



### **How Stubborn Can We Be?**

*<sup>19</sup>This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"*

*<sup>20</sup>And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."<sup>21</sup>*

*They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?"*

*And he said, "I am not."*

*"Are you the Prophet?"*

*And he answered, "No."*

*<sup>22</sup>Then they said to him, "Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?"*

*<sup>23</sup>He said, "I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,' as Isaiah the prophet said."*

*<sup>24</sup>Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. <sup>25</sup>They asked him, and said to him, "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"*

*<sup>26</sup>John answered them saying, "I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know. <sup>27</sup>It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." <sup>28</sup>These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. — John 1:19–28*

One of the foundational rules for handling Scripture where eschatology is concerned is that Christ's First Coming is a shadow or pattern revealing what will take place at His Second Coming. Just as when He came the first time there was a one-world, self-deified ruler based in Rome who marked everyone for the purposes of financial control (the true meaning and purpose of a "census" in those times), this is a shadow of the ultimate one-world government and working of Antichrist at His Second Coming. There are many such similarities, and one of them is how, when it comes to eschatology—one's interpretation of the events surrounding Christ's coming—the same stubbornness

repeatedly displayed at His First Coming seems to be a feature once again in these Last Days leading up to His Return.

It's important to note that the Apostle John documents that although it was priests and Levites from Jerusalem, obviously in association with the operation of the Temple, who sought to investigate John the Baptist in v. 19, further on in v.24 it specifically qualifies that, "*they had been sent from the Pharisees*". These identifications combine to describe not just anyone and everyone in a position of leadership, but specifically those who were the closest to holding God's Word in the highest regard, those who were at the forefront of teaching His Word, and those who assumed the greatest responsibility to carry it out by operating the Temple, synagogues and all associated practices according to the Law.

This is particularly noteworthy because those who were the most educated where God's Word was concerned, even to the point of being at the forefront of both teaching it to the people individually and seeing that it was properly carried out on behalf of everyone corporately, recognized "something" unexpected yet spiritually rooted was taking place. We can examine their teachings from what we call "The Second Temple Period" from the time of Ezra until the Temple's destruction in 70 A.D. and read of their expectations for the impending arrival of the Messiah. The manner in which they expected God's prophetic Word to be fulfilled in the course of what we now call His "First Coming" tragically and completely missed the target. But just the way they worded this question reveals much about how their eschatology at the time of Christ's First Coming was already a bit skewed.

According to their interpretation, the options they offered to John the Baptist was that he must either be the Messiah, Elijah, or the Prophet. Old Testament Scripture is prolific in speaking of the Messiah, Malachi as the last Prophet of the Old Testament canon specifically stated Elijah would return "*before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord*" (Mal. 4:5), but this notion of "*the Prophet*", which comes directly from Moses, is a misunderstanding of Scripture on their part, because it referred not to a separate, individual prophet but to the Messiah as well. A popular interpretation of the time was that this referred to Jeremiah for some reason, even though there was no clear scriptural basis for assuming this.

*<sup>15</sup>“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. — Deuteronomy 18:15*

But when John replied that he is the harbinger preparing the way for the Messiah by citing Isaiah, it should have been those inquiring—the ones who were supposedly most devoted to the study and application of God’s Word—who would immediately recognize the fulfillment taking place right in front of them. We would be quite wrong if we had assumed that those most devoted to the care and cause of God’s Word would be the most amenable to adjusting their interpretation of it when it was so obviously and visibly **not** taking shape according to their long-held presuppositions. Instead, quite the opposite occurred.

*<sup>1</sup>On one of the days while He was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders confronted Him, <sup>2</sup>and they spoke, saying to Him, “Tell us by what authority You are doing these things, or who is the one who gave You this authority?”*

*<sup>3</sup>Jesus answered and said to them, “I will also ask you a question, and you tell Me: <sup>4</sup>Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?”*

*<sup>5</sup>They reasoned among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say, ‘Why did you not believe him?’ <sup>6</sup>But if we say, ‘From men,’ all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet.” <sup>7</sup>So they answered that they did not know where it came from.*

*<sup>8</sup>And Jesus said to them, “Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things.” — Luke 20:1–8*

The ultimate spiritual effect of clinging to a wrong eschatology even in the face of all the signs, wonders and teachings they personally heard and witnessed is recorded as having an even far more serious result.

*<sup>28</sup>“I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.” <sup>29</sup>When all the people and the tax collectors heard this, they acknowledged God’s justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John. <sup>30</sup>But the Pharisees and the lawyers **rejected God’s purpose for themselves**, not having been baptized by John. — Luke 7:28–30*

This theme of holding dogmatically to a false eschatology at Christ’s First Coming in spite of witnessing signs, wonders and direct teaching affirming such so as to contradict what

was popularly believed is repeated over and over again in the Gospels. At nearly every level there is a recorded example, but the innermost affected circle begins with those who were closest to Him.

*<sup>3</sup>Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. <sup>4</sup>For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." <sup>5</sup>For not even His brothers were believing in Him. — John 7:3–5*

*<sup>21</sup>When His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, "He has lost His senses." — Mark 3:21*

It is hard to imagine that Jesus' own family was unaware of the events surrounding His birth, of both their parents' individually telling them about their encounters with Gabriel, the shepherds or the Magi, the temporary escape to Egypt and return (both inspired by divine dreams), or the family accounts of the foretold birth and rise to prominence of their cousin John the Baptist. And yet they were the most severest of critics when Christ's First Coming failed to unfold according to their expectations—to their eschatology, if you will. They had a notion of how these things should have played out and at one point tried to coax Him "back" to the right path, but ultimately concluded in spite of everything He was doing and teaching that "*He has lost His senses*".

*<sup>1</sup>Jesus went out from there and came into His hometown; and His disciples followed Him. <sup>2</sup>When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? <sup>3</sup>Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him.*

*<sup>4</sup>Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household." <sup>5</sup>And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. <sup>6</sup>And He wondered at their unbelief. — Mark 6:1–6a*

This isn't the last time Jesus will hear this objection, but it first comes from the friends and neighbors closest to Him and the hometown where He literally grew up and spent most of His first thirty years of life before entering public ministry. They could not see

Jesus as the Messiah the Son of God because they could not extend their sight beyond their notions of where the Messiah would come from and what He would do to prove Himself. They continued to cling to their beliefs in spite of what they heard or saw, in spite of publicly acknowledging “*this wisdom given to Him*” and “*such miracles as these performed by His hands*”. Jesus categorically describes their inability to shed their presuppositions in the face of the fulfillment of God’s prophetic Word as “*unbelief*”.

*<sup>42</sup>They were saying, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, ‘I have come down out of heaven?’” — John 6:42*

*<sup>27</sup>“However, we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from.” — John 7:27*

*<sup>40</sup>Some of the people therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, “This certainly is the Prophet.” <sup>41</sup>Others were saying, “This is the Christ.” Still others were saying, “Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He? <sup>42</sup>Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?” <sup>43</sup>So a division occurred in the crowd because of Him. <sup>44</sup>Some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him. — John 7:40–44*

Notice how there was an inherent conflict in the eschatology taught to the people. When the Magi inquired at Christ’s birth, Scripture was quoted as to the literal place of the Messiah’s birth and His direct lineage to David; but years later their claim becomes, “*no one knows where He is from*”, and yet others are confused as to how an earth-born Messiah is actually heaven-sent from the Father. Their presuppositions have such an iron grip on them that even though they witness signs and miracles which they acknowledge can only come from God, even though they hear for themselves teaching which has an authority unlike any they have ever encountered, they cannot seem to break the bonds of the bad eschatology to which they are enslaved.

*<sup>28</sup>They reviled him and said, “You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. <sup>29</sup>We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He is from.” — John 9:28–29*

*<sup>39</sup>“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; <sup>40</sup>and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. — John 5:39–40*

*<sup>45</sup>“Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. <sup>46</sup>For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. <sup>47</sup>But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” — John 5:45–47*

Where the people and the leaders of the day were concerned, the fundamental reason for a bad eschatology was their bad theology. Then, as now, no one will attain to the deeper things of God if they have not first mastered and put into personal practice the foundational principles and doctrines of His Word. Jesus constantly pointed out their incorrect interpretation of all the basic things such as divorce, the Sabbath, and so many of the commandments for which they had added their own rules and traditions. Throughout His entire ministry, Christ consistently tried to open their eyes to how far afield they had strayed from the original and true purpose and meaning of God’s Word. It should therefore be no surprise that such people, even those purportedly dedicating their lives to teaching and interpreting it, found themselves even further astray when it came to the more advanced understanding necessary for God’s prophetic Word. Someone who hasn’t mastered mathematics makes for a very poor rocket scientist; a believer who does not practice the most fundamental teachings of God’s Word faithfully and correctly makes for a very poor eschatologist.

*<sup>2</sup>Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples <sup>3</sup>and said to Him, “Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?” — Matthew 11:2–3*

I’m not sure why John the Baptist himself had a problem with the eschatology of the Messiah’s coming. Perhaps, like every Jew of the time, he grew up hearing the typical teachings of the Pharisees and scribes to the point that he adopted at least part of it. Nonetheless, someone who was not only family but whom we might expect to be closest to Jesus spiritually “*heard of the works*”, and instead of being a confirmation for him, seemed to furrow his brow questioningly and asked, “*Shall we look for someone else?*” It is interesting that Jesus provided no more proof in His reply than He gave to everyone else; there was no special treatment for John as what He provided to all is exactly the same as provided to him.

*<sup>4</sup>Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup>the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.*

“How Stubborn Can We Be?”, Page 6 of 11

*‘And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me.’ —  
Matthew 11:4–6*

There is, however, a very revealing caveat provided by Christ which might be explaining all the responses we’ve explored which came from family, friends, the people in general and the religious leadership: *“And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me”*. Have you noticed that in most of our examples that there was much more than just puzzlement or questioning, but outright hostility? Sometimes the response was so emotional that they actually made an attempt to kill Jesus or escorted Him from their midst! Their attachment to their eschatology became extremely **personal**.

This is a phenomenon we see over and over and over again today on websites, online discussion forums, Facebook, in sermons and articles both written and video recorded, as well as at prophecy conferences. I suppose it has always been around to one degree or another, but in the past twenty or so years it has become absolutely acute. Nowhere can you find more “Christian on Christian hate crime” than the aforementioned online venues where mere disagreement on something which is not actually germane to the determination of someone’s salvation is declared to be coming from a “heretic”, “apostate”, or “liar from hell”. Almost everything relating to eschatology has turned personal.

I can understand breaking fellowship over an issue of outright sin; I can understand breaking fellowship over a fundamental doctrine such as something pertaining to salvation or the triune Godhead; I **cannot** understand breaking fellowship over an issue of eschatology. And yet I have seen this happen first and foremost, of course, when it comes to the timing of the Rapture, but just as frequently over many minor issues relating to the Last Days.

You don’t believe the Two Witnesses are Moses and Elijah? You’re outta here! You say the Two Witnesses will come in the first half of the Tribulation instead of the second half? You’re outta here! You say *“the day of the Lord”* begins somewhere differently than I do? You’re outta here! You don’t believe the Antichrist is Barak Obama? You’re outta here! The politeness and etiquette of “scholarly debate” is a rare commodity in the field of eschatology. In the shadow of His Second Coming it has increasingly become **exactly** as it was at His First Coming—intractable, uncompromising, and intensely personal. Something which we have no scriptural license to leverage as a doctrinal test of orthodoxy is being used to decide another’s spiritual state.

*“How Stubborn Can We Be?”, Page 7 of 11*

However, the problem of a wrong eschatology did not end with John the Baptist, but extended even into Christ's innermost circle.

*<sup>30</sup>From there they went out and began to go through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know about it. <sup>31</sup>For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, "The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later." <sup>32</sup>But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him. — Mark 9:30–32*

*<sup>31</sup>Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. <sup>32</sup>For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, <sup>33</sup>and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again." <sup>34</sup>But the disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said. — Luke 18:31–34*

For all students of Bible prophecy I would invite you to note that there are things which the Gospel writers point out that not even the disciples understood at the time. While more than 325 Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in the course of His First Coming, not every single one of them was understood in advance. In fact, it was not until **after** Christ's Resurrection, when He imparted to each of them the Holy Spirit and followed this up with opening their minds to the whole of Scripture, that they finally put it all together. Granted, we are starting out our Christian lives with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and have even more of God's Word than they started out with (that being not just the whole of the New Testament, but no one but John would live long enough to know anything about the book of Revelation), but there is still a valid lesson to be learned here. Some percentage of God's prophetic Word is only going to be revealed as it takes place, and some of it may only be understood in hindsight. Beware of the person who claims they captured the whole enchilada on their handy-dandy chart; beware the person who claims they've put the complete picture together.

But something significant takes place immediately after Peter is the first to acknowledge Jesus' Messiahship—he actually **rebukes** Jesus because His eschatology is not Peter's eschatology. And look who is really behind it all.

*<sup>21</sup>From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders*

*"How Stubborn Can We Be?", Page 8 of 11*

*and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. <sup>22</sup>Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." <sup>23</sup>But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's." — Matthew 16:21–23*

This is not describing Peter as being possessed by Satan but influenced by him. You see, Satan does not want us in the Word to begin with, but if he can't keep us away from it through bad and heretical Bible translations or substituting it for something else like a book or DVD, he will make every effort to distort God's Word in order to render it ineffective. Notice when Satan thrice attacked Jesus in the wilderness that each time he attempted to misquote Scripture.

Yes, there are outright false teachers. We are told some of them operate directly at Satan's behest and others out of their own vain imaginations. And yes, there are shepherds—that is, pastors—who are described in Scripture as merely being "hirelings", someone just in it for the job rather than as a result of an authentic burden and calling. But for those with pure motives and who are authentically saved, Satan is still in operation trying to influence them. As we know, he got to Peter more than once. But it is absolutely true that a doctrine or teaching, particularly where it concerns Christ's First or Second Coming, can be something in and of itself originating in hell, and yet coming from someone under the obviously wrong influence, without their being an outright false teacher or false shepherd. Peter was not *Satanically* possessed, but his eschatology certainly was Satanically influenced.

These things which took place in the course of Christ's First Coming are already coming into play with even greater frequency and strength the closer we approach His Second Coming. But it is not a complete "gloom and doom" scenario. There is a stellar biblical example of what can be done to not just mitigate this behavior, but to completely turn the tables on it.

*<sup>1</sup>In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans— <sup>2</sup>in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. <sup>3</sup>So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. <sup>4</sup>I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said, "Alas,*

*"How Stubborn Can We Be?", Page 9 of 11*

*O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, <sup>5</sup>we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances. <sup>6</sup>Moreover, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers and all the people of the land. — Daniel 9:1-6*

Daniel was praying and fasting in the Word and recognized not only the signs of his times and their relationship to the fulfillment of prophetic events, but even more so addressed the greater spiritual issues serving as roadblocks to that understanding. He was first and foremost immersed in God's Word, but his reaction to it was first and foremost **spiritual**, to pray and mourn and seek forgiveness not just for God's people's sin for rejecting His Word—"turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances", but for also specifically rejecting His **prophetic** Word—"we have not listened to Your servants the prophets".

What would happen if we so likewise immersed ourselves in His Word in prayer and fasting, seeking genuine repentance? Just as mastery of the fundamental doctrines of the faith are required before engaging the more advanced doctrines related to eschatology, so God does not grant insight and understanding for the deeper things if we have not first and foremost committed to the most basic personal application of His Word. Christ will fully apply this to explain the problem experienced at His first coming:

*<sup>17</sup> "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself. — John 7:17*

Those who did His will, such as John the Baptist and the disciples, were ultimately able to accept corrections to their eschatology. Because they habitually put God's Word into practice, their obedience to the fundamental things provided the means to change even their most sacred, long-held presuppositions, which the disobedient could not.

The same kind of test is going to take place in the Last Days as many things do not transpire precisely according to our notions. Those who will remain entrenched in their views regardless of what they see or hear are actually those possessing a hardened, unrepentant heart that is unwilling to fully put into practice the basic tenets of a biblical faith; those who will recognize the errors of their presuppositions will have been accustomed to practicing God's Word in every area of their life all along. Those with Christian "super powers" will be the ones who, like Daniel, begin to proactively return to

["How Stubborn Can We Be?", Page 10 of 11](#)

the Word and absorb the burden of repentance and spiritual restoration on behalf of the Body of Christ at large.

“Lord, that I would fully and genuinely submit to Your Word and ways in every seemingly small thing that I might correctly understand and obtain the big things.”  
Amen.

In Him,

[Servant@WalkWithTheWord.org](mailto:Servant@WalkWithTheWord.org)