**Date Setting**

**Intro:** It has become very popular, and oftentimes very prosperous, thing to set a date for the return of Christ. Actually this is nothing new, it has taken place since the first century.

1. **Early history.**
   a. 2 Tim. 2:18 “Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.”
   b. 2 The. 2:1-3 “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 2That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. ‘Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;”
      i. They thought Christ coming was so imminent that they quit working and became busybodies.
      ii. 2 The. 3:10-13 “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. 11For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. 12Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. 13But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.”
   c. In the middle of the second century, Montanist had ecstatic visions announcing the second coming.
   d. In the tenth century public and private buildings were allowed to decay, and some were pulled down, since they thought they were no longer of any use since the dissolution of all things was at hand.

2. **More recent times.**
   a. The founder of Adventism, William Miller
      i. In 1831 he claimed that Christ would come in 1843.
      ii. Next he set a day in October 1844.
      iii. When that failed Elder White set a date of 1845.
   b. The founder of the Worldwide Church of God, Herbert W. Armstrong in 1956 predicted an end to the present order of things and Christ coming to reign in person on earth by 1975.
   c. Jehovah’s Witnesses.
      i. Charles Russell contended Christ came in 1874 and the consummation of the ages would come in 1914.
      ii. More recently they set the date of 1975.
   d. Hal Lindsey in his book, *The Late Great Planet Earth* has set a date of 1988 for the rapture, then 7 years of great tribulation, thus, 1995 Jesus will return to establish his 1000 year reign on the earth.

3. **Others, such as Billy Graham, while not setting a specific date are saying that the end is now upon us.**

4. **Many refer to Mat. 24 to support these claims.**
I. MATTHEW 24
   A. The Question Asked.
      1. Background.
         a. Mat. 23:37-39 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! 38Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. 39For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”
         b. Mat. 24:1-2 “And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. 2And 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.”
      2. Mat. 24:3 “And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”
         a. They ask about one event.
         b. “These things be,” is the destruction of Jerusalem; “signs of his coming,” is in this destruction.
         c. “The end of the world” to the Jew—if Jerusalem would be destroyed it would be the end.
   B. The Reply.
      1. The destruction of Jerusalem; Mat. 24:4-35
         a. Mat. 24: 14 “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”
            (1) The Gospel was preached to the entire world before the destruction of Jerusalem.
            (2) Col. 1:23 “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;”
         b. Mat. 24:16-20 “Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: 17Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: 18Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. 19And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 20But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:”
         c. Mat. 24:34 “Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.
      2. The end of the world; Mat. 24:36-25:46

II. NO ONE KNOWS WHEN CHRIST WILL COME.
   A. Mat. 24:34-35, 42 “Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. 35Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away... 42Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”
   B. Mat. 25:13 “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.”
   C. 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.”
   D. 1 The. 5:2 “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.”

III. THUS WE SHOULD ALWAYS BE PREPARED.
   A. 2 Pet. 3:10-12 “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. 11Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all
holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?"

B. **Jam. 4:14** “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”

C. **Thus, if you have not obeyed the Gospel, you need to.**

D. **If you have not been faithful, you need to return to God.**