



Matthew 16:28: You Can Trust the Bible 2021!

August 29, 2021

Text Matthew 16: 24-28 (Focus on Verse 28)

Matthew 16:28 (KJV) *Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.*

We last preached on these Text on March 4, 2012...nine years ago. We did so from Mark's version:

Mark 9:1 (KJV) *And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.*

Luke's version is set in a similar context to Matthew:

Luke 9:23-27 (KJV) *And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. 24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. 25 For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? 26 For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels. 27 But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.*

Cause for Consternation?

1. Obviously, our verse (and synoptic versions) if taken at face value, sounds fantastical!
2. His point seems simple enough: Jesus would "come" in His Kingdom before some of His present hearers' death.
 - "Taste death" means to die. The phrase in Greek, *geuomai thanatos*, means just that. The same phrase is used in Hebrews, where it obviously refers to our LORD's physical death.

Hebrews 2:9 (KJV) *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.*

3. Although Matthew, Mark, and Luke read slightly differently, some common themes emerge:
 - Jesus was making a dogmatic statement, not speaking in metaphor. "Verily." "I tell you of a truth."
 - The "some standing here" were "there" not "here" as in 2021.
 - They would "see" the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom.
4. When I was younger, this verse really bothered me! "Are there still people alive from that day? Maybe they are the secret cabal of international people who control world governments! The illuminati!" 😊
5. There are at least four ways this Text has been interpreted:
 - That Jesus is a false prophet. Atheists, agnostics, pagans, and apologists from other religions have seized on these verses to try to brand our Lord as a false messiah. "He obviously did not 'come' in His Kingdom yet, and the people who were there are dead" they say.

- That Jesus is not referring to “then” but “when.” More one this below.
- That Jesus is referring to the next few verses, were He is transfigured before Peter, James, and John. Opponents to this view would site “coming in His Kingdom” as judgment language that obviously goes beyond revelation of His deity. Not only that, but “after six days” (Matthew 17:1), it is likely that “all” of them would be still alive, not just some.
- That Jesus is declaring a “fore” judgment to His hearers, not a “far” one that they would not and could not understand.

Cutting it Straight:

1. Many would said this “coming in the Kingdom” language isn’t unique to Matthew 16:28 and the synoptic versions. For example, here are some words from our LORD in the Olivet Discourse:

Matthew 24:29-35 (KJV) *Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: **30** And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. **31** And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. **32** Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: **33** So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. **34** Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. **35** Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*

Mark 13:24-31 (KJV) *But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, **25** And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. **26** And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. **27** And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. **28** Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: **29** So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. **30** Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. **31** Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.*

2. In a plain reading, we see our LORD gives what some call “time markers” in these texts that frame an immediate context, one that His hearers would perceive personally. In other words, Jesus’ hearers would not have interpreted “this generation” with “that generation, 2000 years from now.” This is basic hermeneutics, as we’ll see.
3. Indeed, I said last week that some see in verses 27-28 of Matthew 16 a summation of two judgments: an eternal one, Christ’s Second Coming (v27), and a historic one, judgment upon Jerusalem and the Temple in 70AD (v28). In other words, a *far fulfillment of judgment and a near fulfillment of judgment*. This is the view I hold.
4. Texts like Matthew 16:28 and those in the Olivet Discourse, if looked at honestly, very obviously meant something to their 1st Century hearers, as do verses like these:

Revelation 1:1-3 (KJV) *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and*

signified it by his angel unto his servant John: 2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. 3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

5. That DOES NOT mean their meaning is totally exhausted in the 1st century, but refusing to change our interpretive rules helps us with right application!

Bible Interpretation Basics: A Quick Review

1. Rule 1: A text cannot mean what it never could have meant to its author or his or her readers.

- This rule anchors us into the author's and hearer's context, and gives us a "foundation" from which to interpret and apply the passage we are reading.

2. Rule 2: Whenever we share the same context with the original hearers, God's Word to us is the same as His Word to them.

- In addition to Context (the "C" in CLIGHTS), at times we must also consider the following areas: Literal principles...interpreting Scripture within the correct literary genre, the need for Spirit-led Illumination, the Grammatical construction, the Historical setting, issues of Typology (especially in the Old Testament), and Scriptural Synergy...how all Scripture works together.

3. Rule 3: The clear must interpret the unclear.

- Here is the process. Keeping all the rules in mind, we start with the most clear: biblical precepts (commands). Then we move to principles and then to patterns. Why this order?
- Because *Narrative is not necessarily Normative*. When we read of Bible characters doing certain things, God's statutes must help us decide the appropriateness of those actions. When we read of someone like David worshipping God or facing down a giant, we can and should say "Amen!" When we read of the same person killing Uriah and taking his wife for himself, we should rightly see those things as sin. Abraham was accounted as righteous because of his faith; that doesn't mean we should lie or take a concubine as he did!
- Precepts inform principles and patterns. The patterns themselves must be considered in light of both precepts and principles. When we have a precept in context, we have God's Word on an issue and other passages must be interpreted in light of what is clearly stated.

Jesus is NOT a False Prophet!

1. I believe that grammatically, there is no reason to interpret our Text in any way than using its plain meaning. Jesus said "there are some standing here." Here, not there. Not there in 1948. Not there in 1967. Not there in the 21st century. Not somewhere in the soon-to-come future. He was talking to those "there" right in front of Him when He said "here." And *seeing the kingdom* or *seeing the Son of man coming* suggests some sort of apocalyptic event.
2. Likewise, in the Olivet Discourse, "This generation" could not have meant some future generation. *Generation* does not refer to a race of people; it refers to the people alive while He was talking. This is very easy to see.
3. Many well-meaning believers have tried to place these statements in a modern context, many times using numerology and different calendars with a particular brand of end-times reasoning. Consequently, many have tried to say that Jesus didn't mean "this generation," He meant "that" generation, 2000 years hence.
4. Also, skeptics and seekers will cry foul immediately, because that is not what the Text clearly says! In Mark 14, we read:

Mark 14:61-62 (KJV) *But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? 62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*

5. If in our Text, “standing here” means what it says, and all those folks the LORD was talking to have died without seeing His coming, isn’t that a false prophecy? NO, because they DID see His coming.
6. Our Hermeneutical Rules help us here:
 - Would Jesus hearers have believed the “coming” to which He was referring would be in their lifetimes or ours? Would they really have supposed that when Jesus said “some here,” He meant “some there...in 2021?” (Rule 1)
 - Taking into account the whole of Scripture (or interpreting Scripture with Scripture...Rule 3) really helps us too. Other than our LORD’s Second Coming, what else does the Bible say about God’s “coming?”
 - Is it possible that Jesus, who knew every jot and tittle of the Words of the prophets, was using prophetic language like they did, both in Matthew 16:28 and the Olivet Discourse?
 - As always, let us look to Scripture, and may the clear help us with the “unclear.”

The Language of the Prophets

1. Scripture contains every form of language. God, by His grace, utilizes all kinds of ways to help us understand His plan and will via the Bible:
 - Historical narratives
 - Poetry and Psalms (songs!)
 - Proverbs
 - Didactic epistles (teaching or commanding verses)
 - Apocalyptic revelations and fantasy imagery
 - And more!
2. Scripture uses historical narratives, didactic teachings, simile, hyperbole, metaphor, types, fantasy imagery, poems, and songs!
3. Normally, it is so easy to tell which is which (by God’s grace), we don’t give it a second thought.
4. For example, when Jesus says “I am the door,” we know He isn’t saying He’s made of wood and hinges! And when He says, “I am the bread of life” we know we can’t put ham and mustard on Him!
5. Read how God uses language to convey His intent with respect to coming to His people or judgment:

Jeremiah 4:13-14 (KJV) *Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us! for we are spoiled. 14 O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?*

Zephaniah 1:14-15 (KJV) *The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. 15 That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,*

Isaiah 19:1-4 (KJV) *The burden of Egypt. Behold, the LORD rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it. 2 And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom. 3 And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof; and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards. 4 And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts.*

Isaiah 13:1-5 (KJV) *The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see. 2 Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain, exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles. 3 I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, even them that rejoice in my highness. 4 The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the LORD of hosts mustereth the host of the battle. 5 They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, even the LORD, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land.*

Isaiah 13:9-10 (KJV) *Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.*

10 *For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.*

Isaiah 13:17-19 (KJV) *Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it. 18 Their bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children. 19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.*

6. When the prophets prophesied about impending destruction, they did so using “prophetic hyperbole,” using language and imagery that made a very sharp point.
7. The shattering of physical Kingdoms via the judgment of God was akin to the overthrow of their whole world, thus the language of stars darkening and crashing, clouds and gloom, etc. God “came” and punished the nations in a devastating manner.
8. In the times of Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, He did just that! The “Day of the LORD” came to both Judah and Israel in the form of the Babylonian and Assyrian captivities. Thousands if not millions were killed or captured and enslaved. Such a day was prophesied and “came” to others like Egypt and Babylon as well!

One view to consider: Jesus Did “Come” in His Kingdom!

- Not only did many in the time of our Text live to see His death, burial, and resurrection...plus the birth of His church, but many were surely alive a generation later...
- In 70 AD, history tells us of the fulfillment of divine judgment, where the LORD did similarly as He did to Judah and Jerusalem in the Old Testament.
- Using another nation as His tool (Rome), He “came in the clouds” and destroyed Jerusalem and obliterated the temple, the ruins of which still exist today.
- Many of those who killed him (around 33 AD) were still alive, and surely they remembered His words.
- So in a generation (roughly 40 years), many did not “taste death” until the LORD fulfilled His promise!

- The Pharisees, who studied the OT day and night, would likely have known that by saying He was coming in the clouds (or coming in His kingdom), Jesus was claiming again to be God and would render judgment thusly.
- Yes, Jesus is coming again in a final judgment (The Second Coming). But given biblical judgment language, it's quite possible our LORD "came" and destroyed Jerusalem...in power and great glory.

Our Main Points are...

1. There is a way to look at this Text in keeping with Old Testament language, New Testament prophecies, and history without presuming that there are 2000 year old people walking around!
2. The "Transfiguration" view has holes, but many good believers hold to it.
3. However, the spiritual significance of the total annihilation of the Jewish world (the Temple destruction in 70 AD) is often underestimated. Literally, everything happened just as Christ said. (Matt 24)

Matthew 24:1-2 (KJV) *And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*

4. What I'm hoping this does is cement again your trust in the inspiration, inerrancy, infallibility, and sufficiency of Scripture.

2 Timothy 3:16 (KJV) *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

5. Yes, our LORD is coming again. However, He also "came" to Jerusalem in great judgment and power, and the whole world knew and those who killed Him saw:

Revelation 1:7-8 (KJV) *Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. 8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.*

6. And He will come again.

Acts 1:11 (KJV) *Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*

7. Are you ready?

Amen.