

QUEST 52

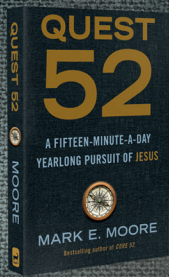
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Will the Completion of the Great Commission Affect the Coming of Christ? Yes, Part 1

By Mark E. Moore, Ph.D.

- I. Texts to Consider
 - A. There is no text that clearly states that the date of Jesus' return is fixed (Matt 24:36; Acts 1:7; 17:31, the closest is Rev. 14:7).
 - B. 2 Peter 3:12 – The Greek word *spoudontas* does not take a direct object. In other words, it is the subject doing the speeding not the object being sped. Thus, the idea is not us hurrying up Jesus, but us racing toward him with moral behavior.
 - C. Acts 3:19–20 – It seems clear that the repentance of men has some bearing upon the coming of Christ.
 - D. Matthew 24:14
 1. Con:
 - a. Paul claims this was done (Rom 1:8; 10:18; 16:26; Col 1:6, 23; 1 Thess 1:8). However, Paul was not responding to this text so his definition of terms should not be taken as identical.
 - b. The word *oikoumene* typically refers to the Roman world, not the globe as we know it.
 - c. Matt 10:22–23 uses *telos* in a similar context to refer to the completion of preaching to Israel, not the globe.
 - d. Together, this suggests that it is reasonable to interpret Matthew 24:14 in the context of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.
 2. Pro:
 - a. This chapter does not clearly distinguish between 70 A.D. and the Parousia, likely for two reasons (1) the Apostles (and perhaps Jesus himself) did not fully realize the difference between these two events. (2) 70 A.D. is a microcosm of the end of the world. Thus, many of the phrases can appropriately be applied to both events.
 - b. Dual Texts of Matt 24:
 - i. Verses that apply exclusively to 70 A.D. – 16–20, 34.
 - ii. Verses that apply exclusively to the Parousia – 31, 36.
 - iii. Verses that apply to both – 6–8 (cf. Rev. 6–9), 13–14, 27–29, 35.
 - c. Dual phrases:
 - i. “He who stands firm to the end will be saved.” (Cf. Matt 10:22; Heb 10:36–39; Rev 2:10–11).
 - ii. “The gospel of the kingdom” is intended to be an international/global reign. Anything less subverts the full glory due to God and reduces his rulership of this earth to a farce. God’s nature demands that this text be bigger than Palestine.
 - iii. “A testimony to all nations” echoes the great commission texts. The combination of “preaching” and “nations” naturally calls to mind a global reign. The fact that casual readers have taken it that way may be a hermeneutical clue to its interpretation.
 - d. Thus, that language that appropriately applies to the destruction of Jerusalem can likely be applied just as appropriately to the Parousia.
 - II. Philosophical Considerations
 - A. Noah is used as an illustration of the second coming in Matt 24. Thus, this hermeneutic has already been applied to this passage: “What happened then will happen again.” (Likewise, “The Abomination that causes desolation” had already been applied to Antiochus Epiphanes of 168 B.C.E. as well as the Roman invasion under Pompey c. 60 B.C.E.).
 - B. Numbers 14:33–34 states that the timing of the entry into the promised land depended upon the Israelites. Their unbelief caused them to wander in the desert for 40 years. The bowls of



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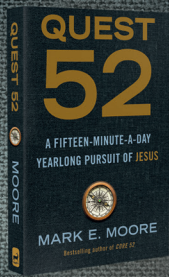
- Revelation 16 are borrowed images of the 10 plagues of Egypt. By extension, the exodus is compared to the coming of Christ and the entry into Canaan to the entry in the new Jerusalem. Thus, the principle of Numbers 14 may well apply to the entry into the new Canaan.
- C. The sovereignty of God is blended with the free-will of men. Our perception of God allows for a flexible return of Christ.

Will the Completion of the Great Commission Affect the Coming of Christ? No (Part 2)

By Jeremy Bacon

I. Texts

- A. 2 Peter 3:12—*spoude* can simply mean "strive for, be eager for, be zealous for" with no actual "hastening" (cf. Isa. 16:5).
- "Hasten" usually does not have an object, this does.
 - The pictures of "speeding" yet "waiting for" don't fit together well.
 - Smart people who agree
 - BAG—"strive for" (p. 769)
 - Kittel—"to strive after, to aspire to." Definitely not the idea of hurrying Jesus back (6: 726).
 - Lenski—"being eager for" (p. 348)
 - Derived words *spoude* and *spoudazo*
 - Common in Peter (2 Pet. 1:5, 10, 15; **3:14**).
 - Primarily "making one's best effort", "eagerness," "zeal." This zeal "determines ethical actions and behavior" for the Christian community. "The whole conduct of life must be molded by it" (NIDNTT, 3:1169). Godly behavior is precisely Peter's point here (esp. 3:11, 14).
 - Eager watching and godly behavior are constantly associated with Christ's return. So here. Does mention people being saved, but not our part in that. His concern here is that we live godly lives in eager anticipation for Christ's return.
- B. Acts 3:19–21
- Not a dissertation to Christians nor an oracle to the nations. It is a sermon to a group of Jews who happened to go to the temple that day. Is Peter saying that Jesus would have returned if all the Jews in his audience would have repented?
 - 3:19–20 can apply to the specific Jews Peter is addressing: repent, sins wiped out, times of refreshing (Acts 2:38), the Christ sent (Luke 17:21; John 14:23).
 - 3:21 is the full Messianic kingdom the Jews would think Peter meant by v. 20. Peter is explaining that this is "not yet."
 - Peter is not connecting repentance and the 2nd coming but drawing a distinction between what is "now" and "not yet" for his Jewish audience.
- C. Matthew 24:14
- In context with 15–20, which is obviously 70 A. D. 15–20 seems to expound on the "end" referred to in 14.
 - Oikoumene* referred mainly to the Roman Empire.
 - Paul said the world had been reached in his time and used much broader language than Jesus (Rom. 1:8; 10:18; Col. 1:6; 1:23; 1 Thess. 1:8). (ASIDE: How much of the world was "reached"? Christianity started in the 10/40 window. Tradition says: Paul—Mediterranean; Matthew—Ethiopia; Mark—Egypt; Thomas—Persia and India; Barnabas—India; Andrew—Asiatic nations.)



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4. Dual reference? The 2nd coming is unexpected (24:36–42). We won't have a clue. 70 A.D. has tons of clues: false christs, Abomination (cf. Luke 21:20), the gospel to the ends of the earth (24:14). By the very fact that this is given as a sign for the "end," it could only be referring to 70 A.D.

II. Other Problems

- A. Jesus' return is no longer immanent since not all people groups have heard. Yet the consistent exhortation to godly living because of the 2nd coming is founded on an imminent return.
- B. Puts Jesus in a headlock. "We do this, he must do this." That's a dangerous place to be.
- C. The picture of Jesus' Return (Matt 24:36–25:46; Mark 13:32–36; Luke 21:34–35; Ac. 1:7; 17:31; Rom. 13:11–14; 1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thess. 5:1–3, 6; Titus 2:12–13; 2 Pet. 3:10–14; Rev. 16:15; 22:7, 20). Like a thief, we will not expect it, much less do anything to make it come. Our response: wait, watch, and live godly lives. That's it.
- D. Biblical motivation for missions: Compassion for the lost (Matt 9:36–38) and the glory of God (Ps. 57:9–11).