

Prophecy Ponderings

There is great interest in coming events in our day. This interest centers around predictions of what life will be like in the future. And it is also about the end of the world as we know it. With every international crisis and change in world leadership, prophecy becomes every man's specialty. Now Christians do have a real interest in the future because it belongs to them. However, sometimes this interest becomes more centered in prophecy timetables and battle scenarios than the major event - Christ Jesus' personal return.

Prophecy in the New Testament focuses on the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to this earth. We often call this the Second Advent. He is not coming back according to someone's timetable or prophetic scheme of things. **He is coming according to the predetermined plan and purpose of God.** *"But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come (Mark 13:32-33).*

It is true that the Bible gives us some signs of the times to challenge us to be aware of Christ's return. But to hear some people talk it seems that the most important thing is to be able to identify today's headlines and newsmakers with a particular Bible verse – this, however, is a misplaced emphasis.

The Bible is not a prophetic jigsaw puzzle waiting for last day Christians to get it all worked out. After all, exactly how spiritually uplifting is it to know the latest prediction of the identity of the Antichrist or the roll call of nations in the final war? In fact, some Christians have become so hung up on their interpretations of prophecy that they forget **the whole purpose of Bible prophecy**. God's Word has one central theme regarding the last days. It is ***Jesus is coming to earth again.***

Even the Book of Revelation has been transformed by some into a complete mystery of terminology in revealing the end time sequence of events that only the enlightened can understand. When God gave the content of this prophecy to John it was sent to the churches as an encouragement to Christians going through hard times. It conveys some great truths that believers need to keep in mind – **no matter what the devil may throw at the church, God’ purposes cannot fail.** The Lord God omnipotent reigns! (Revelation 19:6)

The fact that Jesus Christ is returning to consummate the salvation of His people and usher in God’s eternal kingdom is more important than if we have the correct timetable and sequence of events. Hebrews 9:27-28 reads, *And just as it is destined for people to die once, and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.*

Christians should be sober students of the teaching of Scripture concerning the last days and Christ’s return. We are to avoid sensationalism and fanaticism. Jesus warned us about prophecy speculators who would try to mislead God’s people. We must avoid the danger of false prophets and not let them deceive us with their teachings of when and where Christ will return.

So, if they say to you, ‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out. If they say, ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. ²⁷ For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (Matt. 24:26-27).

The Master was very clear in his instructions to us about his return. He said it would be visible and personal. The Book of the Revelation relates *that every eye shall see him.* (Revelation 1:7) **There will be no such thing as Christ returning and people being unaware that he has come and gone.** His coming will be with a great sound and the sight will be glorious. 1 Thessalonians 4:16 states, *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.* He is coming in power and great glory. When he comes he will bring about the new order of heaven and earth (Rev. 21:1-2).

As believers in our Lord Jesus the future belongs to him and thus to us who are united to him by faith. Paul in Romans 8 testifies: *The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,*¹⁷ *and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*

¹⁸ *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.* ¹⁹ *For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.* ²⁰ *For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope*²¹ *that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.* ²² *For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.* ²³ *And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.* (16-23)

At the heart of Biblical revelation is the resurrection of the dead which occurs at the return of Jesus. Listen to Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15. *Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.* (v 51-52)

²¹ *For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.* ²² *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.* ²³ *But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.* ²⁴ *Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power (1 Corinthians 15:21-24).*

1 Thessalonians 4:14,16, *For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.*

This hope is found in the prophet Isaiah 25:8 and 26:19:

He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.

Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead.

Martha said to Jesus at her brother's death, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die"* John 11:25-26.

John 6:40: *"For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."*

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself (Philippians 3:20-21),

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, ...And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

Revelation 21:1-4

God's prophetic truth should penetrate not just our heads but our hearts. The result should be the fostering of spiritual attitudes conducive to being ready when Christ returns. This includes a striving after holiness and an occupation with the

spiritual advancement of our lives, plus an evangelistic penetration of the world. Jesus said, *“This gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world; the end shall come”* (Matt. 24:14).

“Since Christ will return and establish the new order, what kind of people ought we to be? We should live holy and godly lives, as we look forward to the day of God and speed its coming” (2 Pet. 3:11-12).

¹¹ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, it is clear what sort of people you should be in holy conduct and godliness ¹² as you wait for and earnestly desire the coming of the day of God. ... Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3:1-4)

What is the great and major truth that the Scriptures teach regarding the end times events? It is that the Lord Jesus himself is returning to receive his people unto himself so they may be with him forever.

This has been Wayne Conrad with Bible Insights. Until next time *stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is near!*”

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