

THE PROPHETIC SCRIPTURES
What Lies Before Us?
Scripture Reading: Revelation 3:14-22
Message 3

INTRO: We have taken two messages to prepare ourselves to look at the prophetic Scriptures. We have seen the major events that are behind us. We have looked at the major views of what lies before us. We said that the literal or normal approach to Bible interpretation is the system that is to be used for prophecy just as well as for all the rest. We saw that the major event spoken of in the Bible that determines how one views the future the one thousand years of Revelation 20. Taking the normal approach to Bible interpretation, we concluded that there will be a literal period of 1000 years of peace on earth. From that conclusion, we are now ready to look at the major future events.

Today, we stand in the day we know as July 2, 2006. What we know about what is behind us, we call history. What we know about what lies before us, we call prophecy. Only the Bible believer with the right system of interpretation knows what lies before us. Bible believers that hold to the a millennial or post millennial views, we think, do not know most of the events that lie before us. The cults and the unbelieving world do not know anything at all about what lies before us. They guess or grope in the dark. They have no information about the future. All of what I will present to you about the future is based on what I view as the right system of Bible interpretation. I am very convinced of this, or I would not preach on this topic.

II. IMPORTANT PROPHETIC EVENTS

A. The Closing Days of the Church Age

About 30 A.D., on Pentecost Day, the Church was born. The Church is made up of all believers, all those who have been saved by grace through faith in the shed blood of Christ. I believe the Lord Jesus described what the 2000 years of the Church age would be like in the parables of Matthew 13. I believe Revelation chapters 2-3 are prophetic of what the Church age will be like, dividing the age into 7 periods of time. And I believe we are in the closing days of the Church age.

I believe that very shortly, the next significant time period will begin on earth which is known as the great tribulation. I also believe that Jesus will come and take His own home to heaven before this time of tribulation begins. We will be talking more about that yet.

My question to us now is, "What will life be like on earth just before Jesus returns for His own?" The Church age has not closed yet, so there still is at least some time before us before that time. Is there any indication in Scripture of what life will be like in the closing days of the Church? I think there is and it is this that makes me believe we are in the closing days of the Church age.

a. What will the spiritual climate be like?

What will spiritual life be like in the latter end of the church age? (Read 1 Timothy 4:1-3.) Well, some will depart from the faith. Doctrines will be changed and cause some to depart from the truth. I believe doctrines of demons are not doctrines that sound very evil, but doctrines so close to the truth that it is hard to tell from the truth. These are not doctrines about demons, but doctrines that come from demons.

Let us read 2 Timothy 3:1-5 as well (read). Here is another description of what it will be like at the end of the Church age. Notice verse 13 in this chapter as well (read).

Now go to 2 Timothy 4:3-4 (read). Here is a picture of what it is like in many churches right in our very day! This describes a good section of evangelicalism today!

What will the spiritual climate be like at the end of the Church age? Let us read 2 Peter 3:1-4 (read). Maybe subtly the devil has whispered these words in your ears as well, "Where is the promise of His coming?"

Now many teachers of the Word of God have taken Revelation chapters 2-3 as being prophetic of the

Church age as well. That is, the Church will move through seven periods of time. If that is so, and there is ground for thinking so, then Revelation 3:14-22 describes the closing days of the Church age. Let me simply read this Scripture for us (read).

b. What will be the major political efforts?

I gather from 2 Thessalonians 5:1-3 that the major political efforts of the closing days of the Church age will be to bring peace to this troubled world (read). Now this passage has the phrase, 'the day of the Lord.' This is a very common phrase in Scripture and let me show you on your time-line what this refers to (show). Now there are various phrases that I think refer to different time periods; there is the Day of Christ; the Day of God and the Day of the Lord. I believe that the Day of the Lord refers to both the tribulation and the millennium together. In some Scriptures it may refer especially to the tribulation, while in others it may refer to the millennium or in yet others, to both time periods.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:3, it refers to the beginning of the Day of the Lord, the tribulation. Now verse 3 says, "When they..." The pronoun 'they' here refers to the world, or especially the political world for they are the ones that would seek to accomplish what follows. So it goes on, "When they say, 'Peace and safety!'..." Here is the political world, finally able to announce to the world, "We have achieved peace at last! No more war! We have achieved peace, and we have achieved safety for mankind!"

So what will the closing days of the Church age be like politically? There will be a constant effort to bring about world peace! Does that sound like our day? How much time, effort and money goes into bringing about peace and safety today? It is immeasurable!

Now our passage goes on to say, "For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction

comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman." That is the beginning of the day of the Lord, or the tribulation.

So what will the closing days of the Church age be like politically? There will be tremendous energies poured into bringing about peace and safety. Are we there?

c. What will be in the news?

What will the news be like just before the Lord returns? (read Matthew 24:4-7). Now some hold that these verses describe the beginning of the tribulation. I think rather they describe events just prior to the tribulation.

Verse 8 goes on to say, "All these things are the beginnings of sorrows." It will be noteworthy to you that the word translated 'sorrows' in this verse is the word for birth pangs. Now it says that all these things mentioned in verses 5-7 are indicators of something that is about to happen. When these things happen, then you know that something else is near. Well, what is near? It is the time we know as the tribulation. Verse 9 says, "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation..." Verse 21 says, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be."

So the things mentioned in verses 5-7 are signs that the tribulation is near. Now the tribulation is the time period that immediately follows the Church age. So what will it be like at the end of the Church age or when the tribulation is near?

First, it will be a time of spiritual unrest (read 4-5). Many will come and say they are Christ. Never have more people claimed to be Christ than today. It is years ago when Billy Graham said that in California alone, over 200 people claimed to be Christ. And these folk, the Bible tells us, will deceive many. Does this describe today? So where are we? Is there

spiritual unrest today? We can say it is true as never before.

Second, just before the tribulation there will be a time of tremendous political unrest for notice the words of Jesus in verses (6-7a). Is this what is in the news today? For some time we heard about Iraq. Today we hear much about Iran. When you look at Iran or the Arab nations, does it look like peace to you? For some time now in the Christian world there are rumblings like this, "Watch Iran. Keep your eyes on Iran." What is on the news today? Do we hear of wars and rumors of wars? When you look at that tiny nation of Israel, what do we hear but wars and rumors of wars. Does the news today not fit the prophecy of this passage?

Then it will be a time of natural unrest, that is, nature will be behaving in strange ways. There will be famines. Do we hear of these? Then this text tells us that there will be pestilences. These are deadly maladies. Do we hear of these today? What of AIDS? In the 1940's, with the discovery of penicillin, doctors thought pestilences were about to end. They thought that the end of deadly diseases was on the horizon. But 30 short years later, we began to experience one of the very worst deadly maladies ever known to man; AIDS. And there is no end in sight as this disease mutates and creates more of its kind.

Furthermore, Jesus tells us here that there will be earthquakes in various places. Those who keep track of earthquakes that are called killer quakes tell us of the steady increase of more and more earthquakes. Well, this is what the Bible says and what do we hear in the news but these very things?

d. What will life be like in general?

What will life be like in general just before the rapture? I think in Matthew 24:36-39 we have a picture of what life will be like in general, just before the Lord returns (read). For mankind

in general, life will be quite good. They will be eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.

Some have treated the eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage of this passage as bad signs, and they say, "Look at how many places there are today to eat. That shows we are in the last times." But the point of the passage is not that there is anything wrong with eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage. What this passage teaches is that at the time of the Lord's return, for mankind in general, when the Lord returns for the Church, it will be life as usual. Nobody will be expecting anything unusual, and all of a sudden it will be over. The rapture will have happened. The Lord will have taken the righteous home.

What will it be like just before the Lord returns for His own? It will be life as usual. Look at verse 39 (read). What was it like in Noah's day just before the flood? Well, people ate and drank and married and were given in marriage. No one suspected a thing even though for 120 years Noah had warned them. It was life as usual one day and the very next day life was over for all mankind but Noah and his family. What will it be like when Jesus comes for the Church? Just like that! It will be life as usual. No one will suspect a thing. It will be just like today! And then, just as suddenly, the greatest event mankind has ever experienced to this point in time will happen. It will happen in the twinkling of an eye.

Luke further describes this time as being like that of Lot, in Sodom and Gomorrah (Read Luke 17:28-30). What was life like in Sodom and Gomorrah just before it rained fire and brimstone on these cities? It was life as usual. They ate. They drank. They married. They gave in marriage and then it was over. They have unearthed these cities and they were destroyed just as Scripture says.

There is something not mentioned in these texts that is similar to today as well. In Noah's day

and in Lot's day, sin and immorality were at all time highs. And yet they continued to live life as usual. Today, sin and immorality is again at very high levels. We need to be warned by this that judgment is near.

Maybe this is a moment for me to share a few concerns for our young men. I said to someone recently, "I do not know how a young man can grow up without being seriously damaged by all the immorality that is available today." Our young men are bombarded to such a degree in so many ways, I wonder, "How shall they stay pure." Young men (maybe older ones too), you have at your fingertips the availability of every kind of vice. If you have fallen and you are 'hooked', get help any way you can. This snare will steal your soul.

I had a note from one of our young men who said that the vice of pornography is almost out of hand and that I needed to preach on this. This young man said he had found help by making himself accountable to someone else. There is a word to the wise. Pornography of all kinds exists and is now so easily available.

I want to avail myself to you to talk if you wish to. I am grateful for young men who have come and asked for help. I might be able to help you find someone to be accountable to.

And to our ladies, now that the hot summer days are here, I exhort you, dress yourselves. Do not dress as you think is appropriate. Ask your husband. Ask your dad. One personal word here: I think those ladies pants that hang so low in the front are one of the most despicable styles the devil has designed yet. I see some of our young ladies falling for those clothes along with the body stance that goes with those pants. I entreat you this morning on behalf of our Lord, and our men.

And one final word on this. Immorality and pornography will NEVER satisfy. It will NEVER deliver what it promises. No matter how much we

may think so, it will not satisfy. It is a robber. It is a thief. Follow it, and it will rob you. I say again, it will NEVER satisfy. The sooner you cut all of it, the better. May the Lord bless these few words and may they be found helpful.

Why have I mentioned these things this morning? Because we are talking about what life will be like in the closing days of the Church age. What will life be like just before the end of the Church age? Well, I would gather from the example of the days of Noah and the example of the days of Lot, that it will be a time of great immorality.

CONCL: We have looked this morning at the closing days of the Church age. You see, the days that we have left from here until the rapture or the tribulation are days that are still future. We have seen this morning that the Scriptures address those days.

We looked at what things would be like spiritually. It would be a time of doctrinal deception. It would be a time of selfish living. Evil men and seducers (spiritually) will grow worse and worse. Christians will seek for preachers who will tickle their ears. That is, they will preach what the people want to hear. That is nothing but the seeker friendly approach so prominent today. People will scoff at the near return of Christ. That seems to me to speak of a dislike for the doctrine of prophecy. And then, if the church of Laodicea is a picture of the Church in the close of the Church age, it pictures the church as lukewarm, claiming itself to be rich, when in fact it is spiritually very poor.

What of the political world? What will it be like? It will seek to bring peace to a war ravished world. What will be reported in the news? The news will indicate the closing days of the Church age as a time of spiritual unrest; a time of political unrest, and a time of unrest in nature. Deadly diseases, famine and earthquakes will be common.

And what will life be like for most of the world when the Lord returns? It will be a time of life as usual. It will be a time when people eat and drink; get married and are given in marriage. It will be life as usual. For the most

part, the world will be totally oblivious to the ominous clouds of blackness already visible above the horizon. For the most part they will live as if life will be like this forever, never suspecting that at any moment the most incredible event of all history is about to take place and that the world will be plunged into its darkest hour ever to occur in all of time this side of eternity.