

## Will This Be The Year?

Mark 13:32

### Slide 1

I want to begin this morning by wishing you all an early “Happy New Year.” In ancient times, people didn’t celebrate the new year like we do or even care too much about “what year it was.”

It was enough for them to say that an event happened during the reign of a certain king or so many number of years before or after a certain event like a war, flood, or earthquake.

That’s why we have passages like 2 Kings 23:23 which says, *“But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, this Passover was celebrated to the LORD in Jerusalem.”*

It was only about 1500 years ago that a monk by the name of Dionysius Exiguus developed a calendar which started measuring the years from the time of Christ.

His intention was to date year 1 from the time when, by his best calculation, Jesus was born.

Today, virtually all scholars agree that this sixth-century monk was off by at least four years and possibly by as many as six.

You see, based on our current calendar, Herod the Great died in 4 B.C. Jesus was born near the end of his reign so his birth couldn’t have been any later than that year.

And, since Herod ordered the slaughter of infants in Bethlehem who were *“two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi,”* Jesus’ birth may have been as early as 6 B.C.

Despite that error, our Western calendar has endured and has been adopted as the international standard of measuring years.

But there are a lot of nations that privately use calendars other than this one for dating the documents of government and trade.

For example, today in China the year is 4719, in Islamic nations it's 1446, and in Israel it's 5786.

## **Slide 2**

Here in America, it's going to be 2026, and, despite concerns, the world is still in existence.

For those of you who may have forgotten, January 1, 2000 was supposed to be doomsday.

Computers around the world were suppose to go haywire and create all sorts of chaos, but, when that day arrived, we still had electricity, we still had running water, and there were no plane crashes at midnight.

There's another reason that the year 2000 and the years since have been in the news. Many religious people have become obsessed with date-setting scenarios.

So, as the ominous-looking year 2000 approached, we heard doomsday warnings. We were told that the 2000th year would be the time that Jesus would return.

Many Christian writers and lecturers wanted you to believe that it was going to be "the end of the world as we know it."

I always wonder why Christians tend to jump on every bandwagon being pulled by fear. I never got all that excited and packed my bags. Why not?

For one thing, with the calendar mistake that Dionysius made, the 2000th year after the birth of Christ actually came and passed in 1994, 1995, or 1996 without the end of the world.

But there's another reason I never get all that excited. Jesus said there would be no special sign of His coming.

In unmistakable language, He said in Mark 13:32-37, *"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. "Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"*

### **Slide 3**

Despite what Jesus said, we still had a plethora of predictions for what most people were hyped up to believe was a "monumental hinge date in history."

I read a poll taken by the Los Angeles Times which said that 2% of all people in this country believed that the world would come to an end on January 1, 2000 and 3% believed that Christ would return on that day.

Furthermore, of those who believed the Bible was the Word of God, six percent expected the second coming of Christ to fall on January 1, 2000.

That's more than 15 million people who fully believed that Jesus would return on that day.

The entertainment industry even capitalized on the doomsday predictions of religious groups.

CBS ran a special program in 1996 entitled *Mysteries of the Millennium* that opened with these words: *"Are you going to witness the end of the world? The Bible, Nostradamus, the Mayan Calendar, and ancient Hopi Indians all predicted that doomsday will be sometime in the next few years... even now modern science seems to support them."*

Then Hollywood checked in with two movies exploiting the same forecasts with *Deep Impact* and *Armageddon*.

But the people who exploited the foreboding turn of the millennium the most were religious teachers and ministers.

Hal Lindsey, author of *The Late Great Planet Earth*, had to update his book several times as his fanciful interpretation of Scripture failed to match up with what actually happened.

On one of his videotapes he said, *"All of this [i.e., earthquakes, famines, wars, AIDS, etc.] leads up to one thing... Jesus said, 'This generation will not pass away until all these things are fulfilled.' What generation? The generation that would see all these signs. We are that generation! I believe you cannot miss it. We're that generation, and I believe we're rapidly moving toward the coming of Christ."*

We've heard it a lot, but what people don't realize is that this sort of millennial hysteria is nothing new; it's been fairly constant across the centuries.

In connection with "hinge dates" or world-shattering events, doomsday prophets continue to offer their projections of an end-time scenario.

Here are just a few of these failed predictions:

- Hip poly tus (who died in 236) predicted that the end of the world would occur 500 years after Christ.
- A Spanish monk named Beatus predicted that he would live to see the Antichrist and the end of the world by the year 800. He died in 798 and, of course, the world is still here.
- In the 900's, it was a widespread belief across Europe that the end of the world would occur in the year 1000. After the year 1000 passed uneventfully, the year 1033 was targeted by several as "the time of the end."
- In 1843-44, William Miller, an American Baptist preacher, and his followers were looking for Jesus' return.
- In 1910, many Christians expected that Halley's Comet would destroy the world
- The year 1914 was proclaimed by the Jehovah's Witnesses as the time when the Battle of Armageddon would be fought.
- The February 1967 issue of *Plain Truth* magazine carried Herbert W. Armstrong's pronouncement that the "*Day of the Eternal*" would come between 1972 and 1977.
- A few years later, based on the first edition of Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*, tens of thousands of people sincerely believed "the rapture" would occur by the end of 1981.
- In 1991, Louis Farrakhan announced the Gulf War would "*be that war which the scriptures refer to as the War of Armageddon which is the final war.*"
- Then there were all the predictions about what would happen in 2000.
- In May 2011, Harold Camping predicted that the Rapture and devastating earthquakes would occur, with God taking approximately 3% of the world's population into Heaven.
- F. Kenton Beshore placed the second coming of Jesus between 2018 and 2028 and the rapture by 2021 at the latest.

In the end, all these speculations have only served to discredit the attempts of others who proclaim the gospel.

#### Slide 4

I'm hard pressed to explain the motives of people who try to predict the date of the second coming of Christ.

I'm even more hard pressed to explain the gullibility of those who continue to believe them in the face of Jesus' own words in Mark 13:32, *"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."*

Do I believe Jesus is going to return personally, visibly, and bodily?  
Absolutely!

Do I believe that His return will bring time as we know it to an end?  
Yes. Do I believe His return will result in a separation of the saved and the lost for all eternity? Yes.

Then why am I not interested in trying to figure out when that return will be? I belong to Christ, and I'm ready for his coming at any moment.

The person who needs to post a lookout for his Savior makes me a bit suspicious!

I think God knew that if he gave us the precise time of Christ's return that the natural tendency of people would be to put off following Christ till the last minute. I mean, that's only natural, isn't it?

Parents experience this first hand. If the parent leaves the house in the morning and says, *"We'll be back at 5:00 this afternoon and we expect for the kitchen to be clean when we get back,"* what happens?

You know exactly what happens. The kids watch TV, play on the computer, or read their books until 4:30. Then it's a mad rush to get it finished before Mom and Dad walk through the door!

But suppose the parents leave in the morning and they say, *"We'll be back after a while. We expect for the kitchen to be clean when we return,"* now what happens?

A precise time hasn't been given. So the kids then think, *"I can't wait too long to get started, they could come home sooner than I expect. The only safe thing to do is clean it now and keep it clean till they get back."*

You see, when you don't know the exact time that someone is coming, it changes your whole outlook on getting ready.

That's why Jesus said, *"It could be in a few years, it could be in a few decades, it could be in a few centuries, it could be in a few millennia. It doesn't matter that you know when it is, it only matters that you know it's going to happen; that you get yourself ready now, and that you stay ready."*

There's an old fable which tells of three apprentice devils that were coming to this earth to finish their apprenticeship.

They were talking to Satan about their plans to tempt and ruin men. The first said, *"I will tell them there is no God."* Satan said, *"That will not delude many, for they know that there is a God."*

The second said, *"I'll tell men there is no hell."* Satan said, *"You'll deceive very few that way."*

The third said, *"I'll tell men there's no hurry."* Satan said to him, *"Go, and you will ruin them by the thousands."* The most dangerous of all delusions is that there is plenty of time.

Jesus said in Matthew 24:42, *"...you do not know on what day your Lord will come."*

## Slide 5

As 2026 begins, I can't help but wonder, *"Could this be the year that Jesus returns?"* Absolutely! In fact, I pray that it is.

It has as much chance this year as it has every year. But my concern to get ready is not based on predictions of men; it's based on the fact that Jesus said to be ready at all times.

2 Peter 3:1-5, *"Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles. Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, 'Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.'"*

Peter said there would be people who say, *"I thought you said Jesus was coming back. It's been 2,000 years since he promised that. Looks like it's not going to happen."* But, you know what? It's going to happen!

Listen as Peter continues in 2 Peter 3:8-9, *"But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."*

Peter says that Christ's delay in returning is not to be viewed as a sign that he lied about coming back.

It should be viewed instead as a sign that God loves us and wants us to have every opportunity to get ourselves ready.



If you're not prepared for Christ to come back then, when you woke up this morning and found that Christ did not return yesterday, you got a second chance.

You now have one more opportunity to obey the gospel. It may be your last chance, but, by the grace of God, you have one more day to get yourself ready.

### **Slide 6**

In view of the fact that Christ may or may not return this year, what should be our concern, our focus? Allow me to share with you some desires that I have for you in the coming year.

I pray that God will continue to build us into a healthy church, a church which not only looks to the Word of God as our final authority, but a church where people are allowed to think for themselves.

A church where people can grow at their own pace, and know how to show that grace to one another as Jesus has shown to all of us.

I don't want us to be a "*museum for saints*" but a "*hospital for sinners*." A church that truly demonstrates God's power to transform sinners; offering them something better than they now have in their lives.

I pray that we'll continue to celebrate the Lord in our worship in spirit and in truth by using old hymns and new songs, Bible preaching, and hearts filled with gratitude and praise.

As a priesthood of believers, may we bring our sacrifice of praise to Him and exalt His name. Moving the focus away from ourselves to Jesus Christ where it belongs.

I want our worship to let the visitor who comes into our midst know that we find so much joy in Christ that he or she will want to know more.

I pray that we'll continue to preach the gospel; to tell the story of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection through which we find forgiveness, hope and strength to live our daily lives.

I pray that we'll demonstrate the compassion of Jesus to the community around us since God didn't call us into a cave to isolate ourselves from the world he loves.

Jesus was no isolated, antisocial hermit. He didn't segregate Himself from lepers, prostitutes, poor people, or criminals.

If we're His body in the world today, we must have a burden for the same people He loved.

I want us to see the face of Jesus in the people we serve, to affirm their dignity as men and women in God's own image and give them the opportunity to know Him.

## **Slide 7**

### **Conclusion**

I want to close by suggesting some resolutions for the New Year. Now, I'm not big on New Years resolutions, but these are some that will be life changing.

We should resolve to grow to a new level in our prayer life. To better understand what prayer is and how to pray, and as we pray, talk to God about everything.

We should resolve to grow to a new level in worship. To better understand the nature and meaning of worship; attending worship services, not to observe, critique, or evaluate, but to worship God.

We should resolve to grow to a new level of service; understanding that our relationship with God is the foundation of our service.

We should resolve to grow to a new level of closeness in our association with God's family; contributing to the warmth, the love, the caring, and the attentiveness of the congregation so that we will be blessed because we're a part of this spiritual family.

Will this be the year that Jesus Christ returns? Possibly, but whether He comes or not, I pray that we'll be ready.