

Sorry to Tell You, But Jesus Is Not Returning on September 23

Yes, it would be wonderful if Jesus returned for His people this week, but it's not going to happen. Count on it. The Second Coming will not place this year on Sept. 23.

How can I be so sure? The Bible tells me so, and not in some ambiguous, mysterious language.

Instead, Jesus told His followers what had to take place before He returned, and those things have not yet happened, nor can they happen in just a few days. That's why I'm quite certain that His return is not scheduled for Sept. 23, 2017.

What, then, do I think about the claims of Christian numerologist David Meade, who argues that "verses in Luke 21:25 to 26 are the sign that recent events, such as the recent solar eclipse and Hurricane Harvey, are signs of the apocalypse"? And what do I think of the alleged correspondence between Revelation 12 and the alignment of Jupiter, the sun and the moon?

Actually, I don't think about these things at all, any more than I thought about the claim that Jesus was coming back between Sept. 11-13, 1988, or the claim that Judgment Day was coming on Sept. 6, 1994, or the claim (made by the same author who predicted the 1994 date) that Jesus would return on May 21, 2011.

There was not a shred of scriptural evidence to support these claims, and there was a mountain of evidence against them. Why, then, bother to give them any thought?

"But," you ask, "didn't Jesus say that no one who knew the day

or hour of His return? If so, how can you be so sure He's not coming on September 23?"

First, the fact that He says no one knows the day or hour of His return (Matt. 24:36) means that it's utter foolishness to predict a specific day. If Jesus says no one knows the day, we should quit predicting specific days. Simple.

Second, Jesus said we could not know the specific day or hour when He *would* return. He never said we could not know when He would *not* return.

Put another way, if I get on a boat to sail across the Atlantic from New York to London, you might not know the exact time of my arrival. But you can certainly know that I will not be arriving in one or two days. It takes longer than that to cross the ocean by boat.

So, Jesus spoke of great world upheaval that would take place (far greater than anything we have yet witnessed) and of great cosmic signs (again, of unprecedented nature), while Paul wrote of major world events that would transpire before the Lord's return (see, for example, Luke 21 and 2 Thess. 2).

The Old Testament prophets also painted pictures of what we could expect before the end of the age, and it is clear their words have still not come to pass (see, for example, Zech. 12 and 14).

But this doesn't mean that we should grow complacent and say, "The Lord delays His coming" (see Luke 12:45). God forbid.

Instead, we should always live with readiness to meet the Lord, and we should labor with all our might to make an impact for Him, since we have only one life to reach our generation. As one of my colleagues once said, "I don't know if this is *the* last generation. But it is *our* last generation."

As for those who believe that there will be a secret rapture

that could happen at any moment, when hundreds of millions of Christians are suddenly and stealthily removed from the earth, that will allegedly happen without any definite signs. In other words, it could happen today as well as any other day, since the timing of it is unpredictable. Why, then, are we bothering to make predictions?

By all means, we should understand the times in which we are living and know what we should do (see 1 Chron. 12:32). And we must be sober and alert lest we fall asleep in the light.

But let us stop making foolish predictions. Not only do they make us look like fools in the eyes of the world. But they rob us of a multi-generational perspective, since we're always thinking, "Jesus is coming any moment," rather than thinking and planning in the long term.

Little wonder, then, that we've lost so much moral and cultural ground in recent decades. While our ideological opponents are planning ahead, we're planning our escape.

In the last few years, I've spoken to leaders and believers about the importance of developing a multi-generational mentality, and the impact of those messages has been very deep.

Sadly, this message is foreign to many Christians today, which is why I devoted a whole chapter to the subject in *Saving a Sick America: A Prescription for Moral and Cultural Transformation*. If America is to be changed for the good, it can only be through multi-generational thinking.

As I look back on my own journey, I came to faith in 1971 at the age of 16, and we were told that Jesus was coming at any moment. The signs of the times were all there! Little did we think that, in 2017, we'd still be here and my wife and I would have a 16-year-old granddaughter.

Let's not repeat the same mistake today.

Instead, let's live with readiness, with urgency, with focus, with purpose and with a long-term, multi-generational plan. And if the Lord chooses to interrupt our plans along the way with His return, that would be a welcome prospect.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus! We long to see Your return. Until then, we'll stay busy and pass the torch to the generations to come.