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Watch the Skies!

Four Questions About The Second Coming of Christ!: Part 2

By Tal Davis

Neal Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin were the first men to set foot on the moon on July 20, 1969. The next day newspapers around the world had huge headlines plastered on their front pages. For example, one paper had MAN ON THE MOON! in type that covered the entire top half of the front page. That story was undoubtedly one of the most significant of the 20th century and deserved the recognition it got.

But, the truth is, many newspapers have in reserve even an even larger headline typeface size they have never used. They call it "Second Coming Typeface" and it would cover the whole front page. It is to be used only at what would be the greatest news event in human history, the Second Coming of Christ. Of course, I doubt most newspaper editors and publishers, who don't tend to be very religious, even believe in the Second Coming. Yet, they are hedging their bets and saving that typeface just in case.

In the last installment of this two part article, we looked at two important questions that many Christians, and other people, ask about the Second Coming of Christ. First we asked, "Is the Second Coming of Christ something we should actually believe in?" Our answer was simply that if Jesus Himself and the Bible as a whole is to be believed about anything, we must accept what He and the Scripture taught about the truth of His return.

The second question we answered was, "What is the purpose for the Second Coming of Christ?"

Our answer was that it is to complete the work of His First Coming. At His return He will complete the victory He already won at the cross and by His resurrection. At that time God will destroy evil and fulfill His purposes for all Creation.

Now we turn to the other two questions people ask about His coming. The first involves the timing of Jesus' return.

Question #3- When is the time of the Second Coming of Christ?

Naturally, Christians for centuries have wondered about this pertinent question. They want to be ready when it occurs and have all their affairs in order. As a result of this inquiry, many readers of the Bible have examined the relevant passages and made predictions of when they believed the end would come.

For instance, in A.D. 1000, many pilgrims headed for the Holy Land of Palestine believing that the end of the first millennium would mark the time for Jesus to return. Some people had the same notion in A.D. 2000.

A more recent example was in 1843. For more than a decade before then, a Baptist preacher named William Miller toured the northeast USA speaking and writing articles predicting that Jesus would come on October 22nd of that year. Miller based his prediction on his study of the math in Daniel 8:14 and other passages. When the 1843 date came and went, Miller realized he had miscalculated the date due to the fact that the calendar has no year zero. So he said it would actually be October 22nd of the next year, 1844. Sadly for

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Miller and his numerous followers, that date also came and went and nothing happened. It became known as the Great Disappointment. To his credit, Miller admitted his failure and apologized to those who had believed his predictions. (Ironically, Miller's failure led to the founding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.)

Another instance of a movement's failure to calculate prophetic dates involves the Jehovah's Witnesses. Since that cult's inception its leaders have predicted a number of dates for the secret return of Christ (which they say happened in 1914) and for the end of the world. In the 1960s, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society was pointing to 1975 as the sure date for Armageddon and the end of "this world's evil system." Needless to say, the movement lost many adherents in 1976 when the prediction failed to come true. The leaders offered no apology and just kept right on going. Most Jehovah's Witnesses today are unaware that the 1975 failure ever happened.

A rather notable failure was in the years leading up to 1988. An former NASA engineer named Edgar C. Whisenant wrote a book titled, *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be In 1988*. When the prediction failed, he changed the date to 1989. Still wrong.

The point is, Jesus Himself said that no one knows when the end of the world will come. In Matthew 24:36, Jesus warns:

"But about that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone."

That statement makes it clear that no person or angel knows when the time will come. He says even He,

God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, during His earthly ministry, did not know the date.

So the simple answer to the question as to when the Second Coming will occur is that no one knows. It suggests that those who try to set dates or stir up expectations about the coming (and sell books and get speaking engagements) are doomed to failure. The fact is, we just do not know. Only God Himself knows the time and it will be when He and the world is ready. He said the end would come when people were not expecting it.

"Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. 43 But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 44 For this reason you must be ready as well; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will. (Matt. 24: 42-44)

That being said, Jesus does give one intriguing clue as to what must happen before the end can arrive. In Matthew 24:14, He says:

"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come."

In other words, Jesus will not come again until the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) has been completed in the whole world and the Gospel preached to all peoples. That means that Christians must be diligent to spread the Word of God to all nations. Remarkably, that is happening in our own generation at a rate unseen in all of previous church history.

This leads us to the final and perhaps most important question people ask about the Second Coming.

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Question #4- How should we live in light of the Second Coming?

We already said that when Jesus' disciples asked Him when the Second Coming would occur He answered that no one knows except the Father. He said He would come when people did not really expect it. However, He did use an analogy as to how people will be living when he does come. He says that the world will be very much like it was in the time of Noah.

"For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. 38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be." (Matt. 24:37-39)

The implication is that most people will be going about their regular business and completely unaware or caring about His return. It will be as in the days of Noah when the world was wicked and everyone was indifferent to what God wanted. So when the Lord so comes He will find a world pretty much the same way. The application is that we cannot be indifferent and, though we don't know when, like every generation we must be alert to the possibility of His imminent coming. Jesus told a hard-hitting parable to emphasize this fact.

"Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household slaves, to give them their food at the proper time? 46 Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. 47 Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 48 But if that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time,' 49 and he begins to beat his fellow slaves, and he eats and drinks

with those habitually drunk; 50 then the master of that slave will come on a day that he does not expect, and at an hour that he does not know, 51 and he will cut him in two and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matt. 24:45-51)

We should not be like the bad servant. God has given us work to do and we must not be lax thinking He is not coming soon so we can take it easy. We must live each day as though He was coming today. But even if he does not return soon, we must all be prepared for the inevitability of death. When He comes, or when we die, the door will close for the opportunity to choose to follow Him. Jesus told the Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids to emphasize this truth. Note what happens to the bridesmaids who wait to late to get ready for the wedding feast.

"Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the groom. 2 Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. 3 For when the foolish took their lamps, they did not take extra oil with them; 4 but the prudent ones took oil in flasks with their lamps. 5 Now while the groom was delaying, they all became drowsy and began to sleep. 6 But at midnight there finally was a shout: 'Behold, the groom! Come out to meet him.' 7 Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. 8 But the foolish virgins said to the prudent ones, 'Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out.' 9 However, the prudent ones answered, 'No, there most certainly would not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.' 10 But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the groom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. 11 Yet later, the other virgins

also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' 12 But he answered, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.' 13 Be on the alert then, because you do not know the day nor the hour." (Matthew 25: 1-12)

Jesus is coming again! We don't know when, we just know it will happen. What if it was today? Are you ready? If you are a Christian, you are ready to meet Him, either when He comes or when you die. Meanwhile, commit yourself to holy living and serving God using the spiritual gifts He has given you.

If you do not know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then you are definitely not ready for His return, or for your own death! The Scripture says:

And just as it is destined for people to die once, and after this comes judgment. (Hebrews 9:27)

Put your faith in Christ. He died on the cross for your sins and was raised again to give you eternal life. His first coming prepares you for His second coming, whenever that will be!

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