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Come Again?

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Do you believe Jesus?

Do you believe in Jesus?

Is there a difference?

I remember a History channel special about the writing of the New Testament.

Now, the lesson of the legitimacy of the New Testament and how it holds up to the scrutiny of the study of ancient texts, to me - and many expert scholars, is undeniable. There are more copies near the source text than all other ancient texts combined - by a lot. Now this special was about which books of the New Testament that Paul happened to have written. Read Paul's writing in both 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

1Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. 2For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 4But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. 5For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. 6So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake

and be sober. 7For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. 8But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. 9For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. 11Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-12

6Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. 7For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, 8nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. 9It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. 10For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. 11For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. 12Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.

The argument was this: Why does Paul speak of the impending return of Christ - that it will come like a thief in the night - echoing the words of Jesus himself that

some would **“not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”**

Matthew 16:24-28

24Then Jesus told his disciples, **“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. 26For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? 27For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. 28Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”**

And the very next letter Paul would write to the Thessalonians was telling them not to be idle, not to quit their jobs, to continue to pay for their needs as necessary.

The History Channel, in all of its wisdom and faith, was positing this: this message must have been written by two separate individuals or two separate groups with differing thoughts on the second coming of Jesus.

1. Jesus is coming back very soon - so soon, in fact, that some of you will not taste death until they actually see Jesus coming on the clouds.
2. Don't quit your day jobs. Keep going to work and paying for things and looking after all you have, because we don't know when Jesus is coming back.

And what the History Channel fails to realize is that both statements are inherently true, at the same time. They are a seeming contradiction to one another, however, they speak to one reality: Jesus is coming back.

So we have a paradox - two statements that seem to contradict one another, yet at the same time are both true.

Pastor Steve started off the teaching, God of the Paradox, with this statement: "If God is transcendent how is He also immanent? If His love is unconditional how can it have conditions? Jesus said He is the Way. How is the Way into His Kingdom also the Way out of this world? Can one be in the world at the same time not of the world? If Christ is the beginning, how is it possible for Him to be the ending, or to be the first and also the last?"

Show me a paradox, and I'll point you to the immense and overwhelming Truth of God.

The second coming of Christ has already happened, is happening right here and now, and is still to come.

In Matthew chapter 23, Jesus delivers his diatribe to the ruling religious class of his time, or as it has come to be known, the seven woes to the scribes and pharisees. He blasts the learned and self-righteous for what he calls the leaven of the pharisees, or the title of my last teaching, **It's Hypocrisy You See, It's You and It's Me.**

From here, chapter 23 ends in a lament:

Matthew 23:37-39

37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! 38See, your house is left to you desolate. 39For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Jesus speaks now, after this setup, to the coming end of the age. And we will focus on this 24th chapter of Matthew to finish out our time today.

Keep these things in mind as we read the words of Jesus - his explanation, his foresight, his care.

- Jesus is self existent - he was not created and cannot be destroyed
- Jesus is outside of time - he was and is and is to come
- Jesus is Truth and speaks only the Truth
- Jesus is Love - whoever lives in Love lives in him

Matthew 24:3-14

3As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" 4And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. 5For many will come in my name,

saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. 6And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. 7For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. 10And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. 11And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. 12And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. 13But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

- Many will come saying, "I am the Christ"
- Rumors of wars
- Nation will rise against nation
- Famines and earthquakes
- Tribulation and death for believers
- Believers will fall away and hate one another
- False prophets will lead many astray
- Lawlessness = Love growing cold
- Endurance is the key
- Enlightenment will bring the end

Matthew 24:15-28

15 “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 17Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, 18and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. 19And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! 20Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. 21For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. 22And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. 23Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. 24For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. 25See, I have told you beforehand. 26So, if they say to you, ‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out. If they say, ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. 27For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 28Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

- False god's set up in the temple
- Fleeing to the mountains
- Mothers placed in tough situations
- More tribulation

- False doctrine and false Christs

Matthew 24:29-31

29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

30 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

- Signs in the heavens - sun and moon darkened
- Falling stars
- Mourning at the sign of the Son of Man
- Angels
- Trumpets

Matthew 24:32-35

32 "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. 33 So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 34 Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

- Know the signs
- This generation will not pass
- Heaven and earth will pass away

Matthew 24:36-51

36 "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. 37For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 38For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, 39and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 40Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. 41Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. 42Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. 43But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. 44Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

45 "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time?

46Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. 47Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.

48But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' 49and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with

drunkards, 50the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know 51and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- Only God knows when
- Coming when you do not expect
- Hypocrisy will be cut down

We began this teaching with three questions.

Do you believe Jesus?

Do you believe in Jesus?

Is there a difference?

I want you to think about these questions this month as we navigate our Advent season. If you believe Jesus, that means that you believe what he says about this world, what he says about life, what he says about the past, the present, and the future. It means you should have a better understanding of the things that he said, and those he tapped to bring forward the Gospel.

If you believe in Jesus, that means that you have accepted the above and chosen to let Jesus into your heart. It means that you have admitted that you have fallen short, It's Hypocrisy You See, It's You and It's Me, and you have asked for him to save your eternal soul. You accept that he is the only way to God, Love, eternal life and that the opposite of him is eternal death.

There is a difference between believing Jesus and believing in Jesus - yet they are intertwined and one-in-the same, simultaneously as being different or opposed - paradox.

I look out on a world that is struggling. I look out on a world that is hating, that is scared, that is willing to sacrifice everything in order to be "safe" or "saved".

Nation rises against nation - there are wars and there are rumors of wars.

Natural disasters - earthquakes, hurricanes, flooding, destruction that ravages landscapes.

Mothers are vulnerable - I'll leave that one there.

We've seen signs and wonders - and we know what we do not know.

Jesus says this:

13But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

I'm not a Bible scholar. I don't have a masters or doctorate - just a heart for Truth and the Word of God - Jesus. So excuse my simple theology - **we don't have to agree on everything - I'll say that again - we don't have to agree on everything.**

We all face the end together - believer and unbeliever alike - and Jesus tells us what that will look like.

31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.

34Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ 37Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ 40And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

41 “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, 43I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you

did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' 44Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' 45Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' 46And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."