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## With Special Thanks

Most books are not the product of only one person's thoughts. Nor are they produced by hours of research alone. They are much more. They are the result of years of life experience. For forty-five years, I have had the privilege of preaching on the hope of the Second Advent to audiences in more than eighty countries on almost every continent in the world. I never tire of seeing the sparkle in people's eyes and the joy on their faces as they grasp the incredible good news that Jesus is really coming again. Daily I am reminded of the great privilege I have had for decades of sharing this hope with hundreds of thousands of people both in person and through the mass media. I thank God for this awesome privilege.

I would also like to express special thanks to Steve Mosley, our script writer at *It Is Written* television. During the past twelve years, Steve and I have collaborated on a number of projects, and many of the thoughts in this volume appeared first in *It Is Written* television scripts. I am indebted to Steve's skillful pen and literary clarity. His contributions have enhanced this work greatly.

I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to my wife, Ernestine. Not only has she encouraged me to write a book on the hope of the Second Coming, but she also has played a significant part in the production of this book. Chapters 2 and 3 are updated expansions of my public evangelistic sermons. She faithfully listened to the audio presentations of these messages and typed them so I could edit the material and prepare it for this manuscript.

I praise God for the privilege of sharing the eternal truths of Scripture, and I hope you will be as blessed reading *End-Time Hope* as I was writing it.

## Before You Turn This Page . . .

The United States is more than sixteen trillion dollars in debt, the unemployment rate has gone over 8 percent, and more people are losing their homes than ever before.

College graduates wonder whether they will find a job, retirees are concerned about their retirement accounts, and the international scene is uncertain—is another terrorist attack imminent?

And what's behind all the natural disasters that seem to be ripping town after town apart?

Many people find the time in which we live to be confusing. It seems that twenty-first-century society has lost its moral compass. Long-held moral standards are being cast to the wind, and we're groping around in the dark, looking for the light at the end of the tunnel.

Yet there is hope. That's what this book is about. Every chapter pulsates with hope.

Shortly before Jesus ascended to heaven, He spoke words that brought encouragement to His disciples. He said, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again" (John 14:1-3).

Jesus' promise to return wasn't some make-believe, pious platitude without any substance. It wasn't a warm fuzzy that He gave us merely to make us feel good. His word is sure—a solid foundation for hope in a world that's in deep trouble.

Jesus really is coming again! He really came to this earth once, and He really will come again. But this time He isn't coming as a babe in Bethlehem's manger, but as King of kings and Lord of lords.

One day sickness and sorrow will be perpetually banished.

One day fear and famine will fade into forever.

## End-Time Hope

One day disease, disaster, and death will be gone for good.

One day worry, want, and war will be things of the far-distant past.

One day every tear will be wiped away and every tragedy turned to triumph.

One day our dreams will be fulfilled, and joy will flood our hearts.

One day Jesus will come.

Take a fresh breath of hope as you embark on an incredible journey of discovery through end-time events to eternity.

# The Ultimate Space Journey

On April 17, 2012, the space shuttle *Discovery*, which was bolted on top of a NASA 747 aircraft, soared over the nation's capital in a salute before landing at Washington Dulles International Airport in Washington, D.C. Thousands of people lined the National Mall to catch a glimpse of the famed spacecraft. They applauded wildly as *Discovery* circled the United States Capitol and the Washington Monument and headed for the airport and its final resting place in the Smithsonian Institution.

Aerospace writers described the spectacular scene in these words:

The world's most traveled spaceship took off at day-break from Cape Canaveral, Fla., bolted to the top of a modified jumbo jet for the trip.

Three hours later, the pair took a few spins around Washington at an easy-to-spot 1,500-foot altitude before the retired shuttle was grounded for good. . . .

*Discovery's* list of achievements include delivering the Hubble Space Telescope to orbit, carrying the first Russian cosmonaut to launch on a U.S. spaceship, performing the first rendezvous with the Russian space station Mir with the first female shuttle pilot in the cockpit, returning Mercury astronaut John Glenn to orbit, and bringing shuttle flights back to life after the Challenger and Columbia accidents.<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to imagine that Discovery traveled a total of 148,221,675 miles on thirty-nine space missions. This is the equivalent of 310 round trips to the moon. What an incredible accomplishment! No wonder so many people wanted one last lingering glance at America's most beloved spacecraft.

There's something fascinating about space travel. It captures our imagination. It stimulates our thinking. It fuels our dreams for a better tomorrow. Maybe—just maybe—there are answers to our deepest questions out there beyond the stars.

The universe is definitely beckoning us. Movie phenomena like the Star Wars series provide just one example of our fascination with space. We want to see what's out there. We want to take the ultimate journey. Some private companies are already advertising trips far out into space and booking seats on rocket ships.

Potentially, people could be rocketed to their space vacations via a commuter space shuttle similar to *Discovery*. A March 24, 2006, Associated Press article on space travel made this intriguing observation:

If floating weightless and peering down on a shimmering-blue Earth sounds appealing, you might consider being a space tourist. As long as you've got a fat wallet. Two years after the first privately financed space flight jump-started a sleepy industry, more than a dozen companies are developing rocket planes to ferry ordinary rich people out of the atmosphere.<sup>2</sup>

### **The ultimate space journey**

In this chapter, I'll tell you about a space journey that will answer your questions once and for all. It's the ultimate space journey, and it's open to more than just a few astronauts, more than just the elite. It's a journey each of us can take, and it will bring us face-to-face with destiny.



## The Ultimate Space Journey

What's more, we don't have to build a warp-speed spaceship in order to make this journey. We'll journey through space. We'll travel beyond the stars, beyond the planets, and through Orion's open space to the heart of the universe.

The apostle Paul was one of many Bible writers who under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit described this ultimate journey. He passed the good news to his fellow believers who worshiped in the church at Thessalonica. Paul wrote,

If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. . . . For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:14, 16, 17).

Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the One who paid such a remarkable visit to this planet two thousand years ago, is going to pay us another visit. And He's going to make quite an entrance the next time He comes. He won't be coming as a babe in Bethlehem's manger, but as "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Revelation 19:16). And the heavens will rumble with a great shout as trumpets blast and angels sing out.

The Bible refers to this remarkable space journey that brings our Lord to earth again more than fifteen hundred times. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied that our Lord would return (see Jude 14). David joyfully declared, "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence" (Psalm 50:3). The angelic beings present at Jesus' ascension encouraged the disciples with these words: "This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11)

Other texts fill in many more details. Every human eye is going to see this spectacle of an army of angelic beings descending through the sky (Revelation 1:7). The face of the coming Christ will shine like the sun at high noon, and His garments will flash a brilliant white (Revelation 1:12–16).

Jesus and the heavenly host will swoop down in a cloud of glory and circle the earth faster than any spaceship. The ground will shake. Lightning will flash. Mountains will tumble into the sea. Graves will split open, and those who have died in Jesus will rise up from their graves in the cold ground, alive and transformed, now having glorious, immortal bodies. Believers who were alive at Jesus' coming will rise with them right up into the air, drawn to the glorious light of Jesus' presence.

And what happens next? Remember how 1 Thessalonians 4:14 goes? "God will bring with Him . . ." He'll bring believers with Him. Bring them where?

He'll bring them *from earth to heaven!* He'll raise them from their graves, never to die again, to take a journey to eternity.

Jesus promised us through John: "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3). That's what is going to happen to all those who've placed their faith in Jesus. We are going to be swept up to heaven in that interstellar cloud. We're going to take a journey so we can always be with the Lord. We're going to take a journey to the place where Jesus has been preparing many mansions. We're going to take a journey to our Father's house.

Friends, this is the ultimate journey. It's the journey to the center of the universe, to the home of God. Talk about discovering where we've come from! Talk about exploring our origins! This formation of angels is going to take us to our Creator. It's going to take us to the place where all our questions will be answered, where our deepest longings will be fulfilled.

## Discovering life beyond the stars

NASA's Kepler space telescope is now busy searching for exoplanets—planets in other star system. And 2012 could bring something even more exciting: the first true “alien Earth.”

“Just this month, Kepler scientists announced two landmark finds—the first two Earth-size alien planets, as well as a larger world in its star's habitable zone, that just-right range of distances where liquid water (and possibly life as we know it) could exist.”<sup>3</sup>

In fact, a whole new science has blossomed around this quest: the science of astrobiology. It uses many different disciplines to try to find life in the universe. Some scientists believe that soon we'll have the technology to search for samples of life on Mars and return those samples to earth safely.

Most scientists don't expect to find a cuddly creature like E.T. anytime soon. They're looking for one-celled organisms that can survive harsh environments. Life is hardier than we used to assume. We've now discovered certain bacteria that can actually survive, and thrive, in glacial ice and in 250-degree heat under the sea.

Human beings are curious about life out there among the stars. We can't help wanting to make contact somehow. Who knows what we might find? Who knows what intelligent beings might start talking back to us?

Well, I have good news about life out there among the stars. We're going to find it. I have good news about signs of intelligence in the universe. Intelligent beings are going to start talking back—in a very big way. We're going to hear the voice of our Creator echoing around our planet. We're going to hear the voices of angelic beings rumbling across the sky like thunder. We're going to have a cosmic rendezvous.

That's the great event that Jesus' disciples tell us is coming. It's more mind-boggling than the Hubble Telescope sighting a new galaxy or scientists discovering some single-celled organism on a distant

## End-Time Hope

planet. We're going to come face-to-face with the greatest Intelligence in the universe. His countenance is going to shine down on this world like the sun at high noon.

Yes, Jesus is going to make a very big entrance the second time He comes. Notice this description in Matthew 24:

As the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. . . . The stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. . . . Then all the tribes of the earth . . . will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Matthew 24:27, 29–31).

The Savior adds this thought-provoking truth: “The Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works” (Matthew 16:27).

Jesus Christ is going to appear above us, flashing from horizon to horizon. His great angelic spaceship of light will make heaven and earth tremble. And He will gather believers, living and dead, from every corner of the planet. He beckons them to come up to Him. He beckons them to go on a journey.

Oh, yes, signs of intelligent lives in the universe are going to appear. The sign of the Son of God is going to appear. His glory is going to fill the sky.

And all those who have committed their lives to Jesus Christ are going to be able to journey with Him beyond the stars, through the galaxies, to heaven. We'll be traveling with the Son of God, Jesus—in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

You know, when we human beings try to think about *real* space travel, about journeying from one galaxy to the next, the huge dis-

tances are overwhelming. How do you reach a star thousands of light-years away? Scientists today can't conceive of traveling faster than the speed of light. So, real space travel faces huge obstacles. But the second coming of Jesus Christ is going to remove all those obstacles. The One who created all these stars and calls them all by name and leads them forth—this God can transport us through the universe as fast as He wants to.

We'll be flying along with Jesus in that angelic formation. Distances won't matter. Black holes won't matter. Even the speed of light won't be a barrier. It is God who beckons us home, and that's all that matters. We'll all arrive safely at our destination, and we'll all arrive together. We'll all stand together on a sea of glass around the throne of God—and sing our hearts out in exultation!

That's the ultimate space journey. And you know, people are becoming increasingly aware that we *need* to take some kind of journey. We need to find something beyond this world.

Why? Because we're using up many natural resources on this planet. Experts have begun to look for new supplies out in space. Some talk of mining asteroids for valuable minerals. In fact, some companies have already started developing plans to mine the moon. The soil on the moon contains very high concentrations of silicon. And there's plenty of iron there too.

This planet is wearing out. It's weighed down with so many problems. People are looking for solutions in outer space. They're thinking and hoping that maybe somehow, somewhere in the vast universe, there's a solution to war and hunger and greed. Maybe we can find a better place.

### **Our final return**

The Bible has more good news for us. Our journey to eternity won't be a one-way trip. It may shock you, but the Bible says that we will make a return journey—to earth. Now there's one end-time event that you may not have heard about before. Of course, we'll

make that return trip after we've traveled with Jesus to heaven. It's the last segment of our flight.

Do you remember the statement Jesus made in the Sermon on the Mount about the ultimate fate of God's children? Here it is: "Blessed are the meek, *for they shall inherit the earth*" (Matthew 5:5; emphasis added). David stated this eternal truth in one of the psalms: "The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Psalm 37:11).

No, the earth that we'll return to won't be like the one we live on today. The Bible says, "We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13).

Earth will be a better place. Sickness, suffering, heartache, and death will be gone forever. Disease and disaster will disappear. Chaos and calamity will be finished. Think of what it will be like to descend from heaven with Jesus, His angels, and all the rest of the heavenly host to a magnificent earth made new in the glory of Eden.

So, we're going to take a second incredible space journey. This time our spaceship will be an entire city—a city that gleams with golden streets and pearly gates. Here's what the apostle John saw in vision:

I saw a new heaven and a new earth. . . . Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them" (Revelation 21:1–3).

An entire city is going to appear in the sky! Revelation 20:9 tells us that "the saints"—believers—are inside that "beloved city," the New Jerusalem. They've just made another incredible journey through space. They've come back to the earth. It's now time for "a

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new heaven and a new earth.”

God will burn this world clean of sin and suffering. Then He'll remove the scars. He'll replace the ugliness. He'll re-create the earth.

And then this New Jerusalem will settle down on this planet. It will be our home on earth. And God will live here with us. And from that eternal city we will colonize this renewed planet.

And you know what? The transparent gold of the New Jerusalem's streets won't wear out. Its gates, made of enormous pearls, won't fall off their hinges. The sapphires and emeralds in the city's foundations won't crumble away.

The citizens of the New Jerusalem will be refreshed forever by the river of life that flows through that city. They will be forever renewed by the tree of life in that city, which bears twelve different kinds of fruit.

This is the picture in Revelation. And this picture assures us that we are going to find a forever home of peace and blessing. The life of God will flow from His throne to His people. He, Himself, will be our God. He will light up that city with His everlasting glory. We will live in the warmth of His love and the joy of His presence through the ceaseless ages of eternity.

I want to take that ultimate journey with God. I want to take that great space odyssey. There's got to be more to life than mining minerals on the moon. There's got to be more than poking around on asteroids. There's got to be more than finding renewable energy resources. We need a bigger answer for the longing in our hearts. We need the glory of the Son of righteousness.

The Bible tells us, yes, it's coming. *He's* coming. Jesus is going to make a spectacular appearance the second time He comes.

You'll want to be ready for that event. You'll want to know this Being whose brilliance will flash from horizon to horizon. You'll want to place your faith in the One who will answer back with a voice that thunders across the sky. You'll want to be ready for the ultimate space journey.

## End-Time Hope

It's coming. One day you'll be swept up into the air and into Jesus' arms.

One day you'll journey to heaven in that angelic craft of light.

One day you'll journey back through space in a golden city.

One day you'll live with God on the earth made new.

So be ready.

So look up.

So reach out to the One who is preparing a place for you in His Father's house.

You can decide to commit your life to the living Christ right now. Why not reach out to Him right now by praying this prayer of dedication: "Dear Lord, deep within my heart, I sense that You have plans for me beyond my wildest dreams. Something within me tells me that this world is not all there is. I long to take that eternal space journey with You to my eternal home. I long to see You face to face. Today, I commit my life to You now and forever. In Jesus' name. Amen."

### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Roz Plater, Brianne Carter, and Jay Korff, "Space shuttle Discovery flies over D.C. landmarks," ABC 7/News Channel 8, April 17, 2012, <http://www.wjla.com/articles/2012/04/space-shuttle-discovery-to-fly-over-d-c-landmarks-74857.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Associated Press, "Space Travel Price No Longer Out of This World," *Los Angeles Times*, March 24, 2006, <http://articles.latimes.com/2006/mar/24/business/fi-spacetour24>.

<sup>3</sup> "Why 2012 Could Be the Year We Find a Habitable Planet," *Christian Science Monitor*, <http://www.csmonitor.com/Science/2011/1221/Why-2012-could-be-the-year-we-find-a-habitable-planet>.