

There are many references in the Gospels to the return of Christ as an event that might occur soon. Many such references. Particularly in Mat. 24 and 25 and parallel passages, there are many cases where He says be ready for you don't know when the Son of Man will come.

After Paul spent his whole life witnessing to Christ, spreading His word, when he came to the end of his life in the two last epistles he wrote, in Titus 2:11-13 he says (quoting text . . .) He shows that at the end of his life, Paul was looking for the return of Christ. There are many statements that he thought it might come then. He was looking for it, up to the end of his life. In 2 Tim. 4:8 (quoting text . . .) The Greek word "appearing" here is a word that was regularly used when a king made a visit to one of his dominions. It is looking for the coming of Christ very definitely.

Now many of the early Christian writers quote the statement about the stone cut without hands and say this is a prediction of the virgin birth. Certainly the virgin birth was a supernatural event, an event that was made without hands. It is a figurative expression, but the meaning would fit very appropriately with the virgin birth. They quoted that as being predicted here. There is a problem, however, in taking it as referring to the virgin birth. That is, that the virgin birth occurs very early in the fourth kingdom. The Roman empire did not begin its great period of decline until nearly 400 A.D. and this was 400 years before ~~that~~ that when Christ was born. That is a problem. The stone cut without hands ~~struck~~ struck the image. The stone might conceivably have been cut without hands and struck the image later on. But it does become a problem in considering that the virgin birth is specifically predicted in this passage.

The disciples went out and witnessed for many years and as they witnessed groups of Christians came together in every section, in every place. There was much persecution. There was difficulty from the very beginning, right at the beginning of the Christian church, Stephen was martyred and Paul was stoned. There were great problems, but the Gospel spread as they witnessed but in all these centuries that ~~xx~~ have passed, I doubt if there has ever been a city that could be said to be 100% Christian. I doubt if there has ever been a sizeable section of the world in which you could say that Christ's Word was entirely supreme there. There are certainly parts of the kingdom of Christ. We try to follow Him as King and Lord, but He certainly did not conquer any substantially large section of the world, or any small section completely.

However they had persecutions and God tempered these persecutions. I think that's one thing we should remember. Sometimes we get the impression that during the first 400 years there was just one terrible persecution after another and the gospel can withstand any persecution!

Now in Japan in the 17th century, a bishop of the RC's