

Are We Delaying Jesus' Second Coming?

WHY IS THE 'DEAF NATION' CALLED?

Deaf people are really a Deaf nation of their own language and culture, and are scattered all over the world. The Deaf nation cannot satisfactorily be reached with the Gospel by means of radio, TV without interpreters and a normal hearing church. Therefore the responsibilities rest on the Deaf leaders or the hearing trained to communicate in Sign Language. The good news is that Jesus will not return for His Church *till the Deaf nation has been reached with the Good News!* Because of this more and more of the hearing churches are opening their doors to embrace the Deaf Community.

The Deaf at the Cornerstone Church have been asked to design a flag to represent the Deaf nations throughout the world. They plan to hang this flag together with the other flags from other nations to remind the hearing to pray for the salvation of the Deaf. The Good News of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations (including the Deaf nation) and then the end shall come.

Therefore let us not give up meeting together to fellowship to encourage one another all the more as you see the Day approaching – Hebrews 10:25.

(Extracted from Living Waterfall Magazine, Issue 27 – Spring 2001)

GLOBAL ESTIMATION

With an estimated global population of more than 350 million, the Deaf and partially hearing world is one of the last groups to be reached with the gospel, according to David Stecca, president of Deaf Video Communications in Chicago, USA. **“We’re in an uphill battle to recognize the Deaf as a mission field,”** he said.

There are 56 countries that each has a total Deaf population greater than 1 million. **Worldwide, there are approximately 364 million Deaf people.** Nearly two thirds of them are located in just 10 countries: -

China:	75.2 million out of 1.2 billion
India:	60.4 million out of 1 billion
USA:	16.6 million out of 278 million
Indonesia:	12.7 million out of 212 million
Brazil:	10.1 million out of 170 million
Pakistan:	9.3 million out of 156 million
Russia:	8.7 million out of 146 million
Nigeria:	7.7 million out of 111 million
Bangladesh:	7.6 million out of 129 million
Japan:	7.5 million out of 126 million

In each of these nations, this represents 5,69% to 6,93% of the total population. The Deaf harvest field is ready... where are the workers? **Let us pray for more workers in the Deaf harvest.**

(Extracted from DeafLink, UK – Spring 2001.

A full report on Deaf ministry appears in the March issue of “Charisma” Magazine - March 2001)

350 MILLION DEAF

“For God so loved the DEAF world

PEOPLE WORLDWIDE

That He gave His one and only Son,

98% ARE STILL

That whosoever believes in Him

WAITING TO “HEAR”

*Shall not perish but have eternal
life.”*

JOHN 3:16

DID YOU KNOW...?

- Over three million South Africans are Deaf or hearing impaired. That is around 10% of the population – the largest single group of disabled people in the country.
- 4000 babies born each year will suffer hearing damage unless adequate early detection and treatment programmes are available.
- The majority of Deaf people are unemployed – not because of their inability to function but because of inadequate employer facilities, training and understanding.
- Deaf persons worldwide view themselves as a cultural minority with its own identity and language.
- Hearing aids are the most basic assistive device – yet many children in the rural areas do not have access to hearing aids owing to a lack of funds.
- There is a severe shortage of Sign Language interpreters in South Africa.

Extracted from DEAF TALK from Deafsa (Deaf Federation of South Africa)

ESTIMATION OF DEAF BELIEVERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

So, if there are over 350 000 (statistics likely to be correct) Deaf or hearing-impaired out of about 44 million in South Africa, how many of them really know the gospel?

[From 1996 Census – 383 408]

A rough estimate:

There should be at least 10% of 300 thousand to be born-again in SA:

10% of 300 thousand = 30 thousand Deafies

10% = 30 thousand Deafies?

Are there? **SADLY NO!**

5% = 15 thousand Deafies?

Are there? **AGAIN NO!**

1% = 3 000 Deafies?

Are there? **PROBABLY YES?**

0.5% = 1 500 Deafies?

Are there? **POSSIBLE YES?**

CHURCHES SLOW REACHING OUT TO THE DEAF

Many do not know how to minister to the silent world; experts say many churches are turning a deaf ear to the cries of a large mission field – the millions who cannot hear. And of those who are trying to reach out to the silent world, a lot are going about it the wrong way, Deaf ministry leaders say.

With an estimated global population of more than 350 million, the Deaf and partially hearing world is one of the last groups to be reached with the gospel, according to David Stecca, president of Deaf Video Communications in Chicago. **“We’re in an uphill battle to recognise the Deaf as a mission field,”** he said.

In the United States, less than 8 percent of Deaf people attend church, while worldwide attendance is believed to drop to between 1 percent and 2 percent. **“If you took them all and put them in one place, there would be all kinds of agencies, missionaries and everyone trying to reach them,”** said Mike Buus, president of Deaf Opportunity Outreach International. **“But because they’re scattered all over the place, they’re overlooked.”**

Albert Linderman, a former Assemblies of God pastor and expert on intercultural studies, said that simple misunderstandings have helped create a gap between hearing and Deaf believers. “While choreographed movements are used for communicating to the Deaf society, some conservative denominations have negative attitudes toward what they consider to be dancing,” he said.

“Charismatic and Pentecostal Christians can present a barrier to the Deaf community because many, especially in the developing world, view the Deaf as needing healing, fostering a paternalistic attitude,” Linderman added.

“But Deaf people develop ‘cultural strategies’ which are part of ‘the deepest level of the formation of [their] personality and self-identity,’” he said. “To ‘heal’ their deafness would affect them on the deepest level of identity and would be detrimental to those who were either born deaf or became deaf at an early age.”

Gary Barrett, the founder of Deaf Ministries Worldwide, said that for many years the Deaf have been viewed as disabled. **“When being approached in this manner, the Deaf have been very unresponsive to the gospel.”**

Most hearing Christians are unaware that Deaf believers baptised in the Holy Spirit have received the gift of tongues – speaking in an unknown sign language. Nor do many believers know that the internationally recognised “Bible” of sign language – now called “The Joy of Signing” – was written by a Pentecostal. Now 80, Lottie Riekehof dedicated the book to God at her Arlington, Va., Assemblies of God (AG) church when it was first published in 1963.

Deaf leaders are divided over the best way to reach those who cannot hear. Some advocate special efforts by hearing congregations, while others say that churches especially for the Deaf work best. The AG has 88 Deaf congregations, and in 1998 appointed its first Deaf missionary, to Nicaragua.

“Most Deaf are being reached for the first time,” Barrett said. “While hearing people in some countries have had a lifetime of hearing the gospel and have had several revivals, most Deaf people haven’t even heard the gospel for the first time.”

(Extracted from DeafLink, UK – Spring 2001)

REASON WHY DEAF PEOPLE ARE UNREACHABLE?

According to the global evangelical outreach, statistics on Internet in 1970 (30 years ago) the Gospel reached 40% of the world and it has now doubled to 80%. It contradicts with what is stated above. The 80% of the world reached represents the “Hearing World” as they have an easy access to the Gospel and there is a very little or no access for the “Deaf World” to the Gospel. Why?

Many question would be asked, how do the ‘Hearies’ hear the Gospel? Yes, simply through the vastly various mass media e.g.: -

1. Radio
2. TV
3. Churches
4. Bibles, books, magazines, etc

How do the Deafies “**hear**” the Gospel? Is there the same conveying as the Hearies? Sadly, no!

1. **Radio** – Of no use for the Deafies.
2. **TV** with no or little captions (privileged countries, like USA, UK, some parts of Europe, and Australia have captions of the Deaf), but the third countries, SA being one of them, hardly have any of these captions.
3. **Churches:** -
 - a) **‘Hearing’ Churches with interpreted services**
Advantage – It is easier for the Deafies, scattered all over the city like Johannesburg to integrate within ‘Hearing’ Churches.
– Hearing children worship together with their Deaf parents.
Disadvantage – Great shortage of interpreters in South Africa.
 - b) **‘Deaf’ Churches**
Advantage – Sermon is preached in Sign Language – no interpreters are needed.
Disadvantage – Long distance to drive for those living in distant parts to attend the services.
– Hearing children often do not worship together with their Deaf parents.
4. **Bibles, books, and magazines** – Many Deafies have difficulty in reading and understanding. Few Deafies are literate.

So how can you reach the Deafies in the less privileged (rural) countries? *Romans 10v15b* “...*How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!*” Also in *Isaiah 52v7*. So one must go **on foot**, bring the Good News to the lost Deaf souls, and preach the Gospel in **Sign Language** to them. This will bring down 98% of the unreached in the world to **zero** and increase from 0.01% to 10% or over of the Deaf/hearing impaired people in South Africa.

Who believes that Jesus Christ is coming very soon? Of course all of us do!

The Gospel must be preached to 4 corners of the world **before** Jesus returns. What about the Deafies – 98% still unreached – still waiting to hear John 3:16... God has compassion for the Deaf that I am sure He will not come **until** the Gospel has reached **all** the Deafies in the 4 corners of the world. **Then** He will come again! “*And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come.*” (*Matthew 24:14*) Do you want to quicken Jesus’ return to take up His pure Bride and reign on this earth? You have a **big role** to play! Spread the Good News of Jesus to the lost Deaf souls – not only the Deafies but also the Hearies who can sign or even makes gestures – many Deafies will understand.

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CONCLUSION

I would like to, however, furnish you with the following data. Deaf people are, specifically, the greatest neglected people group. According to a recent survey from YWAM, the Deaf are the fourth largest unreached people group in the world. They have the least opportunity to 'hear' the Gospel in their own language. **“Whilst hearing people in many countries have had a lifetime of hearing the gospel and have had several revivals, most Deaf people haven't even heard the Gospel for the first time,”** said Gary Barrett from the United Kingdom.

Amazingly, in the year 1970 about 40% of the Gospel was preached to normal hearing people throughout the world, and at present it has increased significantly to about 80%. It gives the impression that the time of Jesus' Second Coming is close at hand. Unfortunately, less than 2% of Deaf worldwide (out of 364 million Deaf) have been preached to or heard about Jesus.

On the other hand, Jesus' Second Coming would be delayed until all nations and tribes and tongues have heard the name of Jesus – Matthew 24:14

It's stressed that what you have seen in the Deaf community is only a small proportional tip of an Iceberg, which is visible above the water but that which is below the water line is MASSIVE. It is not what is seen that sinks ships, it is what is unseen. I was impressed to superimpose the first part of 2 Corinthians 4:18. Interestingly, the weight of an Iceberg is estimated 300 millions tons, almost the same as the number of Deaf people worldwide.

In actual fact, there are millions of Deaf people who have never seen a church that speaks their language, particularly those developing countries, and they have never heard how to received eternal life in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

- **Pray** The harvest is huge. Pray that the Lord will send out more workers. Matthew 9:37-38
- **Give** Don't spend your life buying treasures on earth, Matthew 6:19. Give joyfully. 2 Corinthians 9:7
- **Go** God commanded us, “Bring salvation to all the earth, Acts 13:47. “Lord, send me, Isaiah 6:8.

Let's **PRAY** fervently and **GIVE** joyfully, and let's be willing to **GO**. Let's encourage our churches (Deaf or Integrated) to send out true Deaf Christians who will tell them of Christ Jesus and His unconditional love to all Deaf of all sign languages.

We, the Body of Jesus, are called to fulfill Jesus' last commandment, the Great Commission, in every area of the mission fields, including the Deaf nation! (Matthew 28:18-20 & Mark 16:15-16) Jesus said, “...*Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are already white to harvest!*” (John 4:35)

SO BE IT!

(Summarised by Paulo Pinto (D) – Deaf New Life)