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THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST

Over 50 years ago I started listening to Mr. Armstrong on the radio. And throughout the past half century I have looked forward to the second coming of Jesus Christ, to establish the Kingdom of God, and to rule over this whole planet Earth. The question "**when** will Jesus Christ return?" has been uppermost in the minds of very many members of God's Church, not only over the past half century, but in fact since the days of the original apostles.

The Feast of Tabernacles represents the still future time when Jesus Christ will rule this Earth for 1000 years, the time when those in the first resurrection will rule with Jesus Christ. The key to the period we call "the World Tomorrow" is the actual return of Jesus Christ. It is His return that will usher in the World Tomorrow.

Many people in the past have set dates for when the second coming was supposed to take place. And in this regard people in the world's churches started setting dates long before any of us in God's Church in the present era got involved in trying to figure out the timing for Christ's second coming.

For example: the three ancient Catholic theologians Hippolytus of Rome, Sextus Julius Africanus and Irenaeus all predicted that Jesus Christ would return in the year 500 A.D. Later, in September of 1822 William Miller, originally a Baptist, stated in print the following: "**I believe that the second coming of Jesus Christ is near, even at the door, even within twenty-one years, on or before 1843**." Obviously that did not happen.

The Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Christ returned in an "invisible presence" in 1914, since Christ has very obviously not returned in a visible presence. Over fifty years ago Mr. Armstrong wrote a booklet "**1975 in Prophecy**", which, while not dogmatic, suggested a time frame for Christ's return. In 1999 Jerry Falwell stated that Jesus Christ would return "**probably within 10 years**". Dozens of other people have also predicted specific dates for when Jesus Christ was, according to them, supposed to return. Others have predicted yet future dates for when they claim Jesus Christ will return.

And while we ourselves haven't stated it explicitly, over the past 50 years many of us, including me, have in fact felt quite strongly that Jesus Christ will return "**probably** within 10 or 20 or 30 years", or whatever number of years we may have had in mind. But **none of those expectations have come to pass**, have they? And now the year 2016 is drawing to a close, and Jesus Christ has not yet returned. And each year, be it at the Passover or be it at the Feast of Tabernacles, many of us have said, or at least we have wished, "next year Jerusalem", right?

So what about it: when will Jesus Christ return?

There are some things we know, and there are some things we don't know. Let's start by looking at some of the things we don't know.

THINGS WE DON'T KNOW

We don’t know when Jesus Christ will return. We know neither the day nor the month nor the year in which Christ will return. Nobody on Earth knows those things. And people who think they know either the day or the month or the year for Christ’s return are deceived, or they are deceiving themselves.

Here is the most basic thing we need to understand regarding the timing for Christ’s second coming:

God has not established the date for Christ’s second coming based on some formula that can be calculated in advance!

[Yes, there is actually a correct "formula" that we can set up for setting out when Jesus Christ really will return, and I will explain that "formula" later in this article. But that formula does **not** establish any date at all for Christ’s second coming, even though that formula contains specific time periods that are recorded in the Bible. I suspect that this formula will surprise you.

I will also attach that formula in the form of a 1-page chart to the end of this article. While this article is presented in the normal "portrait" layout, for that chart I have switched to "landscape" layout, in order to accommodate the length of that formula. You may perhaps have to print that last page separately and select "landscape" layout for that printout? I don’t know what will work best for your printer.]

God has not established the date for Christ’s return based on adding certain numbers together. There are no two numbers that can be added to arrive at the date for Christ’s return. The timing for Christ’s second coming is simply not something that can be calculated from any key information that is already known. In plain terms:

- We can’t calculate the timing for the second coming from the "**70-weeks** prophecy" in the Book of Daniel, as I have shown in my article about that prophecy.

- We can’t calculate the timing for the second coming from the "**2300 Days** prophecy" of Daniel 8:14, as William Miller had tried to do back in the 1820's.

- We can’t calculate the timing for the second coming from any "**70-years** prophecy" in the Old Testament.

- We can’t calculate the timing for the second coming from any information in **Matthew chapter 24**.

- We can’t calculate the timing for the second coming from any information in the **Book of Revelation**.

- We can’t calculate the timing for the second coming **from any statement anywhere in the Bible**.

- We can’t calculate the timing for the second coming even if we were 100% correct (which we very likely are not!) with all the past dates, such as the exact starting and ending dates for Jesus Christ’s ministry, etc. **The dating of Christ’s ministry does not provide any clues for the timing for the second coming**, any more than that dating provides any clues for the correct calendar for us to use. The correct dating of Christ’s ministry has no significance and no impact of any kind on the date for Christ’s second coming. **The dating of Christ’s ministry is in fact unimportant**, as far as establishing a date for Christ’s return is concerned.

- We can’t calculate the timing for the second coming from anything that happened during Mr. Armstrong’s life. None of the dates that apply to Mr. Armstrong (when he was called, when he started preaching, when he died, etc.) have anything at all to do with the date when Jesus Christ will return.

What we need to get into our heads is this:

God the Father did not intend any kind of information, neither prophetic information nor historical information, nor symbolical information to provide any clues whatsoever regarding the timing for the second coming of Jesus Christ. The timing for Christ's return is something that God the Father does not want anyone to know, and **therefore there are no clues in prophecy or in history or in symbolism that will allow us to deduce when Jesus Christ will return**.

It will only be very shortly before the second coming that God will reveal "His secret unto His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). And that hasn't happened yet.

All our speculations about when Jesus Christ will return are based on assuming that **in God's mind** there must be **a strict timetable** for Christ's return, and that everything is moving along according to that precise timetable. And therefore we feel that if we can only discover the elements that influence that timetable (meaning that we know the dates for certain significant events), that then we can also at least approximate the timing for Christ's return.

But that line of reasoning is totally wrong! It has always been wrong! And it is still wrong right now!

To state this in the plainest possible terms:

In the mind of God the Father there is not a strict timetable with some predetermined date for when Jesus Christ must return!

As far as the date for the second coming of Jesus Christ is concerned, we need to recognize that God's thoughts are not our thoughts (see Isaiah 55:8-9).

The truth is that it doesn't make a difference whether Jesus Christ started His ministry in 26 A.D. or whether His ministry only started in 27 A.D. or in any other year. It doesn't matter whether Jesus Christ was crucified in 30 A.D. or in 31 A.D. or in any other year. It doesn't matter whether the decree of King Artaxerxes, which decree marks the starting point for the 70-weeks prophecy, was made in 450 B.C. or in 457 B.C. or in 458 B.C. or in 460 B.C. or in any other year.

The date of that decree is highly significant in dating the first coming of Jesus Christ; but that date has no effect whatsoever on the date for Christ's second coming.

There is no formula and **there is no timetable that can predict when Jesus Christ will return**. That is because God the Father has **never at any time** in the past committed Himself to sending Jesus Christ back to this Earth in compliance with **some predetermined formula**!

That is simply not how it works!

There are no prophecies anywhere in the Bible that predict the year when Jesus Christ is supposed to return! There is nothing anywhere in the Bible that reveals, or even hints at the "theoretical date" for Christ's second coming, the one from which an unspecified period of time could still (theoretically) be deducted; i.e. that period could (theoretically) still be "shortened" (in reference to Matthew 24:22).

I do believe that in broad general terms God **originally** had a 7000-year plan. But that does not mean that such a very general 7000-year plan can somehow indicate the year for Christ's second coming. Nor does it mean that any specific event in the past can help establish the date for Jesus Christ's yet future coming. Shortly I will explain these statements.

And to be clear:

Not even the dating of the annual Feasts and Holy Days can help us establish a day in the year when Jesus Christ will return. So while the Holy Day of Trumpets **represents** the day when Jesus Christ will return, that does not mean that Jesus Christ's second coming will therefore be on one particular literal Day of Trumpets. While it is certainly possible that Jesus Christ could indeed return on a Day of Trumpets, **His return could just as easily occur on any other day of the year**. There is no commitment anywhere in the Bible that Jesus Christ simply must return on a Day of Trumpets.

SOME CLEAR STATEMENTS BY JESUS CHRIST

Consider these two statements by Jesus Christ, made within the same general context (i.e. Chapters 24 and 25 record different things Jesus Christ said at one particular occasion).

But of that day and hour knows no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. (Matthew 24:36)

Watch therefore, for **you know neither the day nor the hour** wherein the Son of man comes. (Matthew 25:13)

Matthew 25:13, less than 30 verses after the previous statement, is a restatement of the point made in Matthew 24:36. Twice in this short context Jesus Christ emphasized that nobody can know the timing for the second coming. Only God the Father knows that information.

Do you understand what the expression "of that day and hour knows no man" actually means? For a start, it means that God the Father **does not want** any human being to know when Christ will return. If we had only correctly understood this statement in the past, then it should have been clear to us that there is simply no way that the time of Christ's second coming can somehow be calculated in advance. There is no way to get around **God's clear intentions** to keep the date for the second coming completely hidden until very shortly before the second coming.

Next, Jesus Christ specifically said "you don't know the day". Yet all the people who expect Jesus Christ to return on a Holy Day of Trumpets actually believe that they **do** know the day. So who is right: these people or Jesus Christ? To me this statement "you don't know the day" is a strong hint that Christ's return will quite likely be on a day other than Trumpets, even though the Day of Trumpets seems so obvious and so appropriate to us in our biased thinking. It surely would not come as a surprise to us if Jesus Christ did return on a Day of Trumpets. Yet the Scriptures imply an unexpected date for both the wise and the foolish virgins, since they all "slumbered and slept" (Matthew 25:5). That's hardly likely to be a Holy Day of Trumpets.

Next, why did Jesus Christ choose to bring the angels into this matter? What difference does it make if the angels do know or don't know when the second coming will take place? **Why even mention the angels?** Christ's statement is supposed to make us think.

Let's face it:

If there was some way that we could put all the facts together (e.g. exact dates for the decree of Artaxerxes and for Christ's birth and for the starting day and for the ending day of His ministry, the significance of all of the annual Feasts and Holy Days, the exact date for Adam's creation, the significance and the application of God's "7000-year plan", how God has worked in the past,

how many of the 144000 crowns have already, at this precise point in time, been assigned to people who truly repented and then died in the faith, a good understanding of all the prophecies in the Bible, etc.) to then determine the time for Christ's second coming, then God's holy angels in heaven would surely know that!

The holy angels know all the things I have mentioned above. They were there (i.e. in heaven) when God created Adam and Eve. They were there when Artaxerxes made his decree. They were there when Jesus Christ was born as a human child, when He started His ministry, and the day on which He was crucified. The angels know the symbolism for all of the annual days far better than we do. The angels have seen God in action since the day they were created. They are fully aware of God's plan.

And the angels also know exactly how many people (of those who are now dead) have thus far been selected to be in the first resurrection. They know how many more people are needed to bring the number up to exactly 144000. Consider what Jesus Christ said in Luke 15:7.

I say unto you, that likewise **joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repents**, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. (Luke 15:7)

The expression "joy in heaven" infers that the angels of God can correctly discern real repentance. And there has been "joy in heaven" over every single individual who at the time of death had God's spirit, and who will be in the first resurrection. **The holy angels in heaven are keeping score!** They know right now, at this precise point in time, the exact number of people who have thus far been identified by God for having a part in the first resurrection. The angels know whether that number right now stands at 143278 or at 91884 or at any other number.

But the angels also know one other important piece of information. They know exactly how many people alive today have God's spirit dwelling within them right now. So **the angels can add those two numbers together**: the number of those who have died and who will be in the first resurrection, and the number of people who have God's spirit right now. So the angels have a correct and totally accurate knowledge of what is the present situation.

But in spite of all that knowledge **the angels still do not know when Jesus Christ will return**.

Now over the years we have had many people in the Church of God who thought they knew when the second coming will take place. They seem to think that they know better than the angels, even though the angels have far more highly accurate information available to their minds. It seems somewhat ludicrous to think that we human beings somehow know something which even the angels don't know.

Next, when Jesus Christ said "**but My Father only**", Christ was acknowledging that even He Himself did not yet know when He would return to this Earth. Those four words "but My Father only" prove that the date for the second coming cannot possibly be calculated from any past data. The ability to somehow calculate the date in advance is contrary to the statement "but My Father only".

There is one reason, and one reason only, why even Jesus Christ Himself did not yet know when He would return. And I would speculate that even right now, in the year 2016, Jesus Christ still does not know when God the Father will send Him back to this Earth to establish the Kingdom of God. Christ doesn't know that yet because the final 3.5 years before His return have not yet started.

Think about the following point.

THERE ARE NO SECRETS BETWEEN GOD THE FATHER AND JESUS CHRIST

God the Father and Jesus Christ have always existed. Jesus Christ said "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30). Amongst other things, this means that there are no secrets of any kind between God the Father and Jesus Christ. They absolutely trust one another, and they freely express all their thoughts to one another. There is absolutely nothing that one of them is holding back from the other.

So when only God the Father knows something, that is not because God the Father is hiding some knowledge or information from Jesus Christ. God the Father never has and never will hide any information from Jesus Christ, who now has the status of sitting with God the Father on the Father's throne (see Revelation 3:21).

So here is the answer:

The reason why only God the Father knows the exact time for Jesus Christ's second coming is because **that is a decision that God the Father Himself has not yet made**!

In the relationship between God the Father and Jesus Christ it is God the Father who is in charge, and who makes the decisions, or who delegates certain decision-making to other individuals.

When Jesus Christ said that only God the Father knows when He, Jesus Christ, will return, Christ was saying that God the Father had not yet made that decision. But because it is in His power to make that decision, therefore only God the Father knows. Jesus Christ's statement that only the Father knows is an expression of **the latitude for the decision-making process that is available to God the Father**, a latitude that is very difficult to fit into any prophetic chart, except for the chart that I will attach to the end of this article.

There is only one thing that constrains the Father's freedom to choose the date for Christ's second coming. No historical facts, no past events and no prophecies can restrict the freedom God the Father has in making the decision for a date for the second coming. **The only thing that can restrict God the Father's freedom** to choose a date for Christ's second coming is if the number of individuals, which number God has committed Himself to have in the first resurrection, has not yet been achieved.

Once that number of individuals for the first resurrection (i.e. 144000) is assured, then God the Father can set the date. And then **God the Father can pick any day, any month and any year for when to send Jesus Christ back to this Earth**, without being constrained by any prophetic requirements. More on this later.

That date is the Father's decision, and not Jesus Christ's. However ...

Once God the Father has actually decided on a specific date for Jesus Christ's return, **then** God the Father will also immediately reveal that decision to Jesus Christ. This is not to say that God the Father doesn't accept input and advice and recommendations from Jesus Christ. But nothing is final until the Father Himself makes a decision. And with His statements in Matthew 24 and 25 Jesus Christ was acknowledging this fact.

And likewise, all the holy angels will be informed pretty quickly of the decision God the Father has made. But neither Jesus Christ nor the holy angels will try to preempt the Father's decision in any way, by assuming that the Father must select a certain day, month or year for Christ's second coming, simply because the angels can see that God has started working with the last fifty individuals needed to fill those 144000 crowns for the first resurrection (see Revelation 3:11). For thousands of years the angels have already known that **this** (the date for Christ's second coming) **is a decision that God the Father**

Himself will make. And it will not be based on any formula that can be calculated in advance, other than the formula that I will provide shortly.

However, God the Father will make that decision **at least close to four years before the date of Christ's return**. And the Father will at that time also make that decision known to Jesus Christ and to all the holy angels. And all **the angels are fully prepared** to carry out their parts in those end-time events in the last somewhat less than four years before Christ's return.

Now can you understand why it is utterly absurd for any human being to claim or to think that he or she knows the date for Christ's second coming more than four years in advance of the second coming?

It is absurd because such people will claim to know the date even before God the Father has decided on the actual date for Christ's return. It is presumptuous for us to think that we somehow already know when Jesus Christ is supposed to return.

UNDERSTAND THE TIME-FRAME FOR GOD'S PLAN

I suspect that **originally** God the Father and Jesus Christ intended to bring human beings to the point of salvation through a plan that would take 7000 years. It was with that plan in mind that God then brought into existence the 7-day weekly cycle.

However, here is the point we need to understand:

God the Father and Jesus Christ had committed themselves to do something They had never done before. They set in motion **a staggeringly ambitious plan**, to create other living beings like Themselves. As They set this plan in motion, They had certain expectations, but **They did not really know precisely how everything would work out.** And when you do not accurately know how things will work out, then you also cannot possibly set a date for achieving what you are hoping to achieve. In this type of situation you simply have to have some flexibility.

When you want to do something you have never done before, or you want to produce something that nobody else has ever before produced, then there are two major factors that influence the outcome.

First of all, you must decide what you actually want to achieve.

Second, you must know how much time you have available to achieve this goal. The longest possible time to achieve an ambitious goal is the remainder of your own lifetime. And for us some goals may indeed require a lifelong commitment, like for example striving for having God grant us salvation, and also when we get married we make a commitment for the rest of our lives. Most other commitments are more short-term than the rest of our lives.

Now when we try to achieve something we ourselves have never done before, let alone no other human being has ever done before, then **it almost always takes longer** than we originally expected it to take. How often do we hear of new projects going over budget and past the predicted completion date?

You know that from your own personal experiences. You've bought an item that required a complicated sequence to assemble. They tell you that assembly should take about 60 minutes, because that's how long it takes the workers in their factory to assemble that item. However, even with detailed instructions, you end up spending two hours or more assembling the item, because you forgot something and you then had to take it apart again, etc., etc. You know this from experience, right?

So the point is this:

In order to assemble something involved and intricate which you have never assembled before, and which assembly should take about 60 minutes, you know that you had better set aside two to three hours for that project, just in case it doesn't go as smoothly as it is supposed to go. (Technically, that's because your brain has not yet established certain neurological pathways and connections that have already been established in the brains of seasoned assemblers of that particular item. So seasoned assemblers can work faster than you or I.)

So note!

Whenever we want to do something that is completely new to us, then we must choose **one of two options**. Let's take the example of trying to learn a language that is totally foreign to us. Let's take the example of learning to speak and to understand Spanish.

Option #1:

We have exactly **two months** available, and we want to learn to speak Spanish. In this situation we cannot guarantee that we will definitely learn to speak Spanish fluently within two months. The only goal we can realistically set is to say: we will immerse ourselves 100% in trying to learn as much Spanish as we possibly can learn in two months. At the end of the two months **we will accept whatever level of proficiency we have achieved**, even if it is less than we had hoped to achieve. The time-constraint of two months is an obvious limitation. But we can still learn a lot in that limited time-frame.

Option #2:

We want to learn to speak Spanish **as fluently** as we can speak English. We want to achieve a very high degree of understanding and a very large fluent vocabulary of Spanish words. And we are prepared to devote **as much time** to this project **as it may take** to develop the level of fluency we want to achieve, be it one year, or be it five years. We don't care how long it takes, but we do want to achieve our goal. And we are prepared to work intensely at this project without setting a time limit.

Do you see the differences in these two options? Yes, many people could actually acquire a considerable level of speaking and understanding Spanish in a period of two months, if they lived in a Spanish-speaking environment and were fully immersed in that environment for the whole two months. But if they have set themselves a very high goal, then there is no guarantee that they will actually achieve that goal within two months.

So for most of us we would have to make a choice:

EITHER we set ourselves the goal to learn Spanish to the high level of a native speaker, and we are prepared to devote however much time it will take to achieve that goal, even if it takes several years.

OR we set ourselves the goal to learn as much Spanish as we possibly can in the two months that are available to us. We are then prepared to be satisfied with whatever level of proficiency we were able to attain in those two months.

But we can't have it both ways!

Consider the inventor Thomas Edison.

At the time of his death he had 1,093 patents registered in the USA, and another 2,332 patents registered in other countries around the world. He set himself goals to invent certain things. Once he set himself a goal to invent something, he had to be prepared to spend as much time as it would take to achieve his goal. For example:

While other men before Edison were involved in the development of light bulbs, it is Edison who is generally credited with the invention of the light bulb, since in November 1879 he filed a patent for an electric lamp with a carbon filament. What many people don't know is that, before developing the light bulb that worked as desired, Edison and his employees actually tested **more than 3,000 different designs** for light bulbs.

In later life Edison would say regarding all of his inventions: "**I have not failed; I have just found 10,000 ways that won't work**".

That was a very good focus for Edison to have. It was because of this particular focus that Edison was able to achieve so much. Edison usually decided on **what** he wanted to achieve, without setting any time limits for achieving success. Edison's focus was on "what" and not on "when" or on "how long".

Believe it or not, but **the same principle also applies to God**, when God focuses on achieving a monumentally ambitious totally new project. Creating the spirit-born Family of God will be the supreme pinnacle of God's achievements throughout all of past eternity. Anything that God has achieved at any time in the past will be dwarfed in significance by the creation of the spirit-born Family of God.

And when God the Father and Jesus Christ initiated this project, then They set **a very general but flexible time-frame** for this project, the general time-frame being indicated by the creation of the seven-day weekly cycle. But Their plans did not start out with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in mind! We should understand that **a sacrifice is always a response to unanticipated developments**. Nobody, including God, ever starts out with planning a significant sacrifice up front for achieving certain plans that are then developed. A sacrifice is always a response to an emergency.

God's clear and unquestionable focus was on **what** They wanted to achieve, with **the when** They would achieve this goal taking a backseat. From the very start God was willing to modify the time-frame if that was needed to achieve success. Time-frames are very important to prophecy-devotees. But for God time-frames are in actual fact not that important at all, when it comes to achieving meaningful success.

The proof that this is indeed true is found in the period from the creation of Adam up to the flood.

On the day that Jesus Christ created Adam and Eve, God the Father and Jesus Christ had no idea how things would turn out, as far as the finer details were concerned. They had created two human beings with **independent minds** and with **a totally free will** to either accept God's way of life or to reject it. While we can debate whether or not God anticipated that Adam and Eve would at some point surely eat the forbidden fruit, what is clear beyond any doubts is that **the way humanity developed over the next 1500+ years was a total shock for God**! God had not really been prepared for this result.

When it tells us in Genesis 6:6 that "**it repented the Eternal that He had made man on the Earth, and it grieved Him at His heart**", it is telling us that this outcome was totally unexpected for God. Now let me tell you something that some people may not have understood before:

"It repented the Eternal" means that **God actually regretted that He had created human beings**. God had a change of mind. And God the Father and Jesus Christ very likely discussed **the option of scrapping the whole project**! That is how discouraging that result for the first 1500+ years was for the Father and for Jesus Christ. I believe that that was an option which They very seriously evaluated ... and

thankfully rejected. The choice was: do We scrap the whole project, or are You, Jesus Christ, willing to sacrifice Your life for these human beings? Thankfully the conclusion They reached was to add the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to Their plan.

Had They not rejected that option, then there never would have been any "humanity project" after the flood. You and I would never have come into existence.

I further believe that the factor that swayed God the Father and Jesus Christ to reject scrapping the "humanity project" was the three positive results which that approximately 1500-year period had produced. **They didn't scrap the whole plan because of Abel and Enoch and Noah.** I believe that if it was not for those three individuals submitting their lives to God and walking with God, God would have scrapped the plan and humanity would have ceased to exist. **If it was not for those three individuals before the flood, I don't think that Jesus Christ would have put His own very existence on the line with the plan that was implemented after the flood.** There had to be some indication that success was possible, for Jesus Christ to be willing to make that enormous kind of commitment.

I believe that it was those three individuals who gave God the hope that if the plan was modified in some ways (i.e. adding the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on behalf of all mankind after the flood to the plan, and also adding the second resurrection to the end of the millennium, etc.), that then Their ambitious goal could still be achieved.

What had happened to the plan God had originally, before the flood, set in motion is somewhat like Edison's team designing more than 3000 different light bulbs before finally finding one design that worked. Of all the multiple millions or even billions of people that lived during those approx. 1500 years before the flood only three "worked". But those three swayed God's mind to carry on with the plan, albeit in a modified way. Those three held out to God the hope of success.

Consider a principle:

Regarding Sodom, God stated: "I will not destroy it for ten's sake" (Genesis 18:32). And likewise, God made the decision that for the sake of three (Abel, Enoch, Noah) the two of Them (God the Father and Jesus Christ) would not blot out all of humanity. We have been given the opportunity of life because there were three individuals before the flood who were committed in totally submitting their lives to God. In one sense we owe our existence to those three men. Have you ever considered that before?

Now consider God's flexibility regarding the amount of time God was willing to devote to achieve this goal of creating the Family of God.

GOD'S TIME FLEXIBILITY

You are very likely aware of the fact that there were exactly **1656 years** from the time God created Adam up to the time when the flood started, a number I have presented repeatedly in some of my other articles.

Now Genesis 6:3 tells us:

And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also *is* flesh: **yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years**. (Genesis 6:3)

This verse tells us that it was exactly 120 years before the flood that God made the decision to destroy

the Earth with a worldwide flood. 120 years before the flood take us back to **the year 1536** after the creation of Adam.

Do you realize what this means?

It means that even 1500 years after Adam's creation God had **not yet** decided to bring on a worldwide flood. No, God waited another 36 years before reaching that decision. God put up with wicked conduct for a long, long time.

Now of interest is **the year when God made the decision** to destroy all life except for those in the ark. That year may seem to have some significance, since the number 1536 is equal to $\mathbf{1.5 * 2^{10}}$. So perhaps there was some significance in the date when God made the decision to bring on the flood? We might perhaps reason that God decided to give man exactly **50% more time than 2^{10} years** before reaching a decision?

However, since there was no precedent for this type of formula for selecting a time period for testing humanity, therefore selecting this period of time would have been **a totally discretionary decision** on God's part. God was not bound by precedent or by prophecies to apply a $1.5 * 2^{10}$ formula for how long to put up with bad and totally unacceptable results. God could have chosen any other year to start the countdown to the flood without violating any rule or any expectation. There was no prior commitment that somehow pressured God to select that particular year. It was totally at God's own discretion that God made that decision in the year 1536.

God at His discretion then selected a 120-year run-up period to the flood, so that the flood started in the year 1656. That number **1656** is a multiple of 23. And 1656 is equal to **23 * 72**; or it can also be stated as $\mathbf{2^3 * 3^2 * 23}$, a rather interesting use of the numbers 2 and 3. The year of the flood is a multiple of the number 23.

Now the number 23 didn't really have any symbolism when God selected the year for the flood. So we might perhaps reason that from then onwards the number 23 represents chaos, carnality, rebellion and/or destruction? But once again, the decision for selecting the year for the flood was **a totally discretionary decision** on God's part. God was free to choose any year of His own determination for when to start the flood. There were no constraints or prophetic expectations that had to be met.

So my point is this:

God made the decision to wipe out all human life, except for eight people, in **the totally discretionary year of 1536**, a year that has no particular significance. Why didn't God choose to give human beings **a full number of centuries** before the flood, since the whole plan started out with a full number of centuries (i.e. 7000 years)? In selecting the year for the flood wasn't God going to stick to some pre-decided time-frame? Why select years like 1536 and 1656 for such a major change in the plan?

Even in the year 1500 there must have been something that motivated God to continue trying to make that plan work. Or was it simply a case of God sitting out a very wicked period of time just to fulfill a $1.5 * 2^{10}$ formula? We have instances in the Old Testament where God responded spontaneously and instantly to human evils. But before the flood God only made the decision to abort one particular approach 1536 years after having created Adam and Eve, to then start all over again. It took another 120 years for the count-down before that decision was then implemented. Before the flood Jesus Christ was walking on the Earth, and this great length of time shows that God was extremely patient with the evil human beings.

Now in the year 1536 Noah was already 480 years old. So **Noah had already established a record of**

integrity before God. But his sons Japheth, Shem and Ham had not yet been born; those three sons were only born when Noah was 500 years old and older (Genesis 5:32). All of Noah's many, many other children that were born before Noah reached age 500 years are never mentioned, and they all perished in the flood.

So note!

When God in the year 1536 decided to save Noah and his wife through the flood, **there were no other human beings alive, whose lives would also be spared**. Not a one! None of Noah's many children already alive at that time were going to be saved through the flood. Instead, God determined that Noah and his wife would have three more sons who would all be between 90 years and up to 100 years old when God would bring on the flood.

The wives of Noah's three sons were very likely younger than their own husbands. And so those three wives had also not yet been born in the year 1536 when God made the decision to bring on the flood. And God was going to ensure that **those six people** (Noah's three sons and their three wives), who would all be born **not earlier than the year 1556** (i.e. not earlier than 100 years before the flood) would not have any children before the flood would come upon the Earth.

God used those 120 years before the flood to prepare for implementing a modified plan after the flood. Those preparations included have six more people born (three men and three women) who had never experienced anything that had been done anywhere during those first 1550 years of man's existence, and with whom God potentially could work after the flood. And it wasn't until 20 years after making the decision to bring on a flood, by which time Noah was 500 years old, that God instructed Noah to build the ark.

So note!

While God explicitly stated a very precise period of time as the run-up (or count-down) to the flood (i.e. exactly 120 years), **the time period before that run-up period** started was totally **discretionary**. And while we can in hindsight reduce that period to a specific formula (i.e. $1.5 * 2^{10}$), that does not mean that God was somehow constrained to comply with that formula. God could equally well have chosen any other number of years, other than 1536, before making the decision to bring on the flood.

Note also that this figure of 1536 years is not presented to us on a platter. That number is never spelled out by God. That implies that God does not attach any particular future importance to that number. Instead of God simply giving us this number 1536, we have to calculate it from the information the Bible records regarding how long certain men lived before the flood. It is a calculated number and not a given number.

In the whole period before the flood, **the only time period of any real significance** is the run-up period of **120 years**, because God spelled out that 120-year period. God very specifically committed Himself to giving mankind another 120 years from the day that God decided to cause a worldwide flood.

Let me give you the parallels right now for certain periods of time.

There is no significance in any of the following time periods:

- The number of years from Adam to Christ's ministry.

- The number of years from Adam to the 2nd coming of Christ.

- The number of years from Christ's ministry to the 2nd coming of Christ.

- The total number of years between any two events, except for below.

The only time periods that are of importance are:

- The period selected for the lead-up to Christ's 1st coming.

- The period selected for the lead-up to Christ's 2nd coming.

[Comment: I will use the three expressions "**lead-up**", "**run-up**" and "**countdown**" as fully interchangeable synonyms.]

In other words, God is in full control and totally free to decide on any date to start the lead-up to either coming of Jesus Christ. There are no constraints, prophetic or symbolic or otherwise, that require God to select a specific date to trigger the lead-up process. There is no significance of any kind in the selection of the starting date for any lead-up process. That starting date for any of the three run-up periods is always God's unrestricted personal decision. This state of affairs makes it impossible for anyone, human or angel, to accurately predict Christ's second coming until the lead-up period has actually started.

Thus:

There are **four significant lead-up time periods** in the Bible. They are:

- **120 years** = the lead-up to the flood.

- **70 weeks prophecy** = the lead-up to Christ's ministry.

- **42 months prophecy** = the lead-up to Christ's 2nd coming.

- **100 years** = the lead-up to the completion of the plan of salvation.

God could have chosen any year to start the **120 year lead-up** period to the flood. But once God had selected the year 1536 to start a 120 year lead-up to the flood, then God was committed to bring the flood on the Earth in the year 1656 after Adam's creation.

God could have chosen any year to start the lead-up to Jesus Christ's ministry. But once God had selected the decree of Artaxerxes in 458 B.C. to start the **70 weeks prophecy**, then God was committed to have Jesus Christ's ministry start in 26 A.D. (I won't argue with those who insist on the year 27 A.D.)

Today, in the year 2016 A.D., God is still totally unrestricted in selecting the starting date for the 42 months run-up period to Jesus Christ's second coming. **God is totally free to select any day, any month and any year to start that 42 months period.**

There are no prophecies, and there are no constraints of any other kind, that would pressure God to have to select a specific day in the year 2020 or 2021 or 2022 or 2023 or 2024 or 2025 or 2026 or 2027, etc., etc. to start the "**1260 days**" (Revelation 11:3), also identified as "**42 months**" (Revelation 11:2 and Revelation 13:5), which in practical terms amounts to **3.5 years**.

[**COMMENT:** In regard to Christ's second coming, the Book of Daniel identifies a period of 3.5 years (Daniel 12:7), and a period of 1290 days, or 3 years and 7 months (Daniel 12:11), and a period of 1335

days, or 3 years and 8.5 months (Daniel 12:12). So there may be certain events that precede the 42 months by one month and by 2.5 months respectively, which may also feature in the lead-up period to Christ's second coming.

It is because of these prophecies that I earlier referred to "those end-time events in **the last slightly less than four years** before Christ's return". My approach is that four years and more before Christ's second coming God the Father will very likely not yet have decided upon the exact date for Christ's second coming, because **at the time when God makes the decision regarding the day when Jesus Christ will return, at that time the lead-up period will start**.]

God has selected a **100-year period** for all those who will be in the second resurrection. That 100-year period is effectively the run-up to the completion of the plan of salvation. Thereafter there will not be any more physical human beings. God's goal for creating the Family of God will have been completed.

There is also a difference between prophetically predicting a specific run-up period to either coming of Jesus Christ on the one hand, and actually deciding upon the starting date for that run-up period on the other hand. Thus, God predicted in the days of Daniel that the 70-weeks prophecy would start with a king making a specific decree. But it was still totally at God's discretion as to when to motivate Artaxerxes to make that decree. (That decree obviously wasn't Artaxerxes' own idea; it was something that God specifically put into the mind of Artaxerxes at a very specific point in time.)

Once God the Father decides on a specific date, that is when the countdown period begins.

Likewise, God has predicted a specific run-up period of 3.5 years to Christ's second coming. But it is still totally at the discretion of God the Father when to have that 3.5 year period start. **Predicting is not the same as deciding** on the actual day for that predicted run-up period to start.

To be quite clear:

There are no specific events that will automatically trigger the start of that 3.5-year run-up period before the second coming. Yes, certain events will indeed precede the start of the run-up period. But when those "certain events" do come to pass, then it is still within the discretion of God the Father whether to start the run-up period right then, or whether to wait another month or another year or more before starting the run-up period. That discretion always remains with God the Father.

Understand that God the Father doesn't reason as follows:

I want Jesus Christ to return to the Earth **10 years from now**. So therefore the 3.5 years run-up period which I have predicted will start exactly 6.5 years from now. **That is not how God reasons**!

If God were to decide 10 years in advance on the exact day for Jesus Christ's second coming, then the actual run-up period to the second coming would be 10 years and not 3.5 years.

We misunderstand the real purpose for those three run-up periods in the Bible! We think that it is all about us, so that we can know certain events in advance. And it is indeed a secondary purpose to give God's people some information. But **the main purpose for spelling out these three run-up periods is to pinpoint the times when God the Father makes the decisions to start events** which will lead to other major events (i.e. lead to Christ's 1st and 2nd comings). It is the fact that those are (or will be) the dates when God the Father made (or will make) very significant decisions that makes the statements

about those run-up periods so significant.

Think of this analogy:

We are all familiar with **a typical one mile race** around a quarter mile race track. There is a starter who shoots the starter's gun to officially get the race under way. It usually takes a while for all the runners to gather at the starting line. And the starter is watching them as they amble up to the line, perhaps still bending over for a stretch or two. Once everyone appears to be ready, then the starter gets their attention with his "ON YOUR MARKS" shout, followed by "GET READY", and **then the starter shoots off his gun**.

From a time perspective everything before the starter actually fires that shot is somewhat discretionary. Yes, the program says that this race is supposed to start at 4:00 p.m. But that doesn't mean that it will start at exactly 4:00 p.m. It is up to the starter to decide whether the race will start 90 seconds earlier or 90 seconds later. Sometimes the starter waits half a minute longer in starting the race, because he sees that one competitor is not yet ready. At other times a starter may get the race started very quickly. It is only once that gun has been fired that the start of the race can no longer be reversed. The time taken before the gun is shot is immaterial, and nobody even bothers to record it. The only thing that is important is what happens after the starter's gun has been fired.

Now **God is like the Starter** regarding the date for Christ's second coming. It is when God shoots off **the starter's gun** that the run-up period to Jesus Christ's return starts. Yes, the official program says that the gun is to be shot off at 3.5 years before the end of 6000 years from the time of Adam's creation, and that the run-up period will then conclude at exactly 6000 years. But the Starter has a certain amount of discretion over when to actually shoot off that gun. And because something isn't quite ready, therefore the Starter delays shooting His gun by a minute or two or three (i.e. God delays by a decade or two or three).

What is important is not how much time was taken before the Starter's gun was fired. It is immaterial how many years precede the Starter's gun being fired. The only thing that counts in determining the date for Christ's return is the date when that gun was fired. And like the starter of an athletic race, God the Father uses His discretion to shoot that gun when He knows that conditions are just right for starting.

Can you follow that analogy?

The focus should be on God the Father, who is the Starter, and not on us who are looking at the printed out program. We have tried to reason that all these biblical statements about time periods should help us to know when Jesus Christ is supposed to return. But that has been a mistake. Run-up periods don't enable us to predict the length of the total period, because the starting dates for the countdown periods themselves are somewhat flexible. And therefore until the countdown period to Christ's second coming actually starts, there is simply no way that any human being will be able to predict the date for Christ's second coming.

Let's consider another point.

THERE IS NO 7000-YEAR PLAN

We like to base all our speculations on God's "7000-year plan". There is a problem with that approach. And that problem is this:

When at the time of the flood God modified His originally projected 7000-year goal for creating the Family of God, **God abandoned the 7000-year limitation**! God very **freely added the 100-year period** for people in the second resurrection to that period of originally 7000 years.

So since the time of the flood God has had a more or less **7100-year plan**. We need to open our biased eyes and to admit that a 7100-year period is **not** a 7000-year plan! God very readily added 100 years to the originally intended 7000 years. And God added that period of 100 years even before God could evaluate any results for the new plan. In other words, God committed to adding 100 years to the plan, before even knowing **whether that was all that was needed** to reverse the shocking results for the period before the flood, and to still achieve success; or whether at some point still more time would be needed.

With God the results that are achieved are always more important than how long it will take to achieve those results.

Now I'll say something that some of you probably don't really want to hear. Adding 100 years at the time of the flood **set a precedent**, which we should recognize. I believe that if it becomes clear to God that this revised 7100-year plan is still not going to produce 144000 individuals for the first resurrection, God will add whatever number of years are needed to achieve that stated goal of 144000 individuals for the first resurrection. And **there are no prophecies that would prevent God from extending that period**.

While the angels are keeping score and know exactly how far we have progressed towards that number of 144000, **all of us human beings are totally clueless** about the facts in this regard. Now if it will take another 100 years to achieve the total of 144000 for the first resurrection, then I believe that God the Father would not hesitate to add 100 years to that figure of 7100 years, thereby making it a period of 7200 years.

It is my fervent hope that the number of individuals God is preparing for the first resurrection is already close enough to 144000, so that the additional time needed is perhaps 5 or 10 or 15 years. But I have no way of knowing where we stand right now. And neither do you, and nor does anyone else on this planet.

We need to acknowledge that, when things didn't work out as had been anticipated, then God was quite free in making an additional 100 years available to achieve His goal of creating the Family of God. So if it turns out that even this revised plan is not going to achieve the 144000 stated goal within the allotted time period , we have a precedent that God will again add **however much time it takes** to reach that target figure of 144000. God has planned with that figure of 144000 in mind for at least the past 2000 years (i.e. since God revealed that figure in the Book of Revelation), and most likely for the past 4000+ years since the flood; and I don't believe that God will now settle for any number less than 144000.

We need to recognize that **setting time targets is not God's priority**, any more than time targets were Thomas Edison's priority. To achieve perfect results frequently requires more time than had been anticipated.

So what time-frame do I expect for Christ's second coming? I have no idea, none whatsoever. It is my hope that it will be sooner rather than later. It is my hope that it will still be within my own lifetime. But I have no way of knowing that, because I have no way of knowing how close to, or how far away from the number of 144000 for the first resurrection we are at this present time. God and the angels know that number, but we don't.

Now once the 5th seal has been opened and the great tribulation starts, then God tells us that the remaining time before Christ's return is "**yet for a little season**" (see Revelation 6:11). The Greek

expression there is "eti chronon mikron". This is figuratively addressed to "the souls of them that were slain for the word of God" (Revelation 6:9) who are waiting for the first resurrection.

The same Greek expression "mikron chronon" is also used in **Revelation 20:3** in regard to Satan, when it tells us that Satan must be loosed "**a little season**". It seems fairly clear that Satan is loosed for just long enough to assemble all the people who are still unconverted at the end of the millennium, so that all those people can be destroyed by "fire out of heaven" (see Revelation 20:9).

The lesson for us from Revelation 6:11 is that once the tribulation starts, **then** we will definitely have entered the 3.5-year countdown for Christ's return. And then it will indeed only be "a little season". But the tribulation has not yet started. And so right now, I don't have any idea whatsoever regarding when Jesus Christ will return.

So I very frequently pray "please let Your Kingdom come quickly, and please hasten the time when Your will is going to be done here on Earth". But I am very resolutely not setting my heart on any specific year for Christ's return. And **the dates I have previously considered** as potentially significant dates for Christ's return (i.e. the years 2026 or 2027 or 2030 or 2031), because those dates fit quite nicely into the framework of certain past events, **are in fact utterly meaningless**. And I myself do not attach any significance to any of them, as far as predicting Christ's return is concerned. I want that to be quite clear! It has taken me some time to understand that **nothing that has happened in the past** can be used to predict the yet future second coming of Jesus Christ.

There is no significant date or event in the past that could possibly indicate a potential yet future date for Christ's return. I believe that God the Father has at this point in time not yet decided on a specific date for Christ's return. Thus, for example, when Mr. Armstrong was called, what happened during his ministry, and when he died has nothing at all to do with the date when Jesus Christ will return. There simply is no connection between any past event and Christ's second coming, no matter how good some connections might look on various prophetic charts.

The date for Christ's return is **a decision that God the Father will make**, not based on anything that happened before at certain specific times, but **based on the goals which God has set being achieved**. And the very specific goal that must be achieved **before** any date for Christ's return can be set is that there is a guaranteed number of exactly 144000 individuals who have been tried and tested, and who will be in the first resurrection. But this is information that is not available to any human being. None of us know the answer in this matter.

However, we need to understand that having 144000 people ready for the first resurrection is not at all an easy goal to achieve! Just look at how few people responded to God before the flood. And human nature hasn't changed; it is still just as perverse today as it was before the flood. So we shouldn't be too surprised if it may take longer than initially hoped for, for God to have that many people ready for the first resurrection.

Now once it becomes clear that the 42 months run-up period has indeed started, and that this can be correctly identified, then all of us should be able to identify the correct date for Christ's second coming as not later than 42 months from the start of the run-up period. At that point I believe that God the Father will reveal this secret to His servants the prophets, as per Amos 3:7.

However, something specific will have to happen to identify the start of that 42 months countdown, something that has thus far not yet happened. And that "something" is that **the two witnesses** will have started the time of their ministry. And the start of their ministry will be evident by the miracles they will perform (Revelation 11:5-6), real miracles and not clever tricks a la Hollywood make-believe methods. And they will be hated by the whole world.

The start of the ministry of the two witnesses is the clearest key that the countdown to the second coming will have started.

So let's put all these time periods together.

AN OVERVIEW OF VARIOUS PERIODS

START: The creation of Adam and Eve.

1) From Adam to the start of the run-up to the flood = **a discretionary # of years**. (In practice this turned out to be 1536 years.)

2) Up to the flood = **a very specific run-up period** of 120 years.

3) From flood to the start of the run-up to Christ's 1st coming = **a discretionary # of years**.

4) Up to the start of Christ's Ministry = **a very specific run-up period** of 483 years.

5) Up to the start of the run-up to Christ's 2nd coming = **a discretionary # of years**.

6) Up to Christ's 2nd coming = **a very specific run-up period** of 3.5 years.

7) The millennium = 1000 years = **a very specific period.**

8) Dealing with the rebellion when Satan is loosed for a little season after the 1000 years have been completed = **a discretionary # of weeks or months or even a year or two?**

9) Period for those in the second resurrection = **a very specific run-up period** of 100 years, i.e. this is the run-up to **the completion of the plan of salvation**.

END: The plan of salvation will have been completed with the destruction of the wicked and of the physical creation, and the completion of building the Family of God and the creation of the new heaven and the new earth.

So the total time that God will devote to building the whole Family of God can be expressed as a formula: ("**DP**" stands for "God's **D**iscretionary **P**eriod of a number of years or months". I have designated these periods as $\mathbf{DP_{1\text{-}4}}$ to indicate that each period is different in length from the other three periods. See also the chart at the end of this article.)

($\mathbf{DP_1}$ + 120) + ($\mathbf{DP_2}$ + 483) + ($\mathbf{DP_3}$ + 3.5) + 1000 + ($\mathbf{DP_4}$ + 100) = **>7100 years**

(up to the flood) + (up to 1st coming) + (up to 2nd coming) + 1000 + (up to lake of fire) = >7100 years

At present the total I have designated as "**>**7100 years" is already heading to exceed 7130 years. We are not debating about a year or two in excess of 7100, since we are already right now on course to exceed 7100 years **by three decades**, and the countdown for Christ's return has still not started. Our old explanation of a 6000-year plan ignores this reality of already exceeding 6000 years by about three decades.

Can you see that **there is a "Discretionary Period" before the countdown for every major event begins**: **before** the countdown to the flood, **before** the countdown to Christ's ministry, **before** the countdown to Christ's second coming, and **before** the countdown to the completion of God's plan to create the Family of God begins?

The 100-year period for people in the second resurrection is the countdown to the time when Jesus Christ will "deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father" (1 Corinthians 15:24).

We need to recognize that the only time periods that are specified in the Bible are the countdown periods to certain key events. The actual total periods of time that are or will be involved are never specified. Past fulfillments (i.e. total time up to the flood, and total time up to Christ's first coming) we can calculate or at least approximate from biblical and historical records.

So it is these "discretionary periods" that allow God the Father the flexibility to accommodate man's slower than anticipated response to God, i.e. **when it takes longer than planned to have the required number of human beings repent and submit their lives to God**. These "discretionary periods" allow God to only start the countdown periods when God's desired results are assured. These "discretionary periods" allow God the Father to retain full control over the whole process of selecting a date for Christ's return, rather than being forced to comply with some pre-determined symbolism or with certain prophecies.

In plain terms:

God's whole plan of salvation for mankind can be broken down into **four distinct periods** plus the fixed period of the millennium. As far as the number of years involved are concerned, each of those four periods consists of the sum total of two numbers: a discretionary number of years or months, and a foreordained precisely defined countdown period.

What God has revealed to us through the Bible are those four precisely defined countdown periods. But the duration of the four discretionary periods is never revealed, and this ensures that God the Father can lengthen or shorten those discretionary periods without somehow being in conflict with some prophesied date for specific events. In this way the whole process remains under God's sole discretion and without any constraints on God.

Thus:

1) **The period up to the flood**:

This period is equal to **the sum total of two numbers**, only one of which God revealed in advance. God chose not to reveal the total number of years for this period. God only revealed the last 120 years countdown to the flood. But the number of years that elapsed before the last 120 years started were totally at God's discretion, with God being free to make that discretionary period longer or shorter.

Since this pre-flood period is past tense, therefore we now know from the biblical historical record that God chose for that period to be 1536 years before the 120-year countdown started. But there was nothing compelling God to choose 1536 years as opposed to choosing any other number of years.

2) **The period up to the start of Christ's ministry**:

Moving on from the flood, this period is also equal to **the sum total of two numbers**, only one of which God revealed in advance. God chose not to reveal the total number of years for this particular period. God only revealed the last 483 years (i.e. 69 weeks of the 70-weeks prophecy) countdown to the start of

Jesus Christ's ministry. But the number of years that elapsed from the flood up to the starting point for those 483 years were totally at God's discretion, with God being free of any commitments to give that period any particular length, making it as long or as short as God would decide, without being constrained by any prophetic requirements.

Since the time of Christ's ministry is now also past tense, therefore we can now use both biblical and non-biblical historical records to try to date the start of Christ's ministry within a margin-of-error of at the most a year or two or three. But there was nothing to compel God to make that period before the 483-year countdown started a certain number of years. God was free to make that period before the 483 years started longer or shorter, at God's sole discretion.

3) **The period up to Christ's second coming**:

Moving on from the time of Christ's ministry, this period is also equal to **the sum total of two numbers**, only one of which God revealed in advance. God once again chose not to reveal the total number of years for this particular period. God only revealed the last 3.5 years countdown to Jesus Christ's return. But the number of years that will elapse from the end of Christ's ministry up to the starting point for those 3.5 years before Christ's return is totally at God's discretion, with God being free of any commitments to make that period any particular length. God is totally free to make that period as long as He chooses to make it.

Since Jesus Christ's return is still future, and since the 3.5-year countdown has very obviously not yet in this year of 2016 A.D. started, therefore there is nothing, and I mean absolutely nothing, that could enable us to know when that discretionary period will end, and when the 3.5-year countdown will start. Neither history, nor prophecy, nor symbolism, nor parallels can give us that information.

Until the ministry of Jesus Christ's two witnesses starts there is nothing to indicate to us that God the Father has in fact decided on a specific date for Jesus Christ's second coming. And when God the Father has not yet decided on a date, then it is futile and foolish for us to predict any date for the second coming.

The three different lengths of the discretionary periods that precede each of these three countdown periods are of secondary importance, and they are flexible. They allow God to only start the countdown periods **when it is clear that God's goals are going to be met**. There are no requirements that God's goals must be met within a very precise preordained time-frame, when in fact the attainment of those goals depends to a considerable degree on human beings with a totally free will voluntarily submitting their lives to God. Rather, these discretionary periods provide needed flexibility for the decisions that God makes and will make. The Bible shows time and again that **many of God's decisions are direct responses to human actions and behavior**.

Surely you yourself can think of many examples of this being the case.

What we need to recognize is that **this approach** is something that God also uses in determining the precise dates and times for intervening in human affairs. Specifically, God also uses this approach in establishing a precise date for Christ's second coming, responding to human actions and behavior.

Let's continue and look at the fourth and final period.

4) **The period to complete the whole plan of salvation**:

Moving on from the time of Christ's return, God has committed Himself in advance to have Jesus Christ rule over the whole world for exactly 1000 years. Those 1000 years will not be cut short in any way. They

will be completed.

But once those 1000 years have ended, then the remaining period needed to complete the plan of salvation is once more equal to **the sum total of two numbers**, only one of which God revealed in advance.

The number God has revealed in advance is the countdown period of 100 years for the people in the second resurrection. Like the millennium, this is an inflexible commitment that God has made in advance.

But the length of the period from the end of the 1000 years up to the start of the 100 years is not specified. It is once again totally at God's discretion. As it is, many church people don't even realize that there will be a period of time after the 1000 years end and before the second resurrection takes place. This period usually doesn't even make it into our time charts.

But as far as that period is concerned, the only commitment God has made in advance is to tell us that it will only be "**a little season**" (Revelation 20:3). But the term "a little season" is relative, and it means different things to different people. We should keep in mind that this is going to be "a little season" **from God's point of view**, which isn't necessarily the same as what we human beings picture as "a little season".

This period of "a little season" likewise allows God the flexibility to allot as much time as will be needed to fulfill God's intentions, without being restricted to a specific number of days, weeks, months or even years to get the job done.

The purpose of this particular discretionary period is to give Satan time to round up **all the people who are still unconverted** at the end of the millennium, "the number of whom is as the sand of the sea" (Revelation 20:8). While I obviously don't know for sure, I personally suspect that the number of people involved here will be **anything from at least fifty million people to perhaps as many as a billion or more people**. With the expression "as the sand of the sea" God was clearly referring to a huge number of people. Personally, I believe that this number is likely to exceed the army of 200 million of Revelation 9:16. After all, this is going to be **the absolutely final human fight against God**. For that final showdown we should expect the greatest number of people ever.

So my point here is this:

How long will it take Satan to round up a few hundred million unconverted people from all around the world? How long will it take for that huge army to produce at least a certain amount of weaponry and armaments and transport equipment, when military weapons have not been in existence anywhere on Earth for centuries? How long will it take for that vast number of people to come up to Jerusalem from all parts of the world ... since God certainly doesn't want even a single unconverted person at that time to miss out on the fire from God coming out of heaven (see Revelation 20:9)?

I believe that God has provided this period of discretionary duration to make available however much time may be needed for Satan to get the job done, the job being to weed out every single unconverted person alive at that time. So I don't know how long that period will be. But it would not surprise me in the least if that "little season" ends up being more than a full year, perhaps even a couple of years? And I don't think that God has at this point in time, in the year 2016, decided how long that "little season" will be. I think that God is going to respond to whatever the human beings at that time will do. It will be a responsive period, and not a period of predetermined length.

And that, the little season plus the 100-year period, will then conclude God's plan of salvation for mankind. It will conclude the building of the Family of God.

Now today, in the year 2016 A.D., we have definitely already exceeded the period of 6000 years since the creation of Adam. I have proved that conclusively in one of my other articles. Only those who are willingly ignorant can deny that. But exceeding 6000 years also proves that **God is not restricted** by some 6000 year limitation. We human beings are the ones who have attempted to restrict God to a period of 6000 years, after which the millennium is supposed to start. But God has never accepted such a 6000-year limitation. And God has never stated such a limitation.

THE FOUNDATION FOR MAKING PREDICTIONS

We need to recognize the real issue here.

God the Father and Jesus Christ set Themselves a goal. They determined that They would create the Family of God by creating spirit-born sons and daughters. The fact that Jesus Christ was willing to lay His own immortal existence on the line in order to achieve that goal shows the enormous importance that God places on achieving the goal They had set. Allotting additional time to achieve this staggering goal is by comparison relatively insignificant. **So what if it really should take 100 years more or even 1000 years more?** If the goal is achieved 100% after additional time was made available, then that is all that matters.

We, on the other hand, are biased. We want everything right now. We want God to hurry up the process so that Jesus Christ will still return in our lifetime. So we simply assume that God can somehow have 144000 converted individuals ready by a very specifically pre-ordained date. But that is not how it works!

Even **Mr. Armstrong** himself very effectively **contradicted that point of view**, though he didn't realize the implications of his own statements. I personally heard Mr. Armstrong say the following on many occasions. He also wrote this same statement in a number of different books and booklets. You very likely will also remember it.

Here is a statement by Mr. Armstrong that appeared word-for-word identically in Chapter 2 of "**MYSTERY OF THE AGES**" and also in Chapter 4 of "**THE INCREDIBLE HUMAN POTENTIAL**". You can easily find these quotations yourself on the internet. Here is what Mr. Armstrong wrote:

"But there was one super-important quality that **even God's creative powers could not create instantly by fiat** -- the same perfect, holy, righteous CHARACTER inherent in both God and the Word!

This kind of character must be DEVELOPED, by **the CHOICE** and **the INTENT** of the one in whom it comes to exist." (his own emphasis is in capital letters; my emphasis is in bold type)

Mr. Armstrong then wrote:

"I repeat, such perfect character must be developed. **It requires the free choice and decision of the separate entity in whom it is to be created**." (my emphasis in bold type)

Can you see the problem here? Anything that requires "the free choice and decision" of the person involved cannot possibly be predicted to take place by a certain time! This is an either-or situation.

Either God predicts the time when this project finishes, and then God has no guarantee for how many people will have developed godly character.

Or God predicts the number of people who will develop godly character, and then God has to be somewhat flexible regarding the time this may require.

Now when we **multiply** Mr. Armstrong's statement "it requires the free choice and decision" **by 144000**, then we are looking at **the magnitude of the challenge** facing God, to bring 144000 individuals to the point of using their own free choice to themselves make the decision to submit their lives unconditionally to God.

We need to also understand that God doesn't really want people who do not submit their lives to Him of their own free choice. If someone doesn't actually choose to seek God's will and God's ways (i.e. if someone does not actually choose to walk with God), then God doesn't really want that person in His Family! But looking for voluntary submission to God amongst a selfish and self-willed humanity is somewhat like looking for a needle in a haystack.

I am not saying that it will necessarily take longer than God had anticipated; but it **may** take longer, forcing God's project to go "over budget" from a time perspective.

Now here is the difference in perspectives:

Our perspective:

Because we are always trying to predict Christ's return, therefore we look for significance in the most mundane places. We look for parallels and comparisons and analogies and patterns, and we crunch whatever numbers we can get our hands on, all in the hope of being able to extract some clues regarding the date that God the Father will choose for sending Jesus Christ back to this Earth. We assume that God the Father is surely bound to stick with the patterns and parallels we believe we have discovered, and that our number-crunching must surely be on the right track. We invariably try to evaluate all the things we believe we have discovered in a way that predicts Jesus Christ's return nearer rather than further off in the distance.

God's perspective:

God the Father and Jesus Christ set Themselves the goal to create other beings like Themselves in order to establish the Family of God. That is an absolutely staggering goal, an expression of Their very nature, which we call "love". To achieve this goal, after the failure of the pre-flood plan, Jesus Christ was willing to pay a phenomenal price (i.e. give His own life). Christ's sacrifice shows the extreme importance God places on achieving the goal They had set. How long it would take for God to achieve that goal has always taken a backseat in God's perspective. It is simply not particularly important to God that the "humanity project" should be concluded after exactly 7000 years plus zero days and zero hours and zero minutes and zero seconds.

What difference do **a thousand years** really make to God? Isn't that just like "one day" to God (see 2 Peter 3:8)? Peter is telling us that time is not really a big deal to God, who has always existed and who will always exist.

We need to understand that **God didn't actually hide any clues** regarding the time for Christ's second coming in the symbols and parallels and patterns and numbers that we like to crunch. God had no intention of providing us with clues for the time of Christ's return in anything! So when we do find what we believe to be clues, then we are looking at things that have no bearing at all on the date that God the

Father will select for Jesus Christ's return.

Let's now consider another point.

GOD HAS ALREADY ADDED MANY YEARS

In addition to the "**DP**" periods mentioned above, and completely separate from those "Discretionary Periods", God had already before Christ's ministry added some **extra time** to the whole plan, when God lengthened the yearly cycle from 360 days to 365.25 days. This lengthening of the yearly cycle most likely happened in the days of King Hezekiah. It seems that God was already planning to add some time to man's time on Earth before Hezekiah asked for a sign, but without adding any actual years. **More time with the exact same number of years.**

So when King Hezekiah asked for a sign from God that he would be healed, **God** through the prophet Isaiah **set it up** so that Hezekiah would ask for the thing that God wanted to do ... make available more time for God's plan to be worked out.

When Isaiah asked Hezekiah "shall the shadow **go forward** ten degrees, **or go back** ten degrees?" (2 Kings 20:9), Hezekiah's choice was a foregone conclusion. The shadow was going to go forward on its own without any kind of divine intervention. So obviously Hezekiah was going to ask "let the shadow return backward ten degrees" (2 Kings 20:10). And that was precisely what God wanted Hezekiah to ask for. And that is what God then did, intervene in the Earth's orbit around the sun to cause the shadow to move for a few hours from east to west, because for that period of time the sun appeared to move from west to east.

Obviously, I cannot prove this, and I don't dogmatically know that this is correct. But it seems most likely to me that by Hezekiah's time God was planning to make available some extra time for His plan for mankind to work out. And when the shadow "went back ten degrees" (i.e. for a period of time the sun appeared to move from west to east), that is when God changed the yearly cycle of the earth around the sun from 360 days to 365.25 days. In effect God had added 5.25 days to every year.

The sign that God offered Hezekiah is extremely unusual and unexpected. It is clear that God wanted to do something that would influence future events. And God wanted what He was going to do to be recorded. God had a motive in offering Hezekiah this particular sign, that motive being the intent to change the length of the Earth's annual journey around the sun.

Now to illustrate the effect of this change, let's assume this happened in the year 700 B.C. (which is assuredly not the correct date, but it serves as an illustration).

From **700 B.C. - 1 A.D.** = 700 * 5.25 days = 3,675 days more = **10 more years**.

From **1 A.D. - 2016 A.D.** = 2015 * 5.25 days = 10,578 days more = **almost 29 years more**.

So from 700 B.C up to 2016 A.D. there have been approx. 991,653 days, making up **2715 years** of each year being 365.25 days long. However, if the length of every year had remained at 360 days until the present, then those 991,653 days would comprise approximately **2754 years**.

I would speculate that for some reason God decided already some time before 700 B.C. to add about 40 years to the first 6000 years, as far as the number of days that human beings would live are concerned, but without actually adding any additional trips of the Earth around the sun (i.e. without changing the

number of years). In plain language: since 700 B.C. it has taken almost 40 years longer to get to the present year 2016 A.D.

On top of that, today in 2016 A.D., even with 365.25-day years, we are already close to 6030 years after the creation of Adam. Now if the length of the year had remained at 360 days, then **today would be approximately the year 6070 after Adam's creation**, based simply on the number of days that have passed. Reality proves that there is no way that God is restricting His plan to exactly 6000 years until Christ's second coming.

The conclusion I believe we need to draw from this is that God started out with a very general plan of 7000 years, but with the understanding that 7000 years was a somewhat flexible goal to aim for. As it was, the period before the flood set God's plan back by over 1600 years. **1600+ years is a lot of lost ground to try to make up.**

Now if it was just up to God, then everything would assuredly still be on schedule. The challenge for God is that His plan depends on 144000 individuals with totally free minds to voluntarily submit their minds and their wills unconditionally to God. When human beings really have totally free minds, then it means that God cannot actually force any person to repent and to change the way they think and the way they use their minds. **God cannot force individuals with free minds to stop being selfish in their thoughts and actions.**

The most dramatic proof for this statement is the fact that there will still be a vast number of unconverted people after Jesus Christ has ruled over them for 1000 years. It is those unconverted people that Satan rounds up when he is loosed "for a little season". That proves that **some people will never**, under any circumstances, **submit their minds unconditionally to God**. And God cannot work with such people, because the minds of such people work exactly the same way that Satan's mind works.

We human beings have to reach the decision to submit our minds to God on our own. We have to **want** to use our minds the way that God uses His mind. We have to want to see God's whole way of life established everywhere throughout this entire universe, but starting with our own individual lives and in our own individual thought processes. We have to make the right choices with our own free will.

And when it takes longer than God anticipated for 144000 individuals to fully submit their lives to God, then God has to make provision for additional time, because the alternative is simply not acceptable to God. The alternative is for God to accept that there will be only 134000 or 125000, etc. in the first resurrection. But that is not acceptable to God, because **God has already committed Himself** to having exactly 144000 people in the first resurrection. Revelation 14:1 represents a firm, inflexible commitment by God.

So God must make more time available. That is why God built **the "DP" periods** into the plan from the beginning, and only committed Himself to adhering to **the "countdown" periods** that are mentioned in various prophecies. The fact that we today, in the year 2016 A.D., are already approaching 6030 years after Adam's creation is proof of this approach.

Let's also keep in mind that God has an unlimited supply of time available. In itself time is not really important to God. Time is only a tool for God to achieve His goals. But of and by itself time is not important to God. God controls time, and God is not constrained by time. With God "time is **not** money"! To use another figure of speech, God literally has all the time in the world.

Now let's look at some things we do know.

THINGS WE DO KNOW

We do know how the 70 weeks prophecy in Daniel chapter 9 pinpoints the start of Jesus Christ's ministry very likely in the year 26 A.D., leading to a crucifixion date on Passover in 30 A.D. The 70 weeks prophecy is discussed and examined in a separate article which deals specifically with that prophecy. So I won't deal with it here. But you really do need to read that article after this one.

However, here is the point we need to understand:

There is no connection between Jesus Christ's first coming and His second coming, as far as any timing is concerned. The dates for Christ's ministry and His subsequent death on the stake on a Passover day have no influence whatsoever on the date which God the Father Himself will choose for Christ's second coming.

For the yet future date for Christ's second coming it makes no difference whether Jesus Christ was crucified in 25 A.D. or in 30 A.D. or in 31 A.D. or in 35 A.D. God the Father is simply not bound by whatever the date was when Jesus Christ started His ministry, or the date when He was crucified. And therefore all arguments about Jesus Christ being crucified in either 30 A.D. or in 31 A.D. are **meaningless**! It simply doesn't make a difference to anything as far as the present or the future is concerned.

Now consider the following point:

God saw to it that a considerable amount of information for dating certain events was preserved **in the Old Testament**. That includes the lifespan for many key individuals, the length of the reigns of various kings, and also certain long spans of time to bridge over specific periods, which periods might otherwise be somewhat unclear. These periods of time include the 400 years of Genesis 15:13, the 430 years of Exodus 12:41 and the 480 years of 1 Kings 6:1.

All this information in the Old Testament enables us to get a reasonably accurate chronological picture of events. Clearly God wanted all of this information, which ultimately leads us to Jesus Christ's first coming, preserved.

But the New Testament does not even vaguely preserve any kind of chronological data.

The New Testament does not give us any dates at all for New Testament times. The exact date for Christ's birth is hidden. The date for the start of His ministry is hidden. The date for His crucifixion is a Passover day, but the exact year of that Passover is not recorded in the New Testament. **No dates** are recorded for the Jerusalem Council, for the Apostle Paul's ministry, for the deaths of any of the apostles, for the writing of the Book of Revelation, etc. We know how long the various kings in the Old Testament reigned, but we don't know how long any of the apostles lived or carried on their ministries.

Yes, certainly, the 70 weeks prophecy reveals to us when Jesus Christ's ministry started and ended. But this information is **not recorded in the New Testament itself**. My point is that the New Testament itself does not record any dating information. That tells me that **God was not going to provide any dating information in New Testament times**. And that means that all our dating efforts are always going to be less than 100% accurate.

From secular sources we can piece together a lot of information to establish certain dates. But those dates or time spans are not preserved in the New Testament itself in the way that the Old Testament preserves certain dating information.

And instead of helping us to piece various time-lines together, **the New Testament actually instructs us stay away from trying to figure out dates and time-lines**. As Paul instructed a fellow-minister:

But **avoid foolish questions**, and **genealogies**, and **contentions**, and **strivings about the law**; for they are **unprofitable** and **vain**. (Titus 3:9)

In plain language, getting involved in **genealogies** meant getting involved in trying to figure out dates and lineages.

So:

To seek to establish a date for Jesus Christ's second coming is foolish! **It is foolish** because Jesus Christ said that no man knows that date. It is absolutely unprofitable; it is totally useless. As Paul pointed out, this type of quest **always leads to arguments** and more arguments. And most importantly, it is vainly trying to find out something that God the Father doesn't actually want us to know!

The total absence of precise dating information in the New Testament itself, information that would apply to the period before the start of the run-up period to the second coming, should be obvious. **God didn't want that type of information preserved** in the New Testament.

Now let's look at the matter of "those days shall be shortened" (Matthew 24:22).

"THOSE DAYS SHALL BE SHORTENED"

Let's examine Christ's statement in this context more closely.

For **then shall be great tribulation**, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except **those days** should be **shortened**, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake **those days** shall be **shortened**. (Matthew 24:21-22)

This is not a reference to God somehow shortening the period of 6000 years, so that Christ's coming might theoretically be at some point before the 6000 years were completed. This is not a reference to God shortening the "**DP**" period before the countdown to the second coming begins.

This is a reference to the time of the great tribulation. It is because that time will be **so terrible** and **so destructive** that God will actually cut **it** short, lest all human life on Earth would be destroyed. Demon-possessed lunatics will be in charge of nations or military powers, and they will be making decisions to unleash "weapons of mass destruction", with (humanly) irreversible consequences.

So note!

The "**DP**" period before the second coming is not in any way "shortened", because that period does not have any predetermined length. It is totally at God the Father's discretion to end that period at any time and to start the "run-up period". And so right now we are well past the 6000-year mark since Adam's creation, proving that the overall 6000-year period cannot possibly be shortened.

But the 3.5-year countdown period (or run-up period) will be so terrible and so destructive, regarding man's inhumanity to fellow-man, that God will intervene. And **certain aspects** of **that** period will be shortened.

Note!

I am not saying that "that period" will be shortened. I am saying that "certain aspects" of that period will be shortened.

In that 3.5-year countdown period to the second coming of Jesus Christ **several things will be taking place concurrently**. The great tribulation will be going on. The two witnesses will be fulfilling the "confirming of the covenant" for that last half week. Famines in some areas and disease epidemics in other areas will also be likely to still be ongoing.

Here is what I believe Jesus Christ's statement regarding "cutting short" is telling us.

The 3.5-year countdown period itself is not going to be shortened! So when those days are "shortened", then **that does not move Jesus Christ's return to an earlier date**! The ministry of the two witnesses will run its full course of 42 months, and only then are they killed.

What is "shortened" is the time of the great tribulation that is affecting people worldwide! So the extreme factors that cause death and pain and affliction will last for a shorter period of time **during those 42 months** than intended. But the overall period of 42 months for the two witnesses will not be shortened.

Understand the following:

It is not just the people of Israel that will suffer during the great tribulation. **All people worldwide will suffer!** That is what Jesus Christ was pointing out. Yes, it will be the time of "Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7). But **the rest of the world will suffer just as much at that time**. Here is what Christ said:

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, **there should no flesh be saved**: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. (Matthew 24:21-22)

When "no flesh" would survive that period of time, it means that **all people everywhere are being destroyed by the factors that constitute that "great tribulation"**. "No flesh" means **all people** of **all nations** and every background. And it is because of that "great tribulation" that human survival is on the line. So all people on Earth will be adversely affected by that "great tribulation", and as a result all humanity will be threatened with total extinction.

In these verses Jesus Christ presented **a contrast**. But that contrast is not between people of an Israelite background and people of a non-Israelite background. The contrast Jesus Christ presents in these two verses is between "**the elect**" on the one hand, and **all other human beings**, irrespective of their ethnic or national backgrounds, on the other hand. They will all suffer horrendously in those years.

The great tribulation will affect all nations on Earth, Israelite nations and non-Israelite nations alike! All people will suffer during the time of Satan's wrath. The persecutors and the persecuted alike will suffer.

And so **the conditions that cause all that suffering will be "shortened"**, somewhat like God fairly quickly removing all of the early plagues in Egypt at the time of Moses. Those plagues caused a lot of suffering, but they were cut short fairly quickly in each case: 7 days for the first plague (Exodus 7:25), a few days for the second plague (Exodus 8:9-11), a few days for the fourth plague (Exodus 8:29-31), etc. Each plague was cut short fairly quickly, even though more plagues would still follow.

That's the kind of "cutting short" that Christ was referring to.

But the concurrent 3.5-year ministry of the two witnesses will continue its full course, irrespective of certain plagues or suffering on humanity at large being dialed back a notch or two. And **with the ministry of the two witnesses running its full course, it means that the date for Jesus Christ's return is also not moved forward by that "cutting short"**.

When Mr. Armstrong and others back in the 1950's and 60's, **well over 50 years ago now**, began looking at this statement "except those days should be shortened" and then coupled it with the statement "this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled" (Matthew 24:34), **they drew a wrong conclusion** which was heavily influenced by their own bias. That bias was a strong desire to see the second coming of Jesus Christ take place within the next few years (i.e. hopefully sometime during the 1970's). And so they focused on **the potential** for man to destroy all life on Earth, that potential being represented by the development of nuclear bombs. But that focus was completely wrong!

They reasoned that the generation that lived when the nuclear bomb was first developed (i.e. the generation born in the 1930's and living as adults in the 1950's) would also still be alive at Christ's second coming. But that was not correct. And the generation of those who were adults in the 1950's has overwhelmingly passed away since then. And Christ's return is still a future event. More than 50 years have passed!

The correct focus for the prophecy is not man's **ability** to destroy all life. The correct focus is that the actual terrible conditions during the great tribulation will be shortened, because otherwise those conditions would surely escalate to the point of the total annihilation of all life on this planet. **The severity of specific conditions will be shortened**, meaning that not all the nuclear weapons already in existence right now will be detonated. But the two witnesses will continue for 3.5 years to preach "repent because the Kingdom of God is at hand". And so that 3.5-year period will run its full course before Jesus Christ will return.

Look at it this way:

God predicted a 3.5-year countdown period for Jesus Christ's return. The period before that countdown starts is somewhat flexible or discretionary (i.e. the"**DP**" period between the end of Christ's ministry and the start of the countdown to the second coming). God the Father can choose any number of years for the length of that "**DP**" period. But once the countdown to the second coming starts, God has already decided that certain things will take place. Some of those things are allotted very specific periods of time, while the length of time for other things within that countdown period is not predetermined.

My other article, "**The 70 Weeks Prophecy And The Two Witnesses**", presents important information that ties into this discussion right here. There is a very important reason why the ministry of the two witnesses must go for exactly 3.5 years. And **God will not allow any of man's perverse destructive actions to prevent the fulfillment of that particular ministry**.

So it will be the days of man's perverse actions methodically destroying all human life that will be shortened. The woes and problems will then continue on a somewhat lower level of destructiveness, low enough to not threaten human life with total extinction within the next year or two; and by then Jesus Christ will have returned and started to send out "the healing waters" that will on a worldwide basis heal all the things man's actions polluted and destroyed (see Ezekiel 47, specifically verses 8-9). And the actual 42 months countdown to the second coming will continue without any shortening.

Let's try to see this from God's perspective.

After a discretionary number of years since the time of Christ's ministry, God then decides on a very specific countdown period to Christ's second coming. And then God supposedly announces almost

2000 years in advance that this countdown period of 3.5 years will be "shortened".

What does that say about God? If God knows so clearly well in advance that He is going to shorten that countdown period, **why didn't God simply select a shorter countdown period to start with?** Why specify a longer countdown period, only to immediately say that it will actually be shortened?

Furthermore, Revelation 11 is clear that the ministry of the two witnesses will be "1260 days", or 42 months. And it is only "**when they shall have finished their testimony**" (Revelation 11:7) that they are killed. So their 3.5 years are not cut short. Therefore that countdown period of 3.5 years to Jesus Christ's return also remains intact. But if Matthew 24:22 is supposed to mean that this 3.5-year period will be cut short, then we have a conflict: is it cut short or is it not cut short?

The truth is that there is no conflict. **The actual time period will last exactly** as long as God has already announced, which is **3.5 years**. And the ministry of the two witnesses will last exactly as planned for that entire period. But within that 3.5-year period the conditions of extreme dangers to human life and the very likely high levels of toxicity will be scaled back to a level where human life can still survive.

God will intervene in man-caused conditions, but God will not intervene by changing specified pre-ordained time periods.

So where do we stand right now?

NOW IS OUR SALVATION NEARER THAN WHEN WE FIRST BELIEVED

Many of us were motivated to come into God's Church by the thought that Jesus Christ will return soon, possibly in our own lifetime. We believed that we were in the gun-lap with Jesus Christ's return just a few short years away.

And now I am saying that at this point in time we have nothing, absolutely nothing, on which to base our conviction of an imminent second coming. It has all been based on a misunderstanding of the Scriptures.

So understand the following:

Nothing of what I have said in this article makes the second coming of Jesus Christ even one single day later than it was going to be before I wrote this article. What I have discussed in this article has no influence of any kind on the date for Jesus Christ's return. My explanation doesn't make it earlier or later. My article doesn't change anything regarding when Jesus Christ will return.

All I have done here is:

1) I have explained that God the Father doesn't really want any human being to know before the last 3.5 years when Jesus Christ will return. That is the first key.

2) Therefore God saw to it that there are no clues of any kind, neither prophetic nor historical, that could guide us into discovering the date for Christ's 2nd coming.

3) The only clues God has given us apply to the 3.5-year countdown to the 2nd coming. At that point in time God will also reveal His secrets to His servants.

4) God has in the past added years to the original 7000-year plan, and the indication is that God will do so again, **if that is what is needed** to ensure success for God's plan. Such additions are not necessarily planned up-front, but they are added by God as and when a need for more time arises.

5) The real key for anticipating when the second coming will take place is something that is completely unavailable to us human beings. That one key for establishing at least a general ballpark framework for dating the second coming is knowing exactly **how many people have already been irrevocably selected for the 144000 in the first resurrection**.

6) That figure, more than anything else, will influence the date that God the Father will select for Jesus Christ's return. And here we human beings are totally in the dark. We don't even vaguely know whether that number presently stands at 81246 or at 142973, or at any other number.

7) As long as that number falls seriously short of 144000, there is no prophecy chart and no prediction and no interpretation that can hasten Christ's return. **God the Father will not send Jesus Christ back to this Earth until 144000 individuals are guaranteed for the first resurrection.**

8) All we can do is submit our lives fully to God, doing our part to push that total towards the 144000 finish line. We need to show God that with us the seed has fallen "on good ground".

Since for us it is so unpredictable to know when that number will reach 144000, therefore "**in such an hour as you think not the Son of man comes**" (Matthew 24:44). So we must always be ready (same verse). And most assuredly, "now is our salvation nearer than when we (first) believed" (Romans 13:11).

Let us never cease praying "**please let Your Kingdom come quickly**".

Frank W Nelte

Note: On the next page is a 1-page presentation of the time frame for God's plan. However, that one page is in landscape format. It presents the equation I have discussed in this article in a visually easier form. And it also provides some general statements regarding that equation. So be sure to print out the next page in landscape format.

TIME FRAME FOR GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION (From Adam - New Heaven)

(DP_1 + 120 yrs) **+** (DP_2 + 483 yrs) **+** (DP_3 + 3.5 yrs) **+** 1000 yrs **+** (DP_4 + 100 yrs) = **> 7100 yrs**

(**Adam - Flood**) **(1st Coming - 2nd Coming)** **(End of Mill. - New Heaven)**

(Flood - Christ's ministry) **(Millennium)**

DP_1 = God's "Discretionary Period" before starting the 120-year count-down to the flood

DP_2 = God's "Discretionary Period" before starting the 69-week (483-year) count-down to Christ's ministry

DP_3 = God's "Discretionary Period" before starting the 3.5-year count-down to Christ's second coming

DP_4 = God's "Discretionary Period" before starting the 100-year count-down to the completion of God's plan

The total time from Adam's creation to the end of the 100-year period, at which time the present universe will be burned up, and the New Heaven + New Earth + New Jerusalem will be created, will **exceed 7100 years by at least 30+ years**. That is because the period from Adam's creation to the second coming of Jesus Christ is **already** in line to **exceed 6030 years**, and every year that passes only makes that period greater.

The four "Discretionary Periods" give God total flexibility regarding when to start the count-down for all four specific events. And "DP_3" specifically makes it totally impossible for any human being or any angel to predict the time when the 3.5-year count-down to Christ's second coming will start. It is only when that 3.5-year count-down starts, as indicated by the start of the ministry of the two witnesses, that the return of Jesus Christ can be predicted with any accuracy.

Can you see **the pattern** of God employing "discretionary periods" to retain total control, without being committed to meet the expectations of prophecy-buffs regarding when to send Jesus Christ back to this Earth? Those discretionary periods allow God to **make available as much time as will be needed** to achieve God's purposes.

Frank W Nelte