

## GOD'S PREDICTIONS WILL COME TO PASS

- A. Introduction: For much of this year we have been addressing the increasing chaos we see all around us, not just in our own country but across the world—from the pandemic and its economic effects to growing racial and ethnic strife, lawlessness, and immorality.
1. We've been considering these developments in terms of what the Bible says—why they are occurring and how we should respond to them. In the next three lessons, we'll bring this discussion to a close.
    - a. The second coming of Jesus Christ is near. He's coming back to complete God's plan for a family.
      1. God created human beings to become His sons and daughters through faith in Christ, and He created the earth to be a home for Himself and His family. Both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin. Eph 1:4-5; Isa 45:18; Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12; Rom 5:19; etc.
      2. Jesus came to earth the first time to pay for sin at the Cross so that all who believe on Him can be transformed from sinners into sons and daughters of God. He will come again to cleanse the family home and restore it to a fit forever home for Himself and His family. John 1:12-13; Acts 3:21; Isa 65:17
    - b. The world the way it currently is isn't the way it's supposed to be—and it's not going to go on forever as it is. A big change is coming when the Lord Jesus returns in the not too distant future.
      1. I Cor 7:31—For this world in its present form is passing away (NIV); For the outward form of this world—the present world order—is passing away (Amp).
      2. Gal 1:4—(Jesus died) [to atone] for our sins (and to save and sanctify us), in order to rescue and deliver us from this present wicked age and world order, in accordance with the will and purpose and plan of our God and Father (Amp).
        - A. Because of sin, this world is infused with a curse of corruption and death. This world's problems can't be permanently fixed by human effort because the root problem is spiritual.
        - B. When Jesus returns He will root out the sin, corruption, and death and restore this planet to what it was always meant to be. Life in this world will finally be fully glorifying to God and fully satisfying for His family.
    - c. The Bible makes it clear that perilous times will precede the Lord's return and culminate in the worst tribulation that the world has ever seen. II Tim 3:1; Matt 24:21-22
      1. Jesus compared many of the events of this period to birth pains, meaning that they will increase in frequency and intensity as the time of His return draws closer (Matt 24:6-8). Those birth pangs have begun, and we are going to be increasingly affected by them and their effects.
      2. We've made the point that the chaos and tribulation of these final years does not come from God. It is the result of human choice and the consequences of those choices. Almighty God is our source of help in the midst of the birth pains (more on this in these final three lessons).
  2. The Book of Revelation is an eyewitness account of the tumultuous events preceding Jesus' return. In 95 AD the Lord appeared to His apostle John and gave him the information recorded in Revelation.
    - a. John witnessed great destruction on earth (chapters 6-19). However, his vision ended, not with earth destroyed, but with earth transformed and God and His family together on earth (Rev 21-22).
    - b. Revelation scares a lot of people because much of the language seems bizarre to us (tormenting bugs that hurt with their stings, Rev 9:1-11; hundred pound hail stones falling from the sky, Rev 16:21; etc.). And, the destruction on earth does seem to come from God.
      1. One of our main themes in this series has been to determine what this information meant to 1<sup>st</sup> century Christians. How did they hear and understand it? Did it scare or encourage them?
      2. The first Christians expected Jesus to return in their lifetime, meaning they would see perilous times. But they also expected the Lord to deliver and preserve them for life on the new earth.

- B. The Book of Revelation is not the only source of information about the Lord's return and the end of this present age. Other books in the Bible have much to say about world conditions at the time of Christ's return. Revelation is mostly an elaboration of information given to Old Testament prophets.
1. The Bible describes a system of global government, economy, and religion presided over by a Satan-inspired man known as Antichrist. II Thess 2:3-4; II Thess 2:9; Dan 7:9-28; Dan 8:25; Rev 13:1-18
    - a. Although this man will at first seem to have answers to the world's problems, he will eventually bring the world to war at a series of battles known as Armageddon (WWIII). Rev 16:16
      1. Armageddon is a Greek form of the Hebrew word Megiddo. Megiddo is a 70 foot mound on the southwest edge of the Jezreel Valley which is 70 miles north of Jerusalem. The valley runs west to east across the country and has been the scene of many battles throughout antiquity.
      2. The valley's western entrance today is near the Port of Haifa. It is one of the most accessible areas in Israel for amphibious troop landings and it is also a good area for equipment assembly.
      3. Fighting will center at Megiddo and run the length of Israel (200 miles, Rev 14:20). There will be nuclear, biological, and chemical warfare and millions will suffer and die.
    - b. In his vision, John saw these final events. John wasn't describing some supernatural, freaky "throw down" from an angry God. He was describing nuclear, biological, and chemical warfare and the resulting effects on humanity and the earth itself.
      1. He was a 1<sup>st</sup> century man observing events for which he had no words—21<sup>st</sup> century technology and warfare. So he described them in terms familiar to himself and his audience.
      2. For example, John spoke of a great earthquake (*seismos*) (Rev 6:12). The word can mean a terrible shaking, not necessarily an earthquake. If the earth shook due to a nuclear holocaust John would have had no words to describe it other than earthquake.
  2. John was not the only author to write about events he had never seen and had no words for. The prophet Ezekiel (a 7<sup>th</sup> century BC man) described what seems to be one of the first military actions at Armageddon when Gog (Russia and its allies) will launch an invasion of Israel. Ezek 38-39
    - a. In his vision Ezekiel saw highly mobile and well equipped armies and a battle which he described in terms that his readers understood—clouds, shaking, brimstone. Ezek 38:16; 19; Ezek 38:20-22
    - b. Reading his description today, we see that Ezekiel was reporting a nuclear and chemical exchange that produced not only a cloud and shaking, but heavy rains, hailstones, and fire and brimstone.
      1. The movement of mechanized troops would produce great clouds of dust as well as the shaking of the earth. And, we now know that nuclear weapons produce fire. When the atomic bombs were dropped on Japan in WWII people were literally incinerated by the ensuing fireballs.
      2. Brimstone is sulfur which is a principle ingredient in many chemical and nerve gases. And we know that open air hydrogen bomb tests conducted since WWII have produced intense fireballs, radiation, and hailstorms that put large dents on the armor plating of the test ships.
      3. Remember what we've already discussed about the Old Testament language. God's primary purpose was to show Himself to a world of idol worshippers as the only Almighty God. Many events are connected to God, not because He causes them, but to help men recognize that destruction comes when they are out of relationship with Him due to idol worship.
  3. Ezekiel is not the only prophet to mention fire and shaking as the destructive forces in these final battles that will occur before the Lord returns.
    - a. Isa 13:6-13—Isaiah wrote that in the day of the Lord men's faces will be aflame and they will be as scarce as the gold of Ophir, and that the heavens and earth will shake. (Ophir was a gold producing region in what is now Yemen. Gold from Ophir adorned Solomon's Temple, I Kings 10:14-23).
    - b. Isa 24:5-6—Isaiah reported that the inhabitants of the earth will be burned, with few left alive. Because nuclear weapons have been exploded in war in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we know that the intense heat and blinding light of thermonuclear blasts can set people on fire for a radius of up to 100 miles.

- c. Joel 2:1; Joel 2:10-11; Joel 2:30-31—The prophet Joel also wrote about fire and shaking in the day of the Lord and added that the sun, moon, and stars will be darkened. His words resemble a description of the nuclear winter scientists say will follow nuclear war. The debris blasted into the atmosphere will blot out light and heat from the sun and obscure the moon and stars.
- 4. Rev 6—John, in his vision, saw Jesus open a sealed scroll in Heaven prior to His second coming. The opening of each seal triggered an event on earth. We could do an entire lesson on each point. For now, consider a brief summary in connection with our topic tonight.
  - a. When Jesus opened the first seal the final world ruler (Antichrist) was released (v1-2). Other passages tell us that he will establish a false peace and then declares himself to be God (v1-2). When Jesus opened the second seal peace was taken away and men began to kill (butcher, slaughter, ruthlessly massacre each) other (v3-4).
  - b. Notice that the events produced by the opening of subsequent seals are all natural consequences of major war breaking out in the world. (Some of the wording John used is found in the prophets.)
    - 1. The opening of the third seal results in food shortages and extremely high food costs—a loaf of wheat bread or three loaves of barley for a day’s pay (v5-6, NLT).
    - 2. The fourth seal unleashes mass death (sword means death by war). Famine and plague (death) result from scarcity of food and the aftermath of chemical and biological weapons being used. Wild beasts (animals) desperate for food go after men (v7-8).
    - 3. The breaking of the fifth seal is followed by massive persecution of those who refuse to worship the final world ruler when he proclaims himself God (v9-11).
  - c. When the sixth seal is opened John repeats the imagery used by the Old Testament prophets as they described the events they witnessed which strongly indicate a nuclear holocaust (v12-14).
    - 1. If the earth shook due to a thermonuclear blast John would have had not words to describe it but earthquake (*seismos*). The word can mean a terrible shaking, not necessarily an earthquake.
    - 2. The sun and moon being darkened is consistent with the debris blasted into the atmosphere from thermonuclear detonations that blot out light and heat from the moon and sun.
    - 3. John speaks of stars falling. John saw multiple warheads streak through the sky as they fell on intended targets. They looked to him like falling stars.
  - d. Finally, John saw the sky roll up like a scroll. This is another 1<sup>st</sup> century description of the aftermath of 21<sup>st</sup> century warfare in terms that the author and his readers were familiar with.
    - 1. We now know from observing the effects of nuclear weapons tested during and after WWII that in a thermonuclear explosion the atmosphere is pushed back on itself, creating a vacuum.
    - 2. Then it rushes back into the vacuum with almost as much force. That is where much of the damage of the explosion comes from—the violent movement of the atmosphere or the sky rolling up like a scroll which could easily be described as the sky rolling up like a scroll.
    - 3. Isa 34:4—Isaiah recorded a similar event when he recorded a passage about the day of the Lord.
- 5. Neither the imagery John used in the Book of Revelation nor the events he described freaked out the original readers. They already knew from the Old Testament prophets that there was a clear distinction between those who belong to God and those who don’t.
  - a. Ezekiel described intervention by God on the part of His people (Ezek 39:1-8). Joel reported that all who call on the Lord will be delivered. He will be their refuge and hope (Joel 2:32; Joel 3:16).
  - b. Isaiah ended his book of prophecy with the promise of a new heavens and new earth (Isa 65:17; Isa 66:22). John actually saw the new heavens and earth. In his last two chapters John described the great transformation with tremendous outcomes for those who know the Lord (Rev 21-22).
- C. All of the information we’ve share thus far is predictive. The Bible is unlike other religious books in that it contains prophecy or predictions about the future. The primary purpose of prophecy is to glorify God.

1. Only God can accurately state events before they happen.—I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end and the result from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure and purpose (Isa 46:9-10, Amp).
    - a. God’s prophecies are also redemptive in nature because when His predictions come to pass it demonstrates that He is truly the only Almighty God. We referred to predictive prophecies in the Ezekiel concerning the final world war that is yet to come. Note these statements about them.
      1. Ezek 38:23—Thus will I show my greatness and holiness, and I will make myself known to all the nations of the world. Then they will know that I am the Lord (NLT).
      2. Ezek 39:8—That day of judgment will come, says the Sovereign Lord. Everything will happen just as I have declared it (NLT). (Remember what we already said about the ultimate outcome judgment. Those who are God’s will be rewarded with forever life on the new earth. Those who are not God’s will be forever removed from contact with the Lord and His family.)
    - b. Not only do these predictive prophecies exalt God when they come to pass, they also authenticate the Bible. One fourth of the Bible was predictive when it was written, and many of its prophecies have already been verifiably fulfilled. Consider just a few of them.
      1. Isaiah identified the first leader of the Persian Empire by name (Cyrus) 150 years before he lived (Isa 44:28-45:1-4). Daniel predicted the breakup of the Greek Empire established by Alexander the Great into four parts 230 years before it happened (Dan 8:21-22).
      2. There are many details about Jesus’ first coming that came to pass as predicted, like the time and place of His birth (Dan 9:24-25; Micah 5:2), and the fact that He was born to a virgin (Isa 7:14)—along with details about His life, death, and resurrection (Isa 53; Ps 22; Ps 16:8-10).
    - c. We are living in a time when many people profess to be prophets and deliver all kinds of prophecies. The nearness of Jesus return combined with the internet has taken prophecy to a whole new level.
      1. Far too many Christians have their hope in contemporary prophecies. We must be discerning in what we give our attention to. The purpose of prophecy is not to tell us about Antichrist or the mark of the beast or even the future of politics in America.
      2. Note what the Book of Revelation says about prophecy. Rev 19:10—Worship God. For the essence of prophecy is to give a clear witness for Jesus (NLT).
  2. Because America was founded on Judeo-Christians principles and morality, it is easy to get God’s purposes mixed up with America’s destiny. Humans have been on this earth for six to ten thousand years. America has been in existence for a little over 200 years and God got along fine without us.
    - a. There is a battle going on right now (not just in America, but around the world) between nationalism and globalism. The Bible predicts the rise of a global system and the US is the biggest roadblock to such a system. We will decline as globalism temporarily takes over and we join this movement.
      1. I’m not advocating that we just letting it happen—vote, pray for mercy, etc. I mean recognize that when the time is right it will happen—but God will work it into His plan for a family.
      2. When Jesus was arrested and taken to trial He responded: Now is your hour (time) and the power of darkness (John12:27; Luke 22:53). Darkness seemed to win. But God used those wicked events carried out by evil men and caused them to serve His purposes. At the Cross Jesus purchased our salvation.
    - b. Our hope is not in a politician or a business man. Our hope is not in a political party or a system of government. Our hope is in Jesus and the fact that He will complete God’s plan for a family on this earth renewed and restored. Life will finally be what we all long for.
- D. Conclusion: There’s a bright future ahead for those who know the Lord and He will get us through whatever is ahead on this earth until He gets us out. That awareness gives us peace and hope in the midst of the increasing chaos. More next week!