

We are bound by time. We must “keep time” to go to work, to go to worship, to go to bed etc. Likewise, time applies to us when we read the Bible and sing songs. We cannot justify a song based on *human* time standards by appealing to a verse that deals with *God’s* time frame. The passage in 2 Peter 3:8 has no bearing on this issue whatsoever. We need to be better Bible students, and especially students of the context, before we try to justify the unjustifiable.

Another objection that is raised is that this song is “so powerful.” No doubt, this is a truly powerful song. To think that Jesus could be coming back any moment should make all of us live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age. But might does not make right. Just because this song is *powerful* does not make it *scriptural*. If we were to approve of things based on their inherent power, we would use many things that are unscriptural. For example, many people use drama in worship because it is supposed to be a powerful way to teach the Gospel. But does that make it *right* (1 Cor. 1:21)? Many people use instruments of music in worship because they are powerful, but does that make *them* right (Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16)? Just because humans think something is powerful in worship does not put God’s stamp of approval on it.

A third objection that is often raised has to do with what is known as “poetic license.” Many people think that those who object to this song are being too dogmatic and conservative, and simply cannot see the poetic license in the song. What exactly is poetic license? Poetic license is the right of an author, reader, or singer to interpret the words of a poem or song based on its use of figurative or illustrative language. I agree completely with poetic license. However, there is no figurative language in this song. It is meant to express exactly what the words say. In fact, the man who wrote this song was a “died-in-the-wool” premillennialist, and did not mean for us

to interpret it any other way than how he wrote it. Even if you were to try to use poetic license with this song, you could not make it teach the truth. The word “soon” carries inherent connotations. Surely no one would say that the word “soon” means 10,000 years from now! But it is *possible* for Jesus *not* to come back for 10,000 more years. Poetic license does not prove that one can sing this song. If we can use poetic license to justify singing this song, how long will it be before we use poetic license to “re-interpret” passages of Scripture that we do not like. That is exactly what many people are doing today.

When all the evidence is considered, can a Christian who knows the Bible sing this song? I pray that you will honestly consider these things, and search your Bible to see if they are true (Acts 17:11).

Is Jesus Coming Soon?

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As part of worship, Christians are instructed to sing “with the spirit and understanding,” in harmony with God’s Word (1 Cor. 14:15, Jn. 4:24; 17:17). To sing with understanding is to sing with a comprehension of the song’s words and how they relate to the Bible’s teaching on the subject under consideration. Since it is the case that words are our medium of communication, this would necessarily imply that the words of a song must be in harmony with the Scriptures. Unfortunately, however, there are some songs that we sing in the church that are not scriptural. This tract deals with the song “Jesus Is Coming Soon.” Is Jesus *really* coming soon? If so, *how* soon? If not, then why do we sing this song? I am persuaded that this song is not scriptural, and that it is sinful for the child of God to sing it because it cannot be sung with a proper understanding of the Second Coming of Christ. I suggest that this song is unscriptural for the following reasons.

First, this song is not scriptural because of its syntactical meaning. The subject of the sentence “Jesus is coming soon” is Jesus. He is the one doing the action. The words “is coming” are the verb of the sentence. The word “is” is definite in its action. For example, if you say “John is coming over” we understand that to be definite. There is no doubt about John coming over. Thus far, this phrase is biblical. Truly, Jesus is coming. However, here is where this song teaches error. The adverb of time, “soon,” which is used to modify “is coming,” makes this sentence wrong. Notice what the combined syntax of this phrase means: Jesus (the subject) is coming (the verb of definite action) *soon* (adverb of time which means shortly). The only way to understand this sentence (by the meaning of its words) is as follows: *in a short period of time Jesus is definitely coming back*. If you call me and tell me that you are coming by to see me *soon*, I expect to see you shortly (within an hour, a day, or perhaps a week at most). But “soon” does not mean 2,000 years later. One cannot use *any* adverb

of time to describe the Second Coming of the Lord. It would be just as biblically incorrect to say “Jesus is coming *later*” as it is to say “Jesus is coming *soon*.”

Second, the song “Jesus Is Coming Soon” is erroneous because it contradicts certain clear-cut passages of Scripture. Jesus Himself said, “But of that day [the Second Coming of Christ] and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only” (Mt. 24:36). If Jesus and the angels of Heaven do not know when He is coming, then how can *we* even claim to know? Do we not understand that when we say, “Jesus *is* coming *soon*,” we are claiming to know more than our Lord knows? The fact is, Jesus’ coming is *indefinite* in time. How, then, can we use a *definite* adverb to describe it? We must understand that Jesus *may* be coming *soon*, or He *may* be coming *later*. No one knows but God. A second passage of Scripture that this song violates is 1 Thessalonians 5:2. Paul says, “For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.” Question: Do you know *when* a thief is coming to rob you? Do you even have a hint of an idea (i.e., soon or late)? No! A thief does not call you and say, “I’m coming over at 1:50 a.m., so be ready.” Again, the idea is that no one knows when a thief comes, and no one knows when the Lord is coming back. To say that Jesus is coming soon is to say more than the Bible says. When a Christian says that “Jesus is coming soon,” he falls under the condemnation of adding to God’s Word. Christians are not to go beyond what is written (1 Cor. 4:6). If we do, then the woes of Revelation 22:18-19 will come upon us.

A third reason this song is not acceptable is because of the teaching it could express to visitors of the assembly. The Bible teaches that singing is a method of teaching biblical truths (Eph. 5:19ff., Col. 3:16ff.). If a non-Christian was to come into our assembly and hear us sing this song, what kind of teaching would we be offering him? It is quite likely that he could think we believe that within a short period of time the Lord will be coming back. What if he heard us singing this song, and he did what the Thessalonians did due to a

misconception of the Second Coming of Christ? The Thessalonians had been taught improperly about Christ’s Second Coming, and as a result they simply quit working. What if a person was to hear us sing this song, quit working, and start looking for Christ’s coming “any day now”? Although this is an extreme example, the principle of teaching error through singing is valid. In the church, we are adamant about opposing those who teach error (Rom. 16:17), and we should be. But do we not realize that *we* become false teachers when we sing the song “Jesus Is Coming Soon”? No false teacher will be allowed into Heaven.

I affirm that it is a sin for us to sing this song. In fact, if we do not worship God correctly by singing with a correct understanding of His will, are we any different than Nadab and Abihu? The Bible teaches that Christians who do not sing with the understanding of a song (i.e., in harmony with God’s Word) do not please God. If words have meanings (and they do), and if the song “Jesus Is Coming Soon” is unbiblical (and it is), then we are offering false worship to God. When we sing songs to God that violate the Scriptures, we are giving “ignorant” worship to God (Acts 17:23). Has God ever been pleased with false or ignorant worship?

Objections Raised and Answered

The first and most frequently heard objection that people raise comes from 2 Peter 3:8. Peter said, “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” Some will say, “2 Peter 3:8 teaches that a thousand years is one day, and a day is a thousand years.” I agree wholeheartedly. But this does not prove that we can sing “Jesus Is Coming Soon.” The important thing to realize is that this passage is not dealing with *man’s* view of time, but with *God’s*. Peter says, “with *the Lord*”, not with *us*. This speaks of *God’s* view of the clock, not *ours*. Before man existed, there was no idea of time. God is not bound by, nor does He keep, time. Time was created in Genesis 1:1 for man’s benefit.