

# KINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH ONLINE NOTICE BOARD – 73

What happens when it's all over? When it's all over, it all begins! As some have said: 'In my end is my beginning'.

From the earliest days of the Christian Church there have been those who have had a great (some would say, an unhealthy) fascination with the 'End Times' and with the Lord's Second Coming. Of course, every Christian with a sound faith has an interest in the Lord's Return – an *interest* in the sense of a curiosity and enquiry, and also an *interest* in the sense of a sure hope.

But for some this subject is an obsession; it's about the only thing they read about, talk about, search for and want to find in their Bibles. That is spiritually 'unhealthy' because that is not the place this theme has in the Bible itself. It is there, but it is not the main theme or subject of Scripture. But while we must avoid an obsession, it is important that we have some understanding of what the Bible says will happen when the Lord returns – so we may prepare for his return, not treat the subject as a 'hobby'.

The Bible teaches certain *facts* about the End Times – and I'm only concerned with those *facts*. I have no interest in endless, tedious, and mostly bizarre speculations about the End Times. The last two thousand years are evidence of the futility of speculating – almost each year of those two thousand has, according to some, been the year of the Lord's return!

There is an important verse about the Lord's return in Mark 13.32: *About that day or hour no man knows, not the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.* From this verse we gather four facts:

**Fact one:** God knows what it will be and when it will be.

**Fact two:** we do not know when it will be or what it will be.

**Fact three:** all we know is what the Bible tells us.

**Fact four:** no one understands altogether what the Bible says on this subject – those who claim they do will be those proved to be most wrong.

*But about that day or hour no man knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.* Our Lord's words should to stop speculation about our expectation. But these words point to something else: to our Lord's deity and divinity. Notice the progression: *men* > *angels* in heaven > the *Son*. Jesus here does not place himself with *men*, or with *angels* in heaven: angels, arch-angels, cherubim and seraphim. The only category left is *God* – and that is what Jesus claims for himself: he is above men and above angels, he is co-equal with God. Yet, even he, in his human nature, was limited so far as his knowledge of his Second Coming is concerned; in his earthly state not even he knows the 'day nor the hour'. It would be the height of folly for any of us to pretend that we know better.

From around the 1830's onwards certain people claimed to find some very odd ideas in the Bible – we won't go into those just now, only to say that these things are 'in' the Bible only in the same way that a man's head is 'in' a block of marble before the sculptor starts to work! In other words, they are 'in' the Bible only because imagination put them there.

We would be wise to remember that at his first coming no one anticipated the way he came or when he came. We are to *watch* and to be *ready*.

There are certain events that we are told will take place before the Lord's return. Here are some of the events foretold:

**Fact 1:** people will get worse.

*Wicked people ... will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. (2 Timothy 3.13)*

**Fact 2:** life will get worse. (Revelation 9 and 16)

**Fact 3:** natural disasters will increase. (Revelation 9 & 16)

**Fact 4:** Israel, the people, will undergo a conversion to Christ similar in scale to their rejection of Christ.

*And so all Israel will be saved; as it is written, 'Out of Zion will come the Deliverer; he will banish ungodliness from Jacob.' (Romans 11.26)*

**Fact 5:** the world will experience a time of spiritual blessing, Paul refers to this as being like 'life from the dead'.

*For if [Israel's] rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead! (Romans 11.15)*

**Fact 6:** the mysterious figure of the 'Man of sin', the Antichrist, will emerge and there will be a great 'falling away'.

*Let no one deceive you; that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one destined for destruction. (2 Thessalonians 2.3)*

**Fact 7:** Jesus will return, the dead will rise bodily, all will see him, be judged and enter their eternal destiny.

*When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and the angels with him, he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, (Matthew 25.31-32)*

These are (some of) the right facts – *but not necessarily in the right order!*

There has always been a trend to claim each generation will be the one in which the Lord returns – that it's all happening in the 'now' generation. But while avoiding superficial claims, it is vital that we are ready for the Lord's return. It may help to think of the Lord's return as a river. The years of waiting are not a path going *towards* the river at a right angle; but a path that *follows* the course of the riverbank. At any moment we may step into the river! Be always ready, because *we don't know when!*

*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God: the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: we shall be forever with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4.16-17)*