

## The Hope of Christ's Coming Again

Is the recent popular interest in matters prophetic related to the contemporary pessimism and doomsday mentality? Isn't this mentality brought on by the crises of our times: natural disasters, threat of nuclear holocaust, reports on starvation in many third world countries, energy crisis, population explosion, environmental pollution, revolutions, and so on?

Dr. Charles C. Ryrie, of Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas, writes in his book *The Bible and Tomorrow's News*, "Today we face possible nuclear warfare, mounting international tensions, ebbing morality and a skyrocketing crime rate, general ecclesiastical apostasy, and the amazing reestablishment of Israel. These and other conditions stimulate new interest in what the Bible has to say about the world in which we live and the times that are just around the corner." Even the titles of many recent books on prophecy appeal to this spirit of pessimism.

Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* has been a phenomenal sales success. Lindsey, a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, now lives in fashionable Pacific Palisades, California. His new office is in the "equally prestigious Century City district of Los Angeles" as the result of the success of his books. Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* has now been made into a movie. It was released by Hollywood with a great burst of publicity. The film has a whole catalogue of calamities. They are supposed to proclaim the grim message THE END IS AT HAND.

Lindsey is entitled to broadcast his convictions. But he should not be so dogmatic as to claim his view of prophecy as the only true and possible one. Prophecy is heady stuff and it is hard to escape to be sensationalist.

In each century prophecy enthusiasts have announced the approaching end. Hugo of St. Victor (12<sup>th</sup> century) testified that "we must realize the fact that the end of the times is near. "Many prophetic speakers and authors before World War II did not hesitate to identify either Adolf Hitler or Benito Mussolini as the anti-Christ, demonstrating from the Bible that their candidate's name met all the prophetic requirements. The study of prophecy has suffered as a result of this misplaced enthusiasm. Dogmatic date setting does not serve the Gospel.

The Gospel is good news. Christ will come again. And the church must live in this expectancy. When the church no longer expects anything, she loses her dynamics. The Maranatha prayer and hope should be real and earnest. But while we are awaiting Christ's return, we should be involved in seeking justice, feed the hungry, be politically involved, and so on. The expectation of Christ's second coming should affect our life style. The knowledge of Christ's return ought to affect our daily living. The apostle Peter put it this way: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." (2 Peter 3:11,14) And the apostle Paul wrote that he was

"looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus 2:13,14)

In the current rage of prophetic speculation, we need to remind ourselves constantly that, while the Word of God is infallible and stands secure, our understanding of that Word may be faulty and imperfect. Let us be prayerfully careful as we study in God's infallible Word about the rich truth of Christ's second coming. Maranatha! Lord Jesus, Come Soon!

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