

## WE'RE ONLY PASSING THROUGH

- A. Introduction: The return of Jesus to this earth is near. But many Christians are afraid rather than excited due to lack of knowledge, poor teaching and focusing on details in prophecy that are not yet clear.
1. We are remedying this by discussing Jesus' return in terms of the overall plan of God. When you understand the purpose of the Second Coming it becomes a source of joy.
    - a. His return will complete God's plan of redemption, His plan to transform sinners into righteous, holy sons and daughters and loose His material creation from the curse of corruption and death.
    - b. God has been talking about the end since the beginning. When Adam and man in Adam sinned God began to unveil His plan to undo the damage done by man's rebellion and carry out His original plan to have a family on earth. Eph 1:4,5; Gen 3:15; Rev 13:8
    - c. Every person since Adam and Eve who has put faith in God's revelation of His salvation provided through the Cross of Christ is interested and involved in God's plan of redemption.
      1. Although we have more details about the plan than many of those who lived before us, our understanding must be consistent with their understanding. When we examine the Bible record we find that those who came before us were not afraid of the Lord's coming.
      2. Consider one man's view. John the Baptist's father's prophesied that Jesus was coming to redeem His people in fulfillment of His promises to Abraham. He'll wipe out sin, making it possible for men to serve Him in peace, holiness and righteousness forever. Luke 1:67-80
  2. Although these people didn't know there would be separate two comings of Jesus they had the same basic information as us. They knew that at the Lord's coming a world ruler will be in place who will wreak havoc, bringing war and tribulation to Israel (Dan 7,9,11,12, etc.). Yet they weren't afraid. Why?
    - a. It's not what you see. It's how you see what you see. You may recall that Jesus said increasingly difficult times will come on the earth prior to His return. All will see the same things happening. But some will be terrified while others are elated in joyous expectation. Luke 21:28
    - b. The people who lived before us had an eternal perspective. They saw the big picture. They understood that they were only passing through this life as it is. But they knew that they will one day return to earth with the Lord to live in His kingdom on the earth forever.
      1. Part of the fear Christians have about Jesus' return comes from an overemphasis on the importance of this life and little thought give to what is ahead. Rom 8:18; II Cor 4:17,18
      2. We are eternal beings and the greater and better portion of our existence is ahead, first in Heaven and then on the new earth. We need to learn to live with that awareness.
- B. Let's look at several examples of how knowledge of life beyond this life helped real people deal with life's real hardships and how that information is connected with the Second Coming of Jesus.
1. Hebrews was written to Jewish believers in Jesus who were facing increasing pressure from their countrymen to go back to Temple worship. To do so they had to repudiate Christ and His sacrifice.
    - a. The whole point of the letter was to encourage these believers to stay faithful to Jesus no matter what. One tactic the writer used was to remind them that there's more to life than just this life.
      1. Heb 10:32-34--He reminded them that some had already experienced material loss but took it joyfully or cheerfully (a description of their state of mind). They were able to do so because they knew there is more to life than just this life and any loss they experienced was temporary.
      2. Heb 10:35-37--He urged them not to give up their confident courage because it will result in great reward. If they endure they'll receive God's promises. The context is Jesus' coming.
    - b. Note also that in this context the writer says the just (those who've been made righteous through Jesus) shall live by faith. In Heb 11:1 he says: Faith (perceives) as real fact what is not revealed to the senses (Amp). That agrees with an earlier definition: Faith is not sight. (II Cor 5:7).
  2. The writer then spends a great deal of time referring to Old Testament men and women who were renowned for their faith through which they overcame in the challenges of life. Heb 11:2

- a. These people had several things in common: They lived according to unseen realities. They knew that this earth as it is was not their final home. Although God provided for them in this life, they didn't see the fulfillment of His plan, but they knew it was ahead and would see it. Heb 11:13
  - b. They didn't have all the details, but they knew there is more to life than just this life. And that gave them confidence to live through life's challenges and stay faithful to God. That's what the writer of Hebrews was exhorting his readers to do. Note how he closed this section of his letter:
    - 1. Heb 11:39,40--All of these people we have mentioned received God's approval because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God promised. For God had far better things in mind for us that would also benefit them, for they can't receive the prize at the end of the race until we finish the race. (NLT)
    - 2. The writer didn't write in chapters and verses (were added later). He continued his thought by saying that we (his readers and us) are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. Heb 12:1
      - A. All these people I (the writer) have mentioned are watching us from Heaven, rooting for us to run our race and complete our course. They see clearly that a plan is unfolding.
      - B. We're part of that plan. Do whatever you need to do to stay faithful and finish the race. The best is yet to come when God's plan of redemption is culminated at Jesus' return.
  - 3. All these first followers of Jesus expected Him to return within their lifetimes and establish His visible kingdom on earth, and it impacted the way they lived their lives. It wasn't a source of fear but rather of hope. Expecting or looking for Jesus is a major New Testament theme. I Thess 1:10; Titus 2:13; etc.
- C. The writer of Hebrews refers to two key players in the plan of redemption in chapter 11, Abraham and Moses. Let's consider what their example shows us about God's unfolding plan and an eternal perspective.
- 1. Heb 11:8-10--Abraham became the father of the people group through whom the Redeemer came to earth. God called Abraham to leave the land of his birth and travel to a land He would give to him.
    - a. Even though God promised Canaan to Abraham and his descendants, they knew their stay in the land in this life was temporary so they lived as sojourners or temporary residents.
    - b. They lived in tents (temporary) and were looking for a city (permanent with foundations) that would be established by God on this earth. They didn't have all the details but knew a plan was unfolding. They saw it afar off by faith. They recognized there is more to life than just this life.
  - 2. At His first coming Jesus revealed an important detail about the source of Abraham's faith in an exchange He had with the Pharisees. Jesus and Abraham met before Jesus took on flesh. John 8:56
    - a. Jesus made many appearances to His people in the Old Testament. He is most often called the Angel of the Lord in these appearances. Angel does not mean created being. It means messenger or sent one. Jesus is God's message, the Word made flesh, the visible manifestation of the Invisible God in the Old Testament. John 1:14,18; Heb 1:1-3; John 3:17; I John 4:10; etc.
    - b. Gen 22:1-12--Jesus is the one who told Abraham to offer Isaac, the son of promise, and then stopped him after Abraham demonstrated his willingness to do so.
      - 1. v15-18--Preincarnate Jesus told Abraham that He would bless him and give him descendants too numerous to count, and that through his seed all nations would be blessed. Jesus would become that Promised Seed at His incarnation in the womb of Mary. Gal 3:8-16
      - 2. Abraham rejoiced that day when Jesus, before He took on flesh and was born into this world through Abraham's line, discussed with him details of the unfolding plan of redemption.
    - c. Abraham died in faith looking forward to fulfillment of the promise Jesus made to him that day.
  - 3. Heb 11:24-27--Moses was chosen to lead Israel out of bondage in Egypt which pictured the redemption Jesus would provide. Moses was empowered to do what he did because he had this eternal perspective. He lived by faith in unseen realities and endured by seeing Him who is Invisible.
    - a. Moses rejected life as a royal prince of Egypt and the temporary pleasures of sin to share the affliction of his people because he considered "the reproaches which he might meet with in the service of Christ" (Weymouth) of greater value. He knew there is more to life than just this life.

1. How did Moses know Jesus? It was Preincarnate Jesus (the Angel of the Lord) who spoke to Moses from the burning bush and called him into service. Ex 3:1-6
  2. The Angel of the Lord gave His name as I Am, a name Jesus applied to Himself. John 8:58
  - b. Preincarnate Jesus went with Moses and Israel when they left Egypt and accompanied them to Canaan. It was Jesus who was present in the Tabernacle constructed in the wilderness. I Cor 10:1-4; Ex 13:20-22; Ex 13:20-22; Ex 14:19,20; Ex 23:23; Ex 40:34-38
  4. None of these Old Testament men and women lost interest in redemption and the coming of the Lord when they left this earth. Hebrews 12:1 makes it clear that they continue to observe the unfolding plan.
    - a. They understood that separation from the body at physical death is temporary and that one day they will return to earth to be reunited with their bodies and live on this earth forever.
    - b. Job lived at the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He knew that he was passing through this life but that he would one day return with his Redeemer to live on earth again. Job 19:25,26
  5. When the appointed time arrived the Redeemer came into this world. In fulfillment of prophecy Jesus was born in Bethlehem, grew up in Nazareth, and began His public ministry, proclaiming that the kingdom of God had come. Micah 5:2; Matt 2:23; Isa 61:1,2; Matt 4:17; Luke 4:18,19; etc.
    - a. The religious leaders of the day rejected both Jesus and His ministry. They plotted how to destroy Him and events began to move toward the reason for which He had come -- to die for the sins of men. Isa 53; Matt 12:14; Matt 16:21
      1. Luke 9:28-31--Shortly afterward, Jesus was transfigured in front of Peter, James, and John and Moses and Elijah stepped out of the unseen realm. Both had left this earth many centuries earlier, but came to talk with Jesus about His upcoming death in Jerusalem.
      2. The word decease in the Greek is EXODOS (to exit or depart). At the Cross Jesus was going to join humanity in death to bring men through death and out of death. Heb 2:14,15
    - b. There are many aspects to the significance of these two stepping out of the unseen realm to discuss the unfolding plan of redemption with the Redeemer. Consider just a few points.
      1. It was Jesus who called Moses into service and guided him along the way. Israel's exodus was a real event that involved real people but it also pictured what Jesus would do. Now, Moses is about to witness the fulfillment of the type his efforts pictured. Ex 6:6; Ex 12
      2. Elijah also interacted with Jesus before He incarnated in Bethlehem. When Elijah was on earth Baal worship swept through Israel and threatened to wipe out all knowledge of the True God, Jehovah. God raised up Elijah to oppose Baal worship. I Kings 16:29-33
        - A. At a low point in his ministry, when Elijah thought he was the only one still faithful to Jehovah, the Angel of the Lord appeared to him and strengthened him. I Kings 19:1-8
        - B. Elijah was directed to anoint Jehu as king. Jehu destroyed the House of Ahab and the Baalites and preserved the people through whom Jesus will come (Gen 12:3 in action).
- D. Conclusion: In this series we're focusing on the big picture rather than on details like what 666 means or who's the Antichrist to build our confidence in the fact that God's plan is unfolding and our future is bright.
1. The Bible makes it clear that conditions on this earth will worsen as the time of Jesus' return nears. But it also says that God will protect and provide for His people. Part of God's provision for us is knowledge of what is ahead, not just in this life but in the life to come. I Pet 1:5
    - a. Many Christians are fearful because they've never developed an eternal perspective. They're afraid to lose this life because they don't realize this life is only a fragment of our existence.
      1. The greater and better part of our life is ahead -- first in Heaven and then when we return to live with the Lord on earth after it has been renewed and restored. This world is not as it should be. We're only passing through this world as it is, damaged by sin.
      2. Even if you have a wonderful life and achieve all your dreams old age and death take it away. It's not God's intention that things go on as they are forever
    - b. Jesus will come again to complete the plan of redemption by cleansing the earth of sin, corruption

and death and restoring it to its pre-sin conditions. Life will then be what God always intended.

2. It's said in many circles today that we Christians are here to right the world's wrongs and that our primary duty is to work to end poverty, social injustice and war. But that is not accurate.
  - a. We can't end any of it because the root problem is sin and the remedy is supernatural. Hearts must be changed through the new birth. We're here to tell people about Jesus. Mark 16:15-18
    1. I'm not saying that God has never called Christians to spearhead movements for social change. It's clear from history that He has. However, God's ultimate aim is not to "fix up" this fallen world. His aim is to transform it by removing the root problem -- sin.
    2. That doesn't mean we don't help people along the way. We do. It's about keeping our priorities straight. Our destiny is not to make this world a better place. An atheist or Buddhist can do that. Our destiny is to bring knowledge of salvation through Jesus to a lost and dying world so that they can have a share in the life to come when the plan is completed.
  - b. When we read through the New Testament we find nothing about taking over the government to change society. I'm not saying that we shouldn't pray for the government or vote. But we need to recognize that the answer to the world's problems is not a political candidate or election outcome.
    1. We're going to see more and more decisions made by reprobate minds (minds that can't make decisions in their own best interests) in our own country and in the world (Rom 1:28). The stage is being set for the final world ruler to come on the scene and be welcomed.
    2. This will be increasingly hard for us to watch. But keep your priorities right. The most important thing is that people come to saving knowledge of Jesus. Jesus died for the "libs" and the "right wingers", the republicans and the democrats, the socialists and anarchists. Instead of screaming at the TV, pray for those with whom you disagree.
3. When Jesus returned to Heaven forty days after His crucifixion and resurrection His first message to His followers was: I'll be back (Acts 1:11). Obviously Jesus knew He would not return within the lifetime of the people to whom He gave that message. Why did He say that to them?
  - a. Let's first briefly address the idea that He doesn't know when He's coming back (Mark 13:32). Jesus is God become a man without ceasing to be God. Jesus made this statement out of His humanity. The Lord Jesus Christ has always known when He will come again.
  - b. Jesus wants every generation to be looking for Him. It is a source of hope. It helps us keep the right perspective. And it affects the way we live our lives.
    1. It helps us keep our focus on the fact that a plan is unfolding and there's more to life than just this life. We are only passing through this life as it is. I Pet 1:17; I Pet 2:11
    2. It helps us deal with life's hardships because we know the best is yet to come. Come Lord Jesus come!! More next week!