



The Second Coming

Why Don't We Talk About It?

By: Michael P. Horban

The second coming of Christ is rightly called the “blessed hope” because it is the ultimate event and will consummate God’s plan of redemption. This truth is taught all through the Bible, and it was never needed more than today. We live in a world that is running out of hope.

Yet among Christians there seems to be a lethargy regarding this momentous teaching of the Bible. Prophecy conferences, popular in the middle decades of this century, have all but disappeared. Few evangelists devote a series of messages to the subject of our Lord’s return. Pastors seldom address the second coming of Christ. And many Christians have grown cool toward prophetic teaching.

Here are a few reasons I think are involved in our reluctance to emphasize the second coming of Christ.

First, there has been an overemphasis on the soonness rather than the certainty and blessedness of Christ’s return. In the first part of the 20th century, prominent preachers majored on the signs of Christ’s soon return. People believed that the countdown for the Rapture had begun, and they had to beat the clock to get ready.

I remember fully expecting Christ’s return within 5 years (that was in 1936) because I heard a preacher say that the world could not last beyond that. Books on the Antichrist were popular. Some named him.

But Christ did not come in those years of heavy emphasis, on the signs being fulfilled to such an extent that there was nothing left to be fulfilled before Christ’s return.

In 1948 with all the events taking place in Israel, another end-times emphasis began sweeping over evangelical believers. Because of those events, many were convinced Christ could come at any moment. Hal Lindsey suggested that 1988 would be a red-letter year because a generation in the Bible is 40 years, and Jesus said that “this” generation would not pass away until all was fulfilled.

But Christ did not return as some prophecy teachers calculated. So like the people who ignored the boy who cried, “Wolf!” the contemporary church was burned by false alarms. Christ’s teaching on His return clearly consisted of three propositions: (1) He will certainly return; (2) we cannot possibly find out when; and (3) we must always be ready for Him.

The truth of Christ’s second coming should make us live every moment of every year with Donne’s question, “What if this present were the world’s last night?”

Another reason for our reluctance to emphasize the second coming of Christ is that recent attempts to revive interest in the Second Coming have been an embarrassment to the cause of Christ and have backfired. Many Christians read with interest and excitement Edgar Whisenant’s booklet *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988*. As September 14 drew near, television, radio, and newspapers carried stories of Whisenant’s declaration that Christ was to return by that day, and a period of unspeakable tribulation and suffering would follow. He caused quite a stir. However, Jesus did not come on the assigned day. Mr. Whisenant quickly admitted his mistake and adjusted his theory to fit the 1989 calendar. Again he was wide of the mark.

Like all previous date-setters, Whisenant was left with egg on his face. He says, however, that he will try again.

A prominent minister has just introduced a book explaining why he believes Christ will come in the 1990s. When will Christians ever learn? Too many Christians are fascinated with writers and preachers who claim to have the inside track on this vital information. When these preachers speculate and things don't work out, many Christians lose interest in Bible prophecy.

We must guard against this kind of overreaction. And we shouldn't assume that speculators will slacken their pace. Some are telling us that we are in the Millennium now. What next?

Don't concern yourself with fantasies, date-setting, or naming the Antichrist. Stick to the basics.

Perhaps the greatest cause for the fading emphasis on Christ's return is the tendency for Christians to settle into a lifestyle centered in this present world. We hate to admit this, but the average Christian is more concerned with living a comfortable life now than he is in preparing for eternity.

We have come to love life here on planet Earth so much that we seem reluctant to leave it. It is difficult to see beyond our overstocked freezers and luxury cars to a new heaven and a new earth. We have bought too deeply into this world's value system.

Too few of us seem to consider how utterly irrelevant all earthly possessions and pleasures will be when Christ suddenly returns. If we loved Christ more, we would love His appearing and long for it, pray for it, prepare for it.

We do not need to indulge in speculation in order to be watching for our Lord's return. Above all, we must not let the misguided practices of others cause us to turn our backs on the sure word of prophecy. Jesus is going to keep His promise. He said, "I will come again" (John 14:3).

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