 - d. Even specific numbers of days are provided. Anyone on earth at that time, should know down to the day when Jesus Christ will return to conclude those seven traumatic years.

NOTE: You can see my pattern here. I'm simply going back and forth from Jesus' First Coming to His Second Coming. We're looking at basic questions here that provide some structure.

C. And that's why I now want to look at WHAT? (I want to look at: 'What is the condition of the religious institution during this present time just before Jesus' Second Coming?')

NOTE: This is going to sound quite familiar....

1. The corporate religious system of our time – just like it was in Jesus' time - is ruled by church and Christian leaders. Depending on the denomination, they have different titles.
 - a. Things are often seen a bit differently; it's just how denominations act today.
2. But, more importantly, this present religious system is focused on the PAST. They are obsessed with all things concerning Jesus' first coming and the various nuances and intricacies of His ministry on earth His first time around.

- a. In any debate that arises concerning these fixations: it is the PAST that they dwell on over and over. Nearly every sermon in nearly every church nearly every Sunday is about their favorite past issues and past perspectives.
 - b. In addition to these past obsessions: today's religious institution has added layer upon layer of traditions and systems that have very little to do with anything truly righteous or proper.
 - c. Rituals were a big deal to the former religious system, and they are a big deal to the current one as well. It is still expected that certain things be done a certain way, even though none of that has a basis in Scripture.
 - d. It's 'church culture.' It's not necessarily 'Christlikeness,' but these are things that are now deeply entrenched in the church.
 - e. A number of these things were not a part of the practices of the early church. They have however, become part of the identity of our present religious system, and we have many religious leaders that do not want to give any of that up.
3. Just as it was before, the religious leaders and the religious system of today largely fails to see themselves as Jesus sees them.
- a. Put another way, they fail to see themselves as they most need to, as they REALLY are.
 - b. Jesus doesn't call them "*whitewashed tombs*" anymore, but He does call them "*lukewarm, shameful, pitiful, poor, blind, wretched, and naked*" in **Revelation 3:15-18**.
 - c. What Jesus is saying is that today's church doesn't see itself accurately. The church today feels it's in good shape, or as **Revelation 3:17** puts it, "*I do not need a thing.*"
 - d. It's clear from God's Word that today's religious institution is most absent of the presence and power of Jesus Christ.
 - e. That's why in **Revelation 3:20** it says: "*Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me.*"
 - f. While many churches today feel they are all about Jesus Christ, the Bible says the church today is one Jesus is trying to GET IN TO. The bottom line is today's church is mostly spiritually dead and inept.
4. The pride of today's church and its religious leaders is evident in multiple New Testament passages where God takes issue with their postures and statements against the truth.
- a. They mock the importance of Bible prophecy in **2 Peter Ch. 3**: they do not endure sound doctrine, they turn away from the truth, and they seek

out teachers who will say the things they want them to say according to **2 Timothy Ch. 4.**

- b. They promote “*doctrines of demons*” rather than the truth of God’s Word according to **1 Timothy Ch. 4.** This means they have departed from the fundamentals of the faith and have substituted other things in their place.
5. And like it was before, they are utterly failing in their ministry to the common people. The church is called to equip and edify the saints in **Ephesians Ch. 4,** but it’s common today to hear that churches want to be ‘attractive to the lost’ instead.
- a. It is clear in studying the religious system of our time that it is a system that is largely out of touch with the truth, out of touch with Jesus Christ, and out of touch with their own need to repent and get right with God.
 - b. If anything, the real message and the person of Jesus Christ are a threat to who they most want to be and how they most want to be seen.
 - c. His truth, and the clear proclamation of the Gospel, especially if it runs counter to woke views and ideas, is generally unwelcome.

IN SUMMARY:

The religious system, and its leaders during our present time, is mostly missing Jesus Christ entirely. They are too focused on the easy messages of the past, and they do not perceive current and future events as they most need to.

They have deliberately diminished the end times prophecies which should arrest their attention, and which should tell them what is going on. Consequently, they fail to anticipate and understand the full person and work of Jesus Christ as they most need to.

Instead, our present-day religious system has become obsessed with its rituals, with their shallow notion of worship, and with how they are personally perceived in the world’s eyes.

Their ‘Christian culture’ has become much more important to them than ‘Biblical truth.’ They do not see themselves accurately, and any accountability concerning their choices is likely to be perceived as a threat, the same way it was for the Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees of Jesus’ time.

NOTE: I want to wrap up by drawing our attention to two obscure figures from the Bible that we pay little attention to, but in light of today’s lesson, we need to give some careful consideration to these two: Simeon and Anna (Cf. Luke 2:25-38):

IV. **Question:** In light of all the dysfunction of the religious system of their day, how did Simeon and Anna recognize Jesus Christ, the Messiah, when so many others missed the truth? What application can we gain from their examples?

A. **First of all, Simeon and Anna knew the Scriptures. More specifically, they knew the prophetic Scriptures:**

1. The Bible says they were both waiting for the consolation of Israel, the redemption of Jerusalem.
2. They knew it was coming because God had promised this repeatedly, over and over, in the Old Testament Scriptures.
3. They knew God's Word. So, they knew a Messiah, a Savior, was coming.

B. **Secondly, they both maintained an expectant anticipation.**

1. It says of Simeon: *"this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him."* (Cf. Luke 2:25)
2. It says of Anna: *"And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem."* (Cf. Luke 2:36-38)
3. So, Simeon was faithfully waiting for Jesus' arrival, and Anna was faithfully teaching about Jesus' arrival.
4. God blessed both of them for their faithful endurance in one direction.
5. Note: Both Simeon and Anna were not part of the religious establishment. We're not told much about them, so they seem to be relatively common folk. However, they were alert, watchful, prayerful, and ready.

C. **And lastly, both Simeon and Anna never gave up on believing God's promises.**

1. Simeon and Anna not only knew what God had said, (and what he was saying to them specifically and individually) but they also BELIEVED it.
2. They demonstrated a great faith in God's word. They endured in embracing the truth, even when few around them were doing the same.
3. Remember, Satan always tries to cause us to wonder, to fear, and to doubt: *"Did God really say...?"*
4. Simeon and Anna were unmoved by the challenges of their time and by the length of the patience they needed to exercise.
5. "Yes," they would both say, "God promised He would come, and He did."