IS THE COMING OF CHRIST AT HAND ?

Int.

1. Aim: To show what the Bible teaches about the second coming of Christ.
2. 2 Peter 3:10 "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."
3. Much has been written and preached about the immediate coming of Christ.
   a. A book published in 1970 "The Late Great Planet Earth" by Hal Lindsey has been read by millions of people. It was also made into a movie.
      i. The author takes Bible prophecies long ago fulfilled and squeezes their fulfillment into a modern mold.
      ii. Then he declares that Jesus will return to the earth during this generation.
   b. Remember the Y2K threat that people predicted all kinds of things would happen and many predicted that this would be the beginning of the battle of Armageddon.
   c. Just last year a man by the name of Harold Camping received a lot of attention when he declared that May 21, 2011 would be the end of the world. When that did not happen he then revised it to October 21, 2011.
   d. There is another prediction for 2012. It is based on a calendar by the Maya Indians and it is predicted that the end will be on December 21, 2012.
4. We will notice some of the things that the Bible teaches and some things it does not teach about the next coming of Christ.

Discussion

I. The BIBLE TEACHES THAT:

A. Jesus will never set foot on earth again.

1. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 V. 16-17 "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."
2. The Lord is now at the right hand of God
   a. He shall descend from heaven with a shout - it will be noisy
   b. The shout singles out Christ's own dead and quickens them into life.
   c. Jesus said: "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." (John 5:28, 29.)
   d. Those in Christ who are dead shall rise and ascend before those who are alive at his coming.
3. Now notice about those who are still living:
   a. The Christians who are alive will be caught up in the clouds with those who have been resurrected.
   b. As they ascend to meet him their bodies "shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:51, 52), thus their bodies shall be changed from natural into spiritual bodies, which, being fashioned after the likeness of his glorious body.

c. On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus said to his disciples: "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:2, 3.) [Gospel Advocate Commentaries - New Testament Commentary – A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles: I, II Thessalonians, I, II Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.]

d. There is no verse in the N.T. that says Jesus will set foot on this earth again. Instead it says...

B. When Jesus comes again the earth will be destroyed

1. 2 Peter 3:10 "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

2. This earth and everything on the earth will be destroyed.

3. There is nothing about establishing an earthly kingdom taught in the N.T.

C. Jesus is now reigning as King on the throne of David

1. Acts 2:29-31

2. His reign is in heaven, not on this earth

D. Jesus will cease to reign when he comes again.

1. 1 Cor. 15:19ff V. 24-26 "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

2. He is now reigning in heaven with God.

3. Then cometh the end,—
    a. The consummation of the gospel dispensation or state of things, which will open the new and eternal period.
    b. When he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father;—
    c. The mission of Jesus Christ on earth was to redeem and rescue the world from the rule of the evil one, to whom it had been surrendered by the first Adam, and deliver it up to God, even the Father [Gospel Advocate Commentaries - New Testament Commentary – A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles: First Corinthians.]

E. The kingdom of Christ is spiritual and not material
1. John 18:36 "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."
2. Pilate's earlier asked Jesus, "Art thou the King of the Jews,"
    a. The Lord answered by declaring that he did indeed have kingly claims but the kingdom he envisioned was not of this world and was therefore, in no sense, a threat to the Roman empire of which Pilate was a part; and, there was no occasion for fear of violence against the Jews who were his enemies since its adherents would not with carnal weapons fight in its defense.
    b. There was then no occasion for concern on the part of the Roman governor that his plans might lead to unrest and conflict in Judaea.
    c. It was sufficient to make clear to him that his kingdom was not a secular, political one, maintained and perpetuated by the sword; its goals were vastly different from those of Rome, not being of this world; and so there was nothing about it to pose a threat to Rome's political power.

d. More than this the Lord did not say; the nature and purpose of the kingdom were matters about which Pilate would have felt no interest whatsoever.

[Gospel Advocate Commentaries - New Testament Commentary – A Commentary on the Gospel According to John.]

II. EVERY PROPHECY CONCERNING THE SETTING UP THE KINGDOM WAS FULFILLED WHEN THE CHURCH WAS ESTABLISHED

A. Four things Hal Lindsey says will have to take place before Jesus can become king:

1. Jews would have to be a nation
   a. May 14, 1948 - David Ben-Gurion announced the establishment of a Jewish nation.
   b. This nation was to be known as the State of Israel
2. Jews would have to be dwelling in Jerusalem
3. The temple will have to be standing
4. The Roman Empire would have to be revived.

B. All four of these were present on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 Peter said Jesus was on the throne of David.

1. "29. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. 30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;" Acts 2:29-30

2. He shows them that David died and was buried within the city of Jerusalem, and that his tomb was with them and that his body had decayed; hence, David as a prophet did not apply the language to himself, but being a prophet he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon his throne.
   a. Peter here refers to Psalm 132:11.
   b. Furthermore, Peter argues that God has fulfilled that oath and promise to David and that Christ was raised from the dead to sit on David's throne.
   c. Peter here declares that David knew that in Psalm 16:10 he was describing the resurrection of the Messiah.
   d. David as king occupied the throne of the nation of Israel, the national people of God.
   e. The Messiah, who was to descend from him, was in like manner to be King of God's people, his spiritual people; hence, the Messiah was to sit on David's throne ruling the people of God.
   f. The royal government among the Lord's national people was, properly speaking, a theocracy; that is, a government of which God was considered the Supreme Ruler, while the earthly king was God's agent.
   g. Christ or the Messiah was to sit on David's throne, or to be his successor, by becoming the King of God's spiritual people. [Gospel Advocate Commentaries - New Testament Commentary – A Commentary on Acts of the Apostles]

C. Important Points

1. Jesus said in Matthew 24:34 "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."
2. The false teachers apply the "generation" [40 years] which they say began when the Jews became a nation - May 14, 1948.
   a. The 40 years ended on May 14, 1988 and Jesus did not return.
   b. The Dome of the Rock stands on the Temple site.
   c. The Roman empire has not been revived.
3. These things indicate that they do not apply to us today. It has already happened in the first century.

D. The language in the first parts of Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 describes events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem and not the final coming of Christ.

E. There are no signs pointing to the time when Jesus will come again.

1. Mark 13:32 "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."
   a. By certain infallible signs Christ had informed his disciples that Jerusalem should be destroyed, the period when they should make good their escape to the refuge of the mountains, etc., but of the day when the heaven and earth should pass away, and the coming of the Son of God, no man knew; he, the Son nor the angels, did not know.
   b. This day was then only in the knowledge of the Father.
   c. But Christ often spoke of such a day, and so did his apostles who were "charged" even to make proclamation of this very truth. (Acts 10:42.)

d. But they were never so presumptuous as to set a day, because on this point they were not informed.

e. They were obedient to Christ, and thus saved themselves the disgrace and humiliation of attempting to find out what Christ himself and the angels in heaven did not know.

f. Some have at different times set the year and day for the coming of Christ; but these days came and the Master did not come. Such people only display their ignorance.

g. I know not when he is coming but feel sure it will not be at a time set by uninspired men. [Gospel Advocate Commentaries - New Testament Commentary – A Commentary on the Gospel According to Mark.]

2. 2 Pet. 3:10 "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

a. **The "day of the Lord"** is the day when he shall appear in the clouds on the occasion of his second coming for the purpose of raising the dead and instituting the general judgment. (John 5:28, 29.)

(1) The phrase is of frequent occurrence in the Old Testament, where it usually denotes the idea of judgment; and in the New Testament it designates the Lord's coming which will precede the judgment. (1 Thess. 5:2; 1 Cor. 1:8; Phil. 1:6; 2 Thess. 2:2.)

(2) The day will come as a "thief" because it will come with the suddenness and unexpectedness characteristic of a thief.

b. In the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat,—

(1) The "heavens" here include the visible portion of the universe immediately above us in which the birds fly. (Gen. 1:20.)

(2) In the mighty conflagration which shall attend the destruction of the earth great and wonderful changes are destined to occur in the elements immediately surrounding it.

(3) Accompanying its dissolution there is to be "a great noise."

(a) This describes the crash of dissolving worlds and the tremendous roar of flames as they consume the earth.

(b) The "elements" are the rudimental portions of the earth system, the minute parts which comprise the whole.

(c) The heavens and the earth are to be dissolved; they are to lose their form and be returned to the original atoms from which they were constructed,.

c. And the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.—

(1) The works that are to perish in the fire which shall ultimately destroy the earth are those which belong to the earth and are characteristic of it, whether of God or man.

(2) Along with its dissolution there will be the burning of all that man has accomplished of a material nature—houses, cities, monuments, etc. —everything to which he has set his hand here.

(3) These, along with all of God's material creation, are to be dissolved, consumed in the heat of the mighty catastrophe.

(4) The manner in which the Lord will accomplish this is not stated, and it is idle to speculate.

(5) It is sufficient for us to know that it will occur; the manner in which the Lord purposes to do it remains hidden in the counsel of his own will.

[Gospel Advocate Commentaries - New Testament Commentary – A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude.]

III. WHY DO MEN MAKE THESE FALSE PREDICTIONS ?

A. Last year Harold Camping was in the news because of his predictions.

1. There have been others over the years.
2. But of course none of them are ever right and they never will be right.
3. But why do they continue to do this? That does not bother them to be wrong!

B. 2 Peter 2:1-3 explains why

1. Notice two words or phrases: "Covetousness" and "Make merchandise of you"
   a. Covetousness—unlawful desire for personal gain—was the motive which influenced these false teachers; and thus motivated, they used feigned words—words artfully and skillfully forged for the occasion—to deceive those whom they could.
   b. These teachers "made merchandise" of their dupes by treating them as merchandise, i.e., as objects by which to enhance their own wealth.
   c. Such proselyted only that they might profit, and promised what they could never deliver from motives of greed and avarice [Gospel Advocate Commentaries - New Testament Commentary – A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude.]
2. These false teachers make these predictions and they write books with all their reasons why.
   a. These books become big sellers. They make money

b. They are on TV shows and radio shows. They make money

c. They have speaking engagements. They make money.

CONCLUSION

1. "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him." Deuteronomy 18:2
2. It is good that we can be in the Kingdom of Christ
3. He is coming again.
4. We don't know when !!
5. Luke 12:40 "Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

Sources Consulted:
1. Is the Coming of Christ Imminent? By Bobby Duncan p. 51
2. Bulletin article by Malcolm L. Hill. "Will Christ come back to earth and rule on David's throne in Jerusalem 1,000 years before the end of Time." 9/18/2011
3. File on End Times

Sermon by Arthur Pigman - Sunday Evening January 22, 2012
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