

ARE YOU LIVING WITH EAGER ANTICIPATION?

There are many reasons God included prophecies in the Bible. One of the more significant ones is that He does not want the future to be a mystery to us. He wants us to know that the chaos and wickedness so prevalent in the world around us won't last forever. There is coming a day when He will make all things right—a day when the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will reign over all the earth.

The prophecies found in the Old and New Testaments are meant to encourage us to look ahead to the future. They're meant to fill us with anticipation and hope. By hope, we don't mean, "We hope this will happen." Rather, we point to the hope spoken of in 1 Peter 1:3-4: "According to His abundant mercy [God] has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."

This hope is a *living* hope that is *guaranteed* by Christ's resurrection. Because He rose from the dead, we will too. We have an inheritance waiting in heaven for us. The hope we've been given is secure and eternal!

As we survey the hundreds of prophecies in Scripture, we become aware of an interesting fact: For every prophecy about Christ's first coming, there are eight about His second coming.

What does that tell us about the importance of Christ's return? Clearly, God wants the promise of the second coming to have a prominent place in our minds and hearts. These prophecies were given to make us a people who live in fervent and ongoing anticipation.

Philippians 3:20 says "our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." That's the spirit in which we have written this book—to stir up your eagerness for Christ's return.

As you read these daily devotions, may you find yourself saying, with the apostle John, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20).

Amir and Barry

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

There are many takeaways from the familiar encounter of the dejected disciples who walked with the resurrected Lord on the road to Emmaus the very day He rose from the dead. But there is one that stands above them all.

Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself (Luke 24:27).

What the two men expected from Jesus was popular among the Jews of their day. They were waiting for a Messiah who would deliver them from Roman domination.

The disciples who were on the road to Emmaus completely missed the majesty of what had just transpired because they were not looking for a Messiah who would die for their sins, but for a Messiah who would free them from Rome. They overlooked prophecies like the one in Isaiah 53:5: “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.”

In times such as these, when governments are oppressing and restricting God’s people, we need to be careful about falling into the same mistake as these two disciples by overlooking Jesus’ first coming. The truth is that what we needed most has already happened:

You, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight (Colossians 1:21-22).

Let’s not overlook the wonder of Jesus’ first coming and focus only on His second. Yes, He is coming again. Yes, we are coming with Him. Yes, He will rule and reign in righteousness. Yes, we will rule and reign with Him. But these things are true only because He first came as a Lamb, slain for you and me according to God’s plans from before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH MIRACLES

Other than the Lord Jesus Himself, few things in Scripture teach us more about the nature and character of God than that of His relationship with the nation of Israel. Through Israel, we have learned the Lord is our provider, protector, redeemer, enabler, deliverer.

As Romans 11:25-27 says,

I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.”

Many teach that the church has replaced Israel, and this is nothing more than the proverbial “cut off your nose to spite your face” mistake. In other words, if God cast off those whom He made unconditional and eternal promises to, then we are all in trouble. If He cast off Israel, then He could do the same with the church.

Many who do not believe that modern Israel is biblical Israel also believe that God chooses to save some and not others, and those whom He chooses to save cannot be lost because they are eternally secure. Yet they deny this very thing when it comes to the nation of Israel. If God doesn't change, then how can their belief that God has cast off modern Israel be true?

So take heart! Learn from Israel that God is faithful to His promises, and not even nearly 2,000 years outside of their national homeland can separate them from His unconditional and everlasting promises. That means we can know, with certainty, that when we blow it—and we all do—that God will remain faithful to us, for He cannot deny Himself.

You won't find a greater proof of this than the miracle of the regathered nation of Israel, in which God brought His people back into their national homeland.

THE TRUMPET OF THE RAPTURE

There is a lot of confusion surrounding the “last trumpet” Paul mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:52. Note what 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 says about “the trumpet of God”:

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. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Early Christians referred to the death of the body as sleep, based on their belief in the future bodily resurrection of the dead in Christ. Like sleep, the grave was temporary, and thus, they likened it to sleep.

The confusion over the last trumpet often results from mixing up the trumpet judgments of Revelation with the “voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God” that signals the end of the church age, as stated in 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

If the last trumpet in 1 Corinthians 15:52 is the same as the last of the seven trumpets in Revelation, then there is a problem with finding comfort in the words of Paul. There is also a problem that arises with other scriptures, such as Revelation 3:10: “Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”

The Lord doesn’t say, “I’ll keep you from the bowl judgments during the last part of the tribulation.” Rather, He says He will keep you from the whole of the tribulation, the hour of trial coming on the whole world.

So, dear saints, take comfort in the fact that the unknown day and hour when the dead in Christ and those alive in Christ will meet Him in the air—to be with the Him forever—might be today!