

YESTERDAY'S TOMORROW  
Session Seven  
Class Leadership Instructions

Introduction Notes

A. Shortly before the turn of the century, concern about the return of Christ became part of the heart and soul of our denomination. (Verhandlungen, p. 231, 1894)

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Because Jesus will return to earth, our lives ought to be lived in readiness for the moment when He appears.

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1. Eschatology (study of the end times) was not a big concern to Mennonites.
2. Two sources may have been instrumental to leading to a concern for the return of Christ.
  - a. C. I. Scofield published notes for the Bible.
  - b. William E. Blackstone published a book entitled, Jesus Is Coming.
3. The Rose of Sharon, hymnbook of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church, included songs like "What if It Were Today" (588), "Jesus Is Coming Again" (81), and "Jesus Is Coming Hallelujah" (371).

B. As the concern for Christ's return took root, the doctrinal statements began to express more specific points of view.

1. The teaching of the church reflected dispensationalism as a point of view. (See Shelly's book, pages 260ff.)
2. Later, historic premillennialism became the point of view.

Question Notes

1. You will notice that the doctrines become progressively detailed and precise. The Evangelical Mennonites had 1 statement on eschatology, the Mennonite Brethren had 3, and the Bible Fellowship Church has 4.
3. Some Christians believe it is important to work out the details about Christ's return while some believe it is not important. The question might be rephrased, "Is the return of Christ something worth an 'argument' or not?"
4. This extended discussion is intended to get at the problem of "date setting" which happens periodically. On occasion, some Bible teacher proclaims a date for the return of Christ. (At the time of this preparation, Harold Camping of Family Radio has predicted a 1994 return of Christ.) The two parables tell us that we must be ready now

for the return of Jesus but prepared to wait.

5. Several of the biblical references cited in question 2 make a clear connection between a person's anticipation for the return of the Savior and concern for holiness.

6. Allow individuals to share their convictions about aspects of Christ's return. The idea here is to allow people to express what is significant to them.

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**THE RETURN OF CHRIST**

Whereas, we as a Conference believe that the coming of the Lord is rapidly approaching, therefore,  
Resolved: That we advise our preachers to make mention of this more often (1894, Verhandlungen, p. 231).

**19. Resurrection of the Dead, and the Final Judgment**

We believe, according to the Scriptures, that through the incomprehensible power of God, on the last day all persons who have fallen asleep will be again awakened, made alive, and capable of arising, and that these, together with those that then will remain in life, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, will be changed, and placed before the judgment seat of Christ; and that the good and evil will be separated from one another, and that the good or pious, as blessed, will be accepted by Christ, that they will enter upon eternal life and receive joy such as neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard not yet entered into the heart of man;

**Article 27. The Coming of Christ.**

We believe that the hope of the Church is centered in the personal return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who will Himself return in like manner as He ascended. We are exhorted to comfort one another with these words.

**Article 25. The Second Coming of Christ**

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is the personal visible, bodily return of our Lord to this earth to conform believers to His image and to establish the millennial kingdom. In connection with Christ's return there will be the resurrection of the righteous dead, the rapture of the saints, the salvation of Israel, the great tribulation and the inauguration of the millennial reign. Following the millennium there will be the resurrection and judgment of the unrighteous. The righteous will be eternally glorified with Him, the unrighteous will be eternally punished.

It is the believer's source of encouragement and comfort, inspiring him to

that on the contrary, the wicked or evil, as accursed, will be cast out and banished into outer darkness, yea, into eternal torment of hell, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched (Doctrine of Faith, Evangelical Mennonites, 1866, from What Mean These Stones?, p. 31).

active service for Christ, and is a motive for purification and holy living.

**Article 28. Millennium**

The Millennium, or day of the Lord, will be ushered in by the appearance of Christ in His glory with His Church, or ten thousand saints, to reign on earth one thousand years, during which time the devil will be bound and Christ will reign in righteousness until His enemies become His footstool (Doctrines and Discipline, Mennonite Brethren in Christ, 1936)

**Article 27. Millennium**

The Millennium is that aspect of the Kingdom of God that will be ushered in when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to the earth to rule in righteousness. The unfulfilled Messianic prophecies will then be completed. During this period Satan will be bound restricting his deceitful activities. The created universe will undergo a transformation with universal prosperity and peace prevailing on earth. The saints will reign with Christ and the earth will be full of the knowledge and glory of the Lord (Articles of Faith, Bible Fellowship Church).

## Questions

1. How are the statements of the Bible Fellowship Church today like or unlike the earlier statements? How have they changed? How have they remained the same?

2. What do the following passages of Scripture teach about the return of Christ?

-Matthew 24:27-31

-John 14:2-3

-Acts 1:9-11

-1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:3

-1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

-1 John 3:2-3

-Revelation 1:7

3. Do you consider the return of Christ to be a major or minor doctrine? Explain your answer.

4. Compare the following parables: Matthew 24:45-51 and Matthew 25:1-11. The mistake of the servants in the first parable was to assume that the master would delay his return. In the second, the foolish virgins were unprepared to wait when the bridegroom delayed. What do you make of the fact that these stories are told back to back with seemingly different messages? How did Jesus summarize these stories (Matthew 25:12-13)? Can anyone know the time when Jesus will return? (See Matthew 24:36)

5. How should belief in the personal and visible return of Jesus effect a believer's life?

6. What do you believe about the return of Christ?