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Episode 105 - Was Christ Coming in Paul's Lifetime? A Revelation Deep-Dive

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Scott Stanley examines evidence that the Apostle Paul expected Jesus to return soon, studying key New Testament passages and linking Paul's message to Revelation and the last-generation church. He discusses verses from 1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, Romans, and Isaiah 49, explains inner spiritual transformation, the symbolism of Revelation 7, and the practical call to holiness, love, and unity as preparation for Christ's coming.

Modified Transcript:

Scriptures are transcribed directly with notations. Refer to the KJV for verbatim wording.

Hi, this is Scott Stanley with DTG Ministries, continuing to search out and explore the deep things of God in the book of Revelation. One interesting concept that has come to me over the years is the fact that I believe the apostle Paul believed Jesus was going to return in his lifetime. Now, if that is the case, that means in Paul's mind, he was addressing the last generation church.

He, of course, had a handle on what was going to happen at the end. So all of his warnings, all of the things he was saying to that group of people, I could say the first-century church, apply to the last-generation church. I see the wisdom of God in that. I see that God had this man writing the wonderful things he wrote, addressing all the issues, everything going on, not realizing how it would apply to us at the second coming.

So I started going through the New Testament looking for things that implied Paul thought Jesus would come in his lifetime. There were a few things that stood out to me, but nothing that just really had teeth, you know, that you could just look at and say, well, there it is right there, except for two verses.

Now, what I want to do is just read some of the things that Paul wrote, which, maybe to you, to some people, would make sense that he thought Christ was coming in his lifetime. The first one I want to look at is 1 Thessalonians chapter 3. He makes this statement in verse 13. Let me just read verse 12. In fact, let's read verse 11 because everything Paul wrote, I know, was inspired by God, and it all has meaning.

1Th 3:11 God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you.

You know, when I read that, I thought, well, there's a Godhead verse, and I know that in Paul's day, you see, the apostasy had begun... and he said, it wouldn't stop until Jesus returns (2Th 2:7-8). Just that right there makes you think he believed the second coming would occur in his lifetime. However, I could see people would argue that. But here, 1 Thessalonians 3:11,

1Th 3:11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you.

1Th 3:12 And the Lord make you increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you.

1Th 3:13 To the end, he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

Would he write that, knowing that there's a two-thousand-year gap, that it isn't going to happen for two thousand years? And I've got to say something about this, which really

has nothing to do with what I'm trying to say in this podcast. But Paul writes in Ephesians 3 that the Spirit of God is in your inner man. Well, your inner man is your throne...it's your conscience. The Spirit of God is on that throne, just like you see in Revelation.

There's one on the throne, Revelation 4. The Spirit of God is in your inner man. He's on the throne, and Christ is in your heart by faith. Now just think about that for a minute. You see, with Christ being in your heart, that allows God to be on your throne because you have that information Christ brought. This really is a study in and of itself. If you just think about this, Jesus Christ on the cross portrayed the understanding of God.

Now, it just so happens, the understanding of God that he portrayed is about us. So right there on the cross, there is the Father, the Son, and humanity. They're all there present at the death of Christ. And because Jesus is showing you God's understanding, and because God's understanding is about us, I can come to the cross, which is the wisdom of God. In that wisdom, I can draw out God's understanding.

But remember, his understanding is about us. So when I draw out his understanding, I gain in knowledge of myself. It's that knowledge of myself, once I see it, I can seek the Lord for self-control, and to overcome, and remember to apply what I'm seeing at the cross, which is what? Eating the bread. So by eating the bread of life, Christ, I'm applying the Spirit of God who's on my throne.

Christ is in my heart. The Father is on the throne, and he is revealing truth to me about myself and others in my life. You see, we're all one like that. We're all one – the Father, the Son, and us. We're in the mind of God. Jesus brought that to us on the cross, and we receive both the Father and Son, and the Comforter at that cross. Again, we're all one.

So I can't help but think of that when I read what I just read. I'm going to read this again in 1 Thessalonians 3:11.

1Th 3:11 Now God himself our Father, and our Lord, Jesus Christ, direct our way to you.
1Th 3:12 And the Lord, Jesus, make you to increase and abound in love (How does he do that? By the cross, one toward each other) toward all men, even as we do toward you.

1Th 3:13 To the end (he wants you to see the cross, walk in love), to the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all of his saints.

Again, would he have written that that way if he thought, well, there are two thousand years in between here? Well, let's go to another one. Let's go to 1 Peter, chapter 4, verse 7.

1Pe 4:7 But the end, the completion of all things is at hand. Be therefore sober and watch unto prayer.

Does that sound like he's going to wait another two thousand years to see it? To me, it's pretty obvious that these guys thought he would be coming. I went online and typed in, "Did the apostles believe Christ was coming in their day?" And nobody said "no." Everybody thinks this. So another one I want you to look at is 2 Peter, chapter 3, verse 10.

2Pe 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works in it shall be burned up.

2Pe 3:11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conduct and godliness,

2Pe 3:12 As you're looking for and hasting the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

Looking for and hasting... To me, again, it sounds like they actually thought he was coming in their lifetime. Now, I want to read all of these in order to make my point. Philippians 4, verse 5.

Php 4:5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

So you could argue, well, he doesn't mean literally coming. He just means the Lord is here. He's at hand for you, and maybe that's what it means. But if he meant the Lord is at hand, he wasn't expecting another two thousand years of this stuff, was he? *The Lord is at hand*. 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, starting at verse 1,

2Th 2:1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him (that's the resurrection),

2Th 2:2 That you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

2Th 2:3 Let no man deceive you in any way: for that day will not come, except there's a falling away, and the man of sin be revealed...

Now, that says the second coming isn't going to happen until there is an apostasy first, and the man of sin is revealed. Now, the point about that is, Paul says in verse 7,

2Th 2:7 The mystery of iniquity is already working: only he who is restraining him will, until he's taken out of the way.

Did he think in his lifetime that this man of sin was going to happen, that there was going to be an apostasy, then the man of sin? Did he really believe that? I tend to think he did. But let me get to two verses that really seem to knock this out of the park concerning Paul's understanding of the last days. Romans 16, he says in verse 20,

Rom 16:20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

He will bruise Satan under your feet shortly. What makes that so significant? It's because of what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15. In 1 Corinthians 15, I want to start reading at verse 22.

1Co 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

1Co 15:23 That every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christs, at his coming.

1Co 15:24 Then is the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and authority and power.

1Co 15:25 For he must reign, till he has put all enemies under his feet.

1Co 15:26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

1Co 15:27 For he has put all things under his feet. But when he says all things are put under him, it's manifest (it means except) the one who put all things under him.

1Co 15:28 And when all things are subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject to him that put all things under him, so that God may be all in all.

Again, when all things are put under his feet, that's the end. When all things are put under his feet, he delivers up the kingdom. See, again, verse 24,

1Co 15:24 Then comes the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God...

See, all things are put under the authority of God. Well, why would he say, Romans 16:20, "*the God of peace will bruise Satan under your feet shortly*"? I think he thought this was going to be in his lifetime. To me, that clenches it. How are you going to argue that? He actually thought Christ was coming in his lifetime. But another one is seen in 2 Corinthians chapter 6. I want to start reading at verse 1.

2Co 6:1 We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that you receive not the grace of God in vain.

2Co 6:2 (For he says, I've heard you in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

He's quoting Isaiah 49:8, *now is this accepted time*. What does he mean by "the accepted time"? Go to Isaiah 49:8, and in the past, I've gone over "the acceptable time."

Isa 49:8 Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard you...

Well, 2 Corinthians 6:2, what does he mean by "an acceptable time"? Without getting into all the details, when Jesus Christ came, he came for the Jew, the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Jesus comes and dies, knowing that the message will go to the Gentile too. But he's specifically there for the Jew. After he dies, when you come to Acts chapter 10, Peter is given the vision of the sheet with the animals in it. He's told to go to Cornelius, who's a Gentile, and there the Holy Spirit falls on the Gentiles.

In Acts chapter 10, Peter was delivering the gospel. The Holy Spirit fell on them, and if you continue reading that, you'll see that Peter rehearsed to himself what he was going to say to the elders at Jerusalem because they were not going to like it that he gave the message to the Gentiles. See, it hadn't come to the Gentiles. So, the acceptable time

when the message went to the Gentiles... now it's acceptable, give the message to the Gentile.

So we know that Paul understood that the acceptable time had begun. The message goes to the Gentile, and to be perfectly honest about it, he also knew, when the Gentiles reach the fullness, when the fullness of the Gentiles happens, Romans 11, they're going to be sent to Jacob, and it fulfills the prophecy in Isaiah 59:20-21, where the Lord is going to come out of Zion unto Jacob.

That means the Lord is going to come to Zion first, then to Jacob. Who is Zion? Zion is Hebrews chapter 12. I want to read part of this just to have this fresh in our mind, what we're talking about. In Hebrews 12:22,

Heb 12:22 You are come to mount Sion (remember God or the Lord will come out of Zion unto Jacob), you've come to Zion, the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of messengers,

Heb 12:23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

Heb 12:24 And Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel.

So here is Zion. Zion are the people in Paul's day that he is addressing, who have received Jesus as the Son of God, and have received him and understand the Holy Spirit. This is Zion. So in Paul's mind, as I go back and look at Isaiah 49:8, he did not know that if you look at Isaiah 49:7-8, there were two thousand years between those two verses. Isaiah 49:1-7 is about the apostles. Two thousand years go by, and then you have verse eight, where he's addressing the Gentiles who have come into the truth. This is the acceptable time.

Now, I want you to read this with me, and I want to show you how I know that this was not Paul's day, although it's the acceptable time. Let's read this.

Isa 49:8 Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard you, and in a day of salvation have I helped you: and I will preserve you. I'm going to give you for a covenant of the people to establish the earth, and cause to inherit the desolate heritages.

What he's talking about is the Jew. He's going to send you to the Jew. The Lord will come out of Zion unto Jacob. But he says, *I'm giving you for a covenant or the covenant of the people*. That fulfills Isaiah 59:20-21. But if you realize he's talking about the last generation church, he gives you for the covenant. You're going to go explain the new covenant to Jacob. I'm giving you for the covenant

Isa 49:9 So that you (the last generation church) may say to the prisoners (of iniquity), Go forth; to them that are in darkness, be uncovered. (Let light be on you, not the darkness.) They shall feed in the way, and their pastures shall be in all high places.

Now, that word "pasture" in Jeremiah 10:21 is actually the word "flock," the flocks. Even though it's a different word, it still reminds me of Ezekiel 36, and God's promise... looking at verse 37:

Eze 36:37 Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like sheep, flocks, like sheep.

Eze 36:38 ... As the sheep in Jerusalem in the solemn feast days...

Well, those were sacrifices. So he puts within you that willingness to find death, to die to self, to allow God's Spirit to have full control in your life. I think that's what he's talking about in Isaiah 49:9.

Isa 49:9 You can say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them who are in darkness, Be uncovered. They shall feed in the way, and their flocks shall be in all the high places. (Who? The last generation church.)

Isa 49:10 They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat or sun smite them...

Where have you read that? Well, that's Revelation 7:16. That is talking about the 144,000, which are not people. It's truth that's been redeemed. This is one way I know this is talking about the last generation church because God applies that verse to the great multitude clothed in white, and the elder says, *"Who are these in white?"* (Rev 7:13) Does he say, *"Who are these in white,"* changing it? No. *"Who are these in white?"* Who is this great multitude? And he quotes this verse.

They've come out of great tribulation (Rev 7:14). The tribulation we have gone through as the angel ascended from the east into the heavens, redeeming all of the things we were taught. Again, see, he doesn't take away the things we were taught. He changes it so that he puts it in the heavens. He gives you his understanding of what these things are. Whatever it is, you know, whether it's the law or Satan or heaven or hell, we need to understand the way God does. Nothing is going to help you unless you understand that God is love, and we take the definition of love.

You know, I've got to say, I ran into a guy. I took my vacuum cleaner in to have it looked at, and I noticed there was an open Bible on the counter, and I said, "Oh, who studies the Bible?" The guy said, "Oh, we all do." ... "Really?" ... "Yeah." So I said, "Are you aware that when Jesus died on the cross, he was all of us, and Paul tells us we need to unite with him in death? He was a picture of all of us."

The guy said, "Well, do you know that Jesus went into hell to gain disciples?" And I just looked at him. I said, "No, I'm not sure about that." But he totally disregarded what I said, and when he said what he did, I realized that he is one of these people who, if you give them a truth, they don't like where that leads. They're not looking at the truth as the truth. What's happening is, "Wow, if you're right, my church is wrong. If you're right, I'm wrong. If you're right, all the people I know are wrong." So that is enough to cause him to turn and walk away from truth.

You would think if what I said bothered him, he would have said, "Well, what do you mean? Why don't you show me what you're talking about?" But he didn't do it. He didn't want to know what I was talking about. So it's interesting all the different mindsets that are out there, all the different things.

With that, see, there is a tribulation we have gone through, an inward tribulation. As God redeems us, he gives us the picture in the sixth seal, where all the people are crying for the rocks and mountains to fall on them. Why? Because he is taking away all of the things you thought to be true. I've got people in my mind; they come to my mind all the time. I think of the Lord telling me to give this message at the end. I'm giving the message, and there are people who won't even listen to the podcast. That means they're not being redeemed. That means they're not changing their thinking.

Now listen, on these podcasts, if I'm wrong, somebody needs to show me. If I'm not wrong, then you need to believe it and join in. The Lord is trying to make us all one, so that we all might be one even as the Father and Son are one. But it does cause an inward tribulation. Again, that's why giving this message at the end of the world will be so difficult, because of the tribulation people have to endure to change the way they think.

But this is one of the verses, Isaiah 49:10, that tells me he's talking about the last generation church. I want to read it again.

Isa 49:10 They shall not hunger or thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that has mercy on them shall lead them (Who? Who is "them"? The pastures are the flocks. This is what I want you to see.) They'll feed in the way, and their flocks shall be in high places.

The flocks will not hunger or thirst. The flocks will not have the heat or the sun smite them. Again, this is quoted in Revelation 7. God gave the prophecy. It's the flocks. It's the 144,000. It's the four living creatures and elders redeemed. They're clothed in white. *Who are these in white?* He quotes Isaiah 49:10.

Isa 49:10 They shall not hunger or thirst (the flocks.) Neither shall the heat or sun smite them: for he that has mercy on them will lead them, by the springs of water he will guide them.

Isa 49:11 And I will make all my doctrines a way, and my highways shall be exalted.

Isa 49:12 Behold, these shall come from far: lo, these from the north, west, and the far east, from all over the world.

Isa 49:13 So sing, O heavens; be joyful, O earth; break forth into singing, O ye mountains (doctrines of truth): for Jehovah has comforted his people. He will have mercy upon his afflicted.

But here's another reason I know it's the end of the world.

Isa 49:14 Zion said, The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me.

Who was Zion? We read it in Hebrews 12. Just bear with me for a second. If Paul really believed Jesus was coming in his lifetime, and he was teaching that, what about the people in the apostasy who walked away from the apostles? They didn't totally disregard Jesus. They did believe he died for their sin. He was buried. He rose. He was seen. They believed all of that. They believed he was Christ.

But they still walked away from the apostles because they disagreed concerning Christ. Well, if you have an apostasy in Paul's day and he's teaching people that Jesus is coming in his day, but Jesus doesn't come, what would the people in the apostasy think concerning Paul or any of the apostles? They've already walked away from their teachings.

Well, to them, it would be proof that Paul doesn't know what he's talking about. He's telling everybody out here to get ready. *"The Lord's at hand."* Well, the Lord wasn't at hand. He was two thousand years away from coming, and they're telling these people to get ready for it. Why? Because their writings are given to us, and God knew it. They were writing for people at the end of the world. They just didn't know that there was a two-thousand-year gap.

So what do you think the apostasy thought about Paul's writings? Well, I'm sure they discarded them, and they began to think what they wanted to think, interpreting the Old Testament the way they wanted to interpret it, and enough time goes by that the people, say a hundred, two hundred years go by... well, they forget by this time that the beginning of the apostasy was rejecting the apostles.

So the people go back to the Bible. They're taking the writings, now, of the apostles, and again, by the time Martin Luther did what he did, people had not read the Bible for a thousand years. So they have forgotten the rejection of the apostles. Now they're saying "We need to accept the apostles," and they do to the point that they slay the Catholic Church with the sword, the sword of the apostles.

Again, the beginning of the apostasy, I don't think they listened to Paul at all. We know they didn't. *They walked out from us. They walked away from us* (2Tm 1:15; 1Jn 2:19). But why am I saying this? Because he says, *"Zion is saying, The Lord has forsaken me. My God*

has forgotten me." Zion was forsaken, not in Paul's day, by the majority. It's our day that Zion will say, "I'm forsaken," and it's up to God to bring it back together.

Isa 49:15 Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget you.

Isa 49:16 Behold, I have graven you upon the palms of my hands; your walls of salvation are continually before me (talking about Zion).

Isa 49:17 Your children shall make haste; your destroyers, and they that made you waste shall go forth of you.

Isa 49:18 Lift up the eyes of your understanding. (Now, I literally could put Revelation 7 right there... the angel ascending, lifting up, ascending from the east.) Lift up the eyes of your understanding and look: all of these gather themselves together, and come to you. (All of these truths; that's what you're seeing in Revelation 7.) As I live, saith Jehovah, you'll clothe yourself with all of these truths as with an ornament, and you're going to bind them on you like a bride does.

Isa 49:19 For your waste and your desolate places, and the land of your destruction, shall even now be too distressed because of the inhabitants you're having (you're getting. In other words, the truth is being redeemed.) And they that swallowed you up shall be far away (All those lies, all that iniquity).

Isa 49:20 Your children which you shall have (future), after you've lost the other (after the redemption, after the 144,000. He's talking about the 144,000.) Your children which you shall have, after you've lost the other, they're going to say, again, in your ears (Where? In your ears? In your conscience), The place is still too narrow for me (There's still more truth.) Give place to me that I may settle in, that I may dwell.

So the truth just keeps on coming, and eventually we begin to realize, hey, this is the latter rain. This is what he's talking about. Verse 21,

Isa 49:21 Then shall you say (where?) in your heart, Who has begotten me these...

Where did all this truth come from? You're going to say this in your heart. I pray to God that you people are having this experience. Where's all this coming from?

Isa 49:21 You're going to say in your heart, Who has begotten me these, seeing I lost my children (what I thought to be true), and I am desolate, I'm a captive, am removing

to and fro? and who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone. Where were these? Where had these been?

Again, you're seeing a person being redeemed from iniquity, and the experience of that.

Isa 49:22 Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I'm going to lift up my hand to the nations, and I'm going to set up my standard (which his standard is the Son of God. I'm just not getting into it, but that's what it is, Isaiah 11.) I'm going to set up my standard to the people: and they are going to bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders.

Well, your sons and daughters are the truths that you're bringing forth, and people are going to see the Son of God. They're going to see that truth and bear it on their shoulders. What do you mean by "on their shoulders," the burden of it? They're going to bear the burden of the truth of what that brings... because one place he can call it a tribulation; here he can call it a burden.

For some people, I think it's a burden when you see the truth about the Son of God, and you have a wife, a husband, or family that totally rejects it. In that sense, it's become a burden. In that sense, the truth... you're carrying this on your shoulders.

Isa 49:23 And kings shall be your nursing fathers. (Well, that means to stand firm as a support for you. They will stand firm as a support to the people teaching them.) And their queens, we could say their wives, their emotional side, shall suckle, so bring you comfort.) They're going to bow down to you with their face to the earth, and lick up the dust of your feet (helping you understand your own misgivings, your own struggles that you're having) ...

The very people receiving the truth will be there to help you be made complete. Again, that's Revelation chapter 10: The angel comes down, clothed with the cloud. The cloud is the church. Sets one foot on the earth, one in the sea; his feet are fire, he cleanses the earth, dries the sea through the church. There's a final cleansing before going to Jacob.

Isa 49:23 ... and you're going to know I am Jehovah, for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me. (I might as well just close out this chapter.)

Isa 49:24 Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive be delivered?

Isa 49:25 But thus saith Jehovah, Even the captives of the mighty are going to be taken away, and the prey of the terrible will be delivered: because I'm going to contend with him that contends with you, and I'm going to save your children.

Isa 49:26 I'm going to feed them that oppress you with their own flesh (their own ideas); they shall be drunk with their own blood, as with sweet wine (they're going to think it's true): and all flesh is going to know that I Jehovah am your Savior and your Redeemer, I'm the mighty One of Jacob.

Isaiah 49, starting at verse 8, is a tremendous chapter for the last generation church. Again, Paul applied it to his day. God applies it to our day in Revelation 7. We are the last generation church, two thousand years between Isaiah 49:7 and 8. Paul, all the apostles wrote for us without realizing it. I'm sure if we put our heads together, we could find all kinds of verses that show he believed the second coming was in his lifetime. I believe it's obvious.

God is going to put Satan under your feet very shortly, he says. Well, that applies to you and me. Overcome in love. Dismiss sins so God can dismiss yours. Unite with the Savior. Be yoked with the Savior and walk in love continually, and Satan will be put under our feet.

Father, we worship you. There's nothing we want more than to glorify you and to be made in the image of Jesus right in the midst of total darkness. We pray you're glorified in Jesus' name. Amen.