

Countryside Bible Church

21705 South State Highway J
Box 583
Peculiar, Missouri 64078
779-4445
Don Ward, Pastor
Cell Phone 529-2940



What's in Your View?

(If I tell you the truth, will you come to church?)

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this

charge: Preach the Word: 2 Tim. 4:1-2a (NIV)

The early church had two things in view; Jesus' "appearing" and "his kingdom". It gave them a new focus and changed their lives.

In the early centuries of what we might call the mainstream church, both the literal second coming of Jesus to earth and the future Kingdom on earth lost out to another doctrinal system, mainly that souls of the deceased go to heaven at death. The visible second coming (Heb.9:28) of Jesus to earth is now readily believed by many. Fifty-plus years ago (and for hundreds of years before that) it was a different story. Those who subscribed to the second coming of Jesus were often classified as a cult. If my impressions are correct, Dr. Billy Graham had a lot to do with popularizing the second coming in our day without, however, affecting his belief that deceased saints are already in heaven.

Basically four separate NT Greek words are used to describe Jesus coming. One of those words is the word "appearing". It is defined as *manifestation, advent, appearing or brightness* by Strongs. It emphasizes the visible nature of

Jesus' return (Rev.1:7, Matt.24:26-27). It is the Greek word *epiphaneia*, later the Latin *epiphania* and the English *epiphany*. *Epiphaneia* is used six times in the NT, five of which describe the visible aspect of Jesus' return. 2Tim.1:10 refers to His first coming.

In the early centuries AD the mainstream church began to use this word "epiphany" to describe various events celebrated in the church such as Jesus' presentation to the Wise men, the Spirit coming at His baptism and His first miracle at the wedding in Cana. This subtle change helped mask the original biblical meaning of *epiphaneia*, as it revealed the visible second coming of Christ.

Several great prophecies are linked to the Jesus' return. Should Jesus not "appear", there will be no "kingdom" (text above). Should He not "appear", Paul nor anyone else will receive their "crown of righteousness" (2Tim.4:8). Should He not "appear" the "lawless one" will not be overthrown and destroyed "by the splendor of his coming" (2Thess.2:8, NIV. "Splendor" is the Gk. *Epiphaneia*).

And of course, should Jesus not "appear" we will never receive our "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13). "Hope" in the bible often refers to our hope in the resurrection (Acts 23:6; Acts 24:15; Acts 26:6-7; Acts 28:20; Romans 8:20-25; 1 Cor. 15:16-22; 1 Thes. 4:13-16; 1 Peter 1:3) as well as our hope of eternal life (Titus 1:2; Titus 3:7). Without the resurrection there will not be any eternal life, no life at all. For then even

"those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost." (1Cor.15:13-18).

William Tyndale (1500's), reformer and bible translator argued for the second coming of Jesus and a future resurrection with Catholic apologist, Sir Thomas More. He wrote, "Christ and his apostles taught no other; but warned to look for Christ's coming again every hour; which coming again because ye believe will never be, therefore ye have feigned that other merchandise". He confronted Mr. More with the resurrection. "I marvel that Paul had not comforted the Thessalonians (1Thess. 4:14-) with the doctrine, if he had wist it, that the souls of their dead had been in joy; as he did with the resurrection, that their dead should rise again. If the souls be in heaven in as great glory as the angels, after your doctrine, show me what cause should be of the resurrection?" Is not his question still valid? What's in your view? "Preach the Word", Paul says. Because remember, what was popular yesterday may not be popular today and what is popular today may not be so popular when Jesus appears.

Send \$10 for a copy of THE COMING KINGDOM OF THE MESSIAH, by Sir Anthony Buzzard.

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