

the great Son of David who would rule the nations with justice and maintain universal peace. Other passages predicted the coming of One who would be humiliated and would give His life a ransom for many. Before the power of sin could be broken, redemption was necessary. The New Testament principally deals with this latter aspect. It tells of the coming of the matchless Son of God, of His victory over the powers of evil, and of His death to expiate the sin of all who would believe in Him. Yet the New Testament also looks beyond the great work of redemption to the triumphant return of the King. In his very first epistle Paul said that the Thessalonian believers had turned to God from idols "to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven" (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10). Paul continued throughout his life to look forward to his Lord's return to earth, referring to it in one of the last epistles he wrote (cf. 2 Timothy 4:1,8). Other New Testament writers also looked forward to it. The expectation of Christ's return to this earth is frequently mentioned in New Testament books and was specifically taught on various occasions by Christ himself.

At least a dozen verses in the New Testament declare that no human being can predict the time when Jesus Christ will return. This declaration is often connected with an exhortation to watch and be ready for His coming. Whether the Master of the house comes in the evening, or at midnight, or in the morning, it is important that He find us serving Him faithfully (Mark 13:35-37). Although Jesus told the disciples that they were not to be misled by false rumors that He had already returned, and that there would first be wars and rumors of wars (Matthew 24:6), He declared that they should live in constant anticipation of this event (Luke 12:35-40). To take these many exhortations to be ready for His coming as referring to something that cannot occur until long after a predicted period of universal peace and justice, would seem to put the event so far off into the future as to make the exhortations quite meaningless. Thus it would be most logical to think that the return of Christ would come before the period of universal peace rather than afterwards.

#### WERE THE DISCIPLES COMPLETELY MISTAKEN?

The disciples were familiar with the Old Testament. When Jesus had taught them "the things of the kingdom of God" for