

Orlando Bible Students Newsletter

Volume 24, Number 3

September 2023

Signposts of Our Lord's Return

The two most important events in world history are the first and second advents of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Jesus' disciples asked him in Matthew 24:3: "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world (Greek *aion* – age)?" In the original text of this verse, the Greek word "parousia," typically translated "coming," actually means "presence" according to the Rotherham Bible. Does it make a difference? Absolutely.

If a person is on their way home (coming) or at their door (presence), there is a difference in meaning. One is you are on your way and the other is you have already arrived. Rotherham Bible's appendix says that the original Greek word "parousia" being translated "coming" in Matt. 24:3 (and 21 other times in the New Testament) is obviously wrong. For example, "parousia" in 2 Corinthians 10:10 clearly means presence. Here, Paul is contrasting his bodily presence with his absence from the Corinthians. Likewise, in Philippians 2:12 the translators could not substitute "coming" for "parousia." "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence (parousia) only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

Thus, Jesus' disciples were asking him in Matthew 24, "what shall be the sign of thy presence"? Why? Because Jesus had said in John 14:19, "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me (Greek: "to be a spectator") no more." Thus, Jesus said signs would indicate his return, not seeing him literally.

Since Jesus gave up his perfect human life

as a ransom for all (I Tim. 2:5-6), he does not return as a human being. Although Jesus appeared as a man several times after his resurrection (Matt. 28:9,10,16-20; Luke 24:15-31,36-51; John 20:14-23,26-29), his disappearance at the end of each showed that he was a spirit being, whose glorious appearance blinded Saul of Tarsus. (Acts 9:3-8) Jesus will NOT fly through the sky in a rapture scenario for the world to see.

Thus, we have to look for the signs of his presence. Paul wrote in 2 Thess. 2:2-3, something quite similar when responding to those teaching Jesus had already returned. Paul gave them two signposts that would have to occur before Jesus' returned: (1) a falling away of the faith and (2) the man of sin being revealed.

There are many signposts of Christ's presence in the world today. Israel, returning to their land after 26 centuries. (Daniel 12:1; Matt. 24:32,33) A time of trouble such as never was before in the world. (Daniel 12:1; Matt. 24:21,22) Daniel's prophecy that knowledge and travel would be increased. Daniel 12:4

Most of the world and Christianity are in the dark regarding our Lord's return. However, if you would like learn what the scriptures give us as signposts of our Lord's presence, we offer the booklet "Our Lord's Return" listed on the back page of this newsletter. For a more in-depth study, we offer *The Divine Plan of the Ages* and *The Time is at Hand*, both from the series *Studies in the Scriptures*. Advertisements for these Books are listed on our website: www.orlandobible.org

Artificial Intelligence vs. the Mind of God

One of the most discussed topics in today's world of technology is Artificial Intelligence or "AI." Artificial Intelligence is the ability of machines to perform tasks typically associated with human thinking and intellect. Most of us are users of AI in some limited way. When we search the Internet, watch a YouTube video, shop on Amazon, use voice recognition tools such as Siri and Alexa, or operate a self-driving car, we are often influenced, unknowingly perhaps, by Artificial Intelligence.

Such uses can be of assistance to people today. However, there are limitations to the value and validity of Artificial Intelligence applications because humans are responsible for the decisions made by AI systems. Are these decisions fair, ethical, transparent, and accountable? Humans are also responsible for any "unintended consequences" from AI failures. In many cases, such shortcomings of an AI application may require only minor adjustments. However, in a worst-case scenario, an AI failure could be catastrophic for an individual or for the masses.

The limitations of Artificial Intelligence can best be identified in three ways. First, an AI system, developed and "trained" by humans, is only as good as the initial data put into it during its training. AI decisions and actions can be biased or flawed if the input data is likewise biased or flawed. Second, AI lacks emotional intelligence since it cannot factor human emotions, sentiments and mindsets into its decision-making. Third, business and organizations often fail to approach AI from a strategic, business-model, point of view.

The bottom line is, given the limited and often faulty nature of human reasoning due to this imperfect world, faith in the benefits of AI comes with a host of restrictions and cautions.

On the other hand, faith in the Almighty God of the Bible, the Creator of the universe, should be unwavering and limitless. God's supreme intelligence, as well as his perfect character in the use of that intelligence, is not only far above that of any AI application, but it is far superior to any human mind which has designed these systems.

We note these powerful Scriptures: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa. 55:8,9) "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" (Rom. 11:33,34) "Where wast thou [Job] when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof?"—Job 38:4-6

Thanks be to God that there neither has been, nor ever will be, any "unintended consequences" from the results of his intelligence. It is based upon his four supreme and unwavering character attributes: his foundation of justice, his infinite wisdom, his boundless love, and his almighty power. "Faith can firmly trust him, come what may! ■

Observing the Vision of the Last Days

Paul tells Timothy “that in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!”—2 Timothy 3:1-5, *New Living Translation*

Perhaps Paul is looking back to Proverbs Chapter 29 and verse 18 where Solomon is writing prophetically saying “Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained, But happy is one who keeps the Law.” When we include verse 16 with verse 18, we get a clear vision and timing of what Paul calls the last days: “When the wicked are in authority, sin flourishes, but the godly will live to see their downfall. When people do not accept divine guidance, they run wild. But whoever obeys the law is joyful.”—*NLT*

According to Strong’s Concordance, the Hebrew word in Prov. 29:18 translated “vision” is H2372 *châzôn* (khaw-zone’) and means “a sight mentally, revelation, dream, or oracle.” The meaning of vision here in Proverbs is a prophecy and all Biblical prophecy is from God.

With the vision so clearly stated, why doesn’t mankind recognize their sin-sick condition, repent and turn to the Lord? We are told by our Lord Jesus that at this time, the deep things of God are meant for those in relationship with Jehovah. Jesus told his disciples, “You are permitted to understand the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but others are not. ... This fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah that says, ‘When you hear what I say, you will not understand. When you see what I do, you will not comprehend. For the hearts of these people are hardened, and their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes—so their eyes cannot see, and their ears cannot hear, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and let me heal them.’” (Matthew 13:11,14-15 *NLT*) Here, Jesus was quoting from Isaiah 6:9-10. Just think of how far the hearts of the Israelites were from God when while expecting the Messiah, they could not recognize Jesus as he walked among them. How much worse is the condition of the people in our day!

When Jesus was asked for a sign, he told the scribes and Pharisees that they were an “evil generation.” (Luke 11:29) He added that in the days of his return or the last days, it would be like in the days of Noah and Sodom. Mankind will be drinking, taking in marriage and doing all sorts of immoral acts and they will not see their destruction or repent of their ways. (Luke 17:26-33). Daniel adds, “the wicked will not understand the vision but the wise will understand.”—Daniel 12:10

Thus, to all those who would desire to be of the wise class spoken of by Daniel, and to understand the vision or prophecy of these last days, you must come into covenant relationship with the Heavenly Father, be found desiring to understand God’s word, striving to develop a Christ-like character and following the law of Love. These will be able to observe, through the calamity, the signs of the establishment of Christ’s kingdom here on earth and have great joy.—Psalm 50:5; 2 Timothy 2:15; Philippians 2:5; Romans 13:1 ■

ORLANDO BIBLE STUDENTS CHURCH
PO Box 180216
Casselberry, FL 32718-0216

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
—PAID—
Mid-FL, FL
PERMIT NO. 3532

Calendar of Events

Orlando Bible Students Convention October 28-29, 2023

South Seminole Lodge
122 Triplet Lake Drive
Casselberry, FL 32707

For further information contact:

Orlando Bible Students
Phone: (407) 695-6815
orlandobibleinfo@gmail.com

Or contact us at our website:
www.orlandobiblestudents.org

The Orlando Bible Students is a non-denominational group that meets for Bible studies and devotions on Sunday mornings.

For further information call: 407-695-6815

Special Offer

We would like to send you a complimentary copy of the booklet,

Our Lord's Return

This booklet discusses the signs of our Lord's return and the blessings his earthly kingdom will shortly bring to all mankind.

For your **FREE** booklet, call 407-695-6815 and request a copy, or fill in your address below and mail this coupon to:

Orlando Bible Students
PO Box 180216
Casselberry, FL 32718-0216

Name _____
Street _____
City _____ State _____
Zip Code _____