

*Restoring Original Christianity—for Today!®*

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Dear Brethren,

According to the Roman Civil Calendar, the year 2026 has begun. God, however, will continue to reckon time according to *His* timetable—the Calculated Hebrew Calendar.

Many of us who have been in the Church of God for decades once believed that Christ would have already returned by now—and that we would be in the Kingdom of God, ruling with Him. But every attempt by men to calculate or set exact dates for the return of Christ has failed. In fact, none of the dates theologians or self-styled prophets have assumed to be the day of Jesus' second coming have had anything to do with *God's actual timetable*. While the Bible gives us the structure of major events to happen in prophecy—based on the Sabbath and holy days—we must not forget what Jesus Himself told us about His return: “But concerning **that day, and the hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only**” (Matt. 24:36).

Indeed, forty days after Jesus' resurrection—after teaching the disciples much more about the Kingdom of God—as He was about to ascend into heaven, His disciples asked, “Lord, will You restore the kingdom to Israel at this time?” He answered, “**It is not for you to know *the times or the seasons, which the Father has placed in His own authority***; but you yourselves shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto *the ends of the earth*” (Acts 1:6-8). This confirms that the Father has the sole authority in determining the exact time of Jesus' return.

***We Must Watch Events—Not Specific Dates:*** According to biblical prophecies of the end times, certain specific events must take place. This is why Jesus told us to watch *events*, not to set dates. There are 14 major events that must take place before Jesus' return. Some years ago I recorded a message detailing these events—*Fourteen Things to Happen in Prophecy Before the End Comes* (you may download this message from our website). This letter will focus on *five* of those key events that must transpire *before* the beginning of the Great Tribulation. Indeed, many events we are witnessing today are leading up to the fulfillment of these key events. What follows are *five key prophetic events* that must occur.

***First: The King of the North*** must be ruling in Europe. The fulfilling of this event is not yet on the horizon. Although Germany has a strong economy and is rapidly rebuilding its military, Europe as a whole is still in political and financial disarray. Religiously, the Catholic Church is at its lowest level of influence in modern history. Thus, it will take a number of years for the King of the North to appear.

***Second: The King of the South*** must be in power in the Islamic countries of the Middle East. According to biblical prophecy, the King of the South—apparently leading a confederacy of Islamic

nations—will arise to a position of power and become a threat to the King of the North. Given the chaotic conditions of the Islamic nations today, this will also take a number of years to develop: “And at the time of the end, the king of the south shall push at him. And the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind with chariots and with horsemen and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries and shall overflow and sweep through. He shall also enter into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown. But these shall escape out of his hand: Edom and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. And he shall stretch out his hand also upon the countries. And the land of Egypt shall not escape. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt. And the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps” (Dan. 11:40-43).

**Third:** Before these events can take place, the Jews must build the third Temple in Jerusalem, as shown in the book of Revelation: “Then *the angel* gave me a measuring rod like a staff, saying, ‘Arise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those who worship in it; but leave out the court that *is* within the temple *area*, and do not measure it because it has been given *up* to the Gentiles; and they shall trample upon the holy city *for* forty-two months’ ” (Rev. 11:1-2).

**Fourth:** The Two Witnesses must come on the scene: “And I will give *power* to My two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred *and* sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and *the* two lamp stands that stand before the God of the earth” (Rev. 11:1-4). The Two Witnesses will not come from any of the churches of God. One will be the governor of Judea and the other will be the High Priest of the coming Temple (see Zech. 3 & 4).

**Fifth:** A third and final Elijah is yet to come: About the same time the Two Witnesses appear, a third and final Elijah is prophesied to come on the scene. We find the biblical record of the *first* Elijah the prophet in I Kings 17-22 and II Kings 1-10.

*The second Elijah was John the Baptist.* When the angel Gabriel announced to Zacharias that his wife Elizabeth would bear him a son, he prophesied this about John the Baptist: “For he shall be great before the Lord. And he shall never drink wine or strong drink in any form, but he shall be filled with *the* Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to *the* Lord their God. **And he shall go before Him in *the* spirit and power of Elijah, to turn *the* hearts of the fathers to *the* children, and *the* disobedient to *the* wisdom of *the* righteous, to make ready a people prepared for *the* Lord**” (Luke 1:15-17).

There are two other prophecies concerning John the Baptist in the Old Testament. The first one is found in the book of Isaiah: “A voice is calling out in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God’ ” (Isa. 40:3). The second one is recorded in the book of Malachi: “ ‘**Behold, I will send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me.** And the Lord, Whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in Whom you delight. Behold, He comes,’ says the LORD of hosts” (Mal. 3:1).

After John the Baptist was circumcised and named John, his father Zacharias prophesied this about his son: “**And you, little child, shall be called *the* prophet of *the* Highest; for you shall go before *the* face of *the* Lord, to prepare His ways;** to give *the* knowledge of salvation to His people by *the* remission of their sins, through *the* deep inner compassions of our God; in which *the* dayspring from on high has visited us, to shine upon those who are sitting in darkness and in *the* shadow of death, to direct our feet into *the* way of peace” (Luke 1:76-79).

Although John the Baptist was described by the angel Gabriel as one coming in the spirit and power of Elijah, John the Baptist did not describe himself in that way. When the Jews asked John who he was, he did not declare himself to be Elijah. Notice his answer: “And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, ‘Who are you?’ Then he *freely* admitted, and did not deny, but declared, ‘I am not the Christ.’ And they asked him, ‘**Then who *are* you? Are you Elijah?**’ And he said, ‘**I am not.**’ Then they asked, ‘Are you the

Prophet? 'And he answered, 'No. 'Therefore, they said to him, 'Who are you? What do you say about yourself so that we may give an answer to those who sent us?' He said, **'I am a voice crying in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord,"** as Isaiah the prophet said. 'Now those who had been sent belonged to *the sect* of the Pharisees..." (John 1:19-24).

Interestingly, John did not link himself to the prophecies of Malachi. Rather, he designated himself as "a voice crying in the wilderness" from the prophet Isaiah. Why was this? It could only be that there is a *third* Elijah to come before the second coming of Jesus at the end of the age.

**The third Elijah** was prophesied of by Jesus Himself. After Peter, James and John had seen the vision of Jesus' transfiguration, which included a vision of Moses and the first Elijah, Jesus announced to these three disciples that John the Baptist was an Elijah and that there was yet another Elijah to come. However, they apparently did not understand—because Jesus was speaking of an Elijah who "shall come" before His second coming—about which they knew nothing. Notice: "Now as they were descending from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, **'Tell the vision to no one until the Son of man has risen from the dead.** 'Then His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first? 'And Jesus answered *and* said to them, **'Elijah shall indeed come first and restore all things** [a future Elijah—a third Elijah]. **But I tell you that Elijah has already come** [John the Baptist—the second Elijah], and they did not recognize him; but they did to him whatever they desired' " (Matt. 17:9-12).

It is important to realize that when Jesus told these things to the three disciples, John the Baptist—the second Elijah—had already been dead for some time. Before the vision of the transfiguration, it is recorded in Mark 6:17-28 that Herod the Tetrarch had beheaded John the Baptist. This means that Jesus was indeed declaring that a third Elijah was yet to come. Thus, Jesus was confirming the prophecy of a third Elijah as found in the book of Malachi, who is yet to appear just before Jesus' second coming. " 'For behold, the day is coming, burning like a consuming oven; and all the proud, and every doer of wickedness, shall be stubble. And the day that comes shall burn them up,' says the LORD of hosts, 'and will leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you who fear My name, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise [this is the sign of the Son of Man that appears like a sun at the beginning of His second coming—Matt. 24:27-30], and healing will be in His wings. And you shall go out and grow up like calves of the stall. And you shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I am preparing,' says the LORD of hosts.

" 'Remember the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded to him in Horeb for all Israel, *with* the statutes and judgments. **Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD** [Jesus' second coming, not His first]. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the sons, and the heart of the sons to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth *with* utter destruction' " (Mal. 4:1-6). This has to be the third Elijah, who is yet to come—just as declared by Jesus that "Elijah shall come."

Decades ago a leading minister in a church of God was declared to be the third Elijah. But, he has been dead now for 26 years and is thus too far removed from the return of Christ to have had any connection with the prophesied third Elijah. So we still don't know who that man will be. But most assuredly he will not come from a church of God. Rather, it is more likely that he will be a descendant of the house of Aaron—of the priestly line, as was John the Baptist—and will minister to Jews in Palestine who are repenting because of the work of the Two Witnesses (see Zech. 12:7-14).

As Jesus said, we cannot know the exact date of His return. So we need to be watching for prophesied events to unfold. This is why Jesus admonished us: **"Take heed, be watching and praying.** For you do not know when the time is *coming*. *It is* like a man journeying to a far country, leaving his house and giving authority to his servants, and to each one his work, and commanding

the doorkeeper to watch. **Be watching**, therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming: at evening, or at midnight, or at *the* cock's crowing, or *in the* morning; **lest he come suddenly and find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!**" (Mark 13:33-37).

Jesus also told us to watch so that we are not caught up in the affairs of this world, not preoccupied with the cares and troubles of this life: "Then He spoke a parable to them: 'Observe the fig tree, and all the trees. When they have already begun to bud, *and* you look *at them*, you yourselves know that summer is near. In the same way also, **when you see these things coming to pass, know that the kingdom of God is near.**"

" 'Truly I say to you, *there is* no way that this generation shall pass away until all *these things* have taken place. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall never pass away. **Watch yourselves, lest your hearts be preoccupied with high living and drinking and the cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly.** For as a snare it shall come upon all those who dwell on the face of the earth. **Watch therefore, and pray at all times** that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:29-36).

***Being Perfected in the Love and Grace of God:*** We know that God the Father and Jesus Christ love us. But we must not take that for granted and focus on the physical things of this life and neglect our love for God. The best way to be "watching" our spiritual life and relationship with God is to be growing in the love and grace of God (II Pet. 3:18). This is the greatest thing we can do and is why Jesus said that the greatest commandment of all is this: "*The* first of all the commandments *is*, 'Hear, O Israel. Our one God is *the* Lord, *the* Lord. **And you shall love *the* Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.**' **This is the first commandment**" (Mark 12:29-30).

Remember, growing in the grace and love of God is a process, based on our daily fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ through prayer and study. The apostle John wrote his first epistle when there was great turmoil in the churches and in the world, much like it is today. Therefore, we can learn a great deal from his letters about how we need to live our lives in these times of trouble. We need to devote ourselves to prayer and study and focus on the love of God—God's love for us and our love for God. "[I]f anyone is keeping His Word, truly in this one the love of God is being perfected..." (I John 2:5).

John explains that we are *in* the love of God and that His love is being perfected in us. "In this way the love of God was manifested toward us: that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. **In this act is the love—not that we loved God; rather, that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also are duty-bound to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. **Yet, if we love one another, God dwells in us, and His own love is perfected in us.**

"By this *standard* we know that we are dwelling in Him, and He *is dwelling* in us: because of His own Spirit, *which* He has given to us.... **And we have known and have believed the love that God has toward us. God is love, and the one who dwells in love is dwelling in God, and God in him. By this spiritual indwelling, the love of God is perfected within us,** so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment because even as He is, so also are we in this world. **There is no fear in the love of God; rather, perfect love casts out fear because fear has torment...**" (I John 4:9-13; 16-18).

The apostle Paul brings out that the love of God is combined with the faith and the grace of God. These are the spiritual gifts that empower us to develop godly character through the love of God. He writes, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Whom **we also have access by faith into this grace in which we stand,** and we ourselves boast in *the* hope of the glory of God. And not only *this*, but we also boast

in tribulations, realizing that tribulation brings forth endurance, and endurance *brings forth* character, and character *brings forth* hope. **And the hope of God never makes us ashamed because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, which has been given to us**” (Rom. 5:1-5).

Jude, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote that there were ungodly men who were subverting the grace of God. They were stealthy infiltrators, attempting to destroy the Church from the inside. He exhorted the brethren to stand strong in the faith and remain firm in the love of God: “Beloved, when personally exerting all *my* diligence to write to you concerning the common salvation, I was compelled to write to you, **exhorting you to fervently fight for the faith**, which once for all *time* has been delivered to the saints. For certain men have stealthily crept in, those who long ago have been written about, condemning *them* to this judgment. *They are* ungodly men, who are perverting the grace of our God, *turning it* into licentiousness, and are personally denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.... **Beloved, be building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, so that you keep yourselves in the love of God**” (Jude 3-4, 20-21).

Brethren, just as the early New Testament Church faced great spiritual challenges, we too are confronted with similar challenges. Thankfully, God has provided their wonderful epistles to teach and inspire us so that we will have the strength to continue to grow in grace and knowledge and to develop a stronger love for God. Thank you for your love and prayers for us and all the brethren. We pray for you every day—for God’s blessings and protection, and for your health and healing. We thank you for your tithes and offerings—used to serve the brethren and preach the Gospel of the coming Kingdom of God. We pray that God will bless you and keep watch over you in all things. May God’s love and grace continue to be upon you.

With love in Christ Jesus,

*Fred R. Coulter*

FRC

*PS:* Our program of distributing Bibles and Greek-English Interlinears continues to be a success! And we still have plenty of Bibles and Interlinears left—so feel free to request copies if you can place them into the hands of those who have a sincere desire to study the Scriptures. You can order copies individually or by the box—paperback, 8 in a box; vinyl, 6 in a box; and Interlinears, 4 in a box. Thank you and keep up the good work!

***Note about the monthly letters:***

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The articles—which feature all new material—will be organized into short booklets called the *Basic Biblical Christianity Series*. Volumes 1 and 2 are available now. Please contact us if you would like these booklets (or download them from our website).

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