

Prophecy in Perspective

Dr. Scott Gregory Downing
An Email Newsletter

Our Times - *Prophecy in current events*

Are You Watching For Christ's Return?

"Let your waist be girded and you lamps burning, and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master..." (Luke 12:35-36)

We are told when a storm approaches to be sure that certain preparations be made for the event. We are told to have a flash light available, to check the batteries and be sure it is within easy reach in case the lights go out. Other preparations need to be made as well. We are fairly responsive to these warnings, especially since we can see the storm's approach on the radar.

Jesus has given us certain things to look for that are even now appearing on our spiritual "radar" which we can ignore only at our own peril. I have written of how the Scriptures predict an increased hatred for the Gospel and persecution of Christians in the latter days. Youcef Nadarkhani, is an Iranian pastor who has consistently refused to turn from his faith in Christ even after being threatened with death for his faith. In the last issue of *Prophecy in Perspective* I describe the similarities of the present Iranian regime with the future rule of the Antichrist. It is reported that if Pastor Nadarkhani continues to refuse to recant his profession of faith in Jesus Christ he will be executed. Part of a recent article of the *Christian Solidarity Worldwide* organization reads as follows:



Pastor Nadarkhani was tried and found guilty of apostasy (abandoning Islam) in September 2010 by the court of appeals in Rasht. The verdict was delivered verbally in court, while written confirmation of the death sentence was received nearly two months later. At the appeal in June 2011, the Supreme Court of Iran upheld Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani's sentence, but asked the court in Rasht, which issued the initial sentence, to re-examine whether or not he had been a practicing Muslim adult prior to converting to Christianity. The written verdict of the Supreme Court's decision included provision for

annulment of the death sentence if Pastor Nadarkhani recanted his faith. (Please see this article in its entirety by going to Christian Solidarity Worldwide, <http://www.csw.org.uk>) **We need to pray for pastor Nadarkhani, that he will be freed to continue to preach the gospel!!**

Another indication of the soon coming of the Lord is the reality of signs in the heavens that seem to accompany important and pivotal points in the recent history of Israel. In other words, there is an inevitable increase of UFO sightings at the time that there is increased activity related to Israel's re-establishment and continued existence as God's nation. These are not beings from other planets, but demonic manifestations which may be related to the invasion of the earth by the angels described in Genesis six.

The Apostle Paul describes the Devil and demons as **"the prince of the powers of the air" (Ephesians 2:2)**. In Luke 21:12, Jesus tells His disciples of some of the things that they will see as the time of the coming of the Lord approaches. As related to the signs in the heavens, He said: **"there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven."** These sorts of things, I believe, are already showing themselves in our times, even before the rapture of the Church, because in God's sovereign unfolding of His purpose for Israel, His people, the Jews are returning to their land. The nations are now seeking their destruction, and events seem to be coming together that are in preparation for the Great Tribulation period. I believe that among these events are the growing numbers of UFO sightings that are occurring. I believe demons are fallen multidimensional entities and these appearances are designed to deceive.

In the 1890's, while the Zionist movement, which encouraged the re-establishment and re-population of Israel, was growing, there were numerous reports of UFO's, which were in those times, known as sightings of "airships." After WWII, and just the year before the re-establishment of Israel as a nation, there were the beginnings of major UFO sightings. This is the time when the much touted Roswell event, which even today is still a great mystery, happened. Around this time, the terms, "UFO" and "Flying Saucer" came into use. Even recently there is an unexplained event of a light that descended over the temple mount in Jerusalem. It hovered for a time over the Dome of the Rock structure, then suddenly flashed and rapidly ascended until it was out of sight. This, evidentially, was not a hoax as there were many witnesses and it can be viewed from different angles on YouTube today. I suggested you prayerfully view this video to see for yourself and to draw your own conclusions. Also, for more information on these UFO sightings and how they seem to occur at strategic times in Israel's history, see the "Prophecy In The News" web-site, and view the program "UFO Sightings Increasing," Daily Update 9/29/11.



Satan is the prince of the Power(s) of the air
(Ephesians 2:2) Gustave Doré

Are you looking for the coming of the Lord in a serious way? I mean, does the promise of His coming influence the way you view world events, your morality, your life decisions, and yes, even your political convictions? Jesus told the multitudes who gathered to hear His teachings,

"Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming'; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, 'There will be hot weather'; and there is. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?" (Luke 12:54-56)

So do not be surprised or distressed over the events of our day. Be sure that God is unfolding His perfect prophetic plan. And while we are not to be distressed as Christians, yet this does not mean that we can grow passive and uncaring about the coming of the Lord and about the horrible darkness, immorality, false teaching, and violence that is coming upon the earth. When Christians get uncaring about these things, they can begin to actually mistreat other servants of Christ. I believe that abuses of power in the Church and Christian ministries that we sometimes hear about are the result of leaders who are cold toward the doctrine of the coming of the Lord. Jesus said: ***"But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of the servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him..." (Luke 12:45-46)***

This is why the teaching of the coming of the Lord is such an important incentive for believers today. The lack of teaching on the coming of the Lord, according to Jesus Christ's teachings, will adversely affect many areas of life. Family divisions (Luke 12:52-53), unethical business dealings (Luke 12:45), and theological Scripture twisting (2 Peter 3:16), and many other ills of the Church and society are attributable to ignoring Bible prophecy.

Upward Call - *How to walk in view of Prophecy*

The Practical Importance of Watching for the Lord's Return

As we can see in Luke 12, Jesus spent a large amount of time directing His disciples as to how they should walk in these times. He cautions them, and us, to be completely sincere and genuine in our convictions and our walk when He warns them about the hypocrisy of the religious leaders in 12:1-12. Jesus directs us not to be like the rich fool who, ignoring the truths of the coming of the Lord, simply thought about himself in his plans for retirement in 12:13-21. Next our Lord encourages us to completely trust in Him for all our needs by **"seek(ing) the kingdom of God, and (thus) all these things shall be added to you"(12:22-34)**. Then Jesus exhorts us to be faithful stewards of those things He has given us responsibility for. He then warns us of the devastating consequences of neglecting the reality that Jesus could come back at any moment (12:41-59). There are efforts today to systematically discourage and discredit Christians from watching for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, as we will look at briefly in the next section.

The Church Today - *Doctrine and Prophecy Today*

Current Teachings that Discourage or Discredit Watchfulness

Here are some (4) of the more prominent teachings today that I believe tend to obscure the Bible's teaching on the imminence or "any time" nature of the coming of the Lord.

1. Postmillennialism - This is the view that the Lord will not return until the Church converts the world to Jesus Christ and all the world's nations and institutions are Christianized. The fact that wars and unbelief are actually increasing in the world tells us that, just as the Bible teaches, things will grow worse and worse until the rapture. Those who are Postmillennial tend to be among the Reformed, Calvinistic, and Covenantal groups theologically.

2. Amillennialism - This is the view that the Church is now in the Millennium, and that Satan is now bound. It teaches that the Lord will return at some time in the future. Bible prophecy, such as that found in the book of Revelation, tends to be interpreted in a spiritual, not plain, or literal way.

3. Replacement Theology - This particular theology is a real problem for Israel as it teaches that Israel becomes the Church in the New Testament era. God's promises to Israel are therefore viewed as being fulfilled in the Church. Thus, the Church replaces Israel. This has been the basis for a great deal of persecution of the Jews by so called Christians throughout the centuries, especially through the Roman Catholic Church, but also through some, but, not all of adherents to Reformed theology. Reformed Theology tends to hold therefore to Replacement Theology. Replacement Theology is a natural outgrowth of Amillennialism. Again, major adherents to Replacement Theology tend to be among the Reformed, Calvinistic, and Covenantal groups theologically.

4. Preterism - To be brief, two types of Preterism are gaining prominence today, "moderate," and "extreme." (Some break down this into three groups, mild, moderate, and extreme) Moderate Preterits hold generally that most all of the Bible's prophecies concerning the second coming of Christ have already been fulfilled by the time of the destruction of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Extreme Preterits view 70 A.D. as the point when all of the Bible's prophecies have been fulfilled, including the return of Jesus Christ. Preterits generally hold that we are now living in the time of the "new heavens and the new earth." Preterits tend toward a Postmillennial outlook by emphasizing how the Church should subdue the world for Christ.

I believe it is wise for the Christian of the latter days to steer clear of Postmillennialism, Amillennialism, Replacement Theology, and Preterism . Again, these views de-emphasize the importance of the coming of the Lord and rather tend to dangerously replace Israel with the Church. This is something that is clearly forbidden in the Scriptures (Genesis 12:1f, Romans 11:1-2; 25-29). It is possible that many who hold these views have added incredible amounts of confusion and discouragement to those who would otherwise clearly understand the great Bible truths concerning the coming of the Lord and the events of the End Times.

The Better Approach: The Premillennial and Pre-Tribulational View

I believe that the **Premillennial and Pre-Tribulational view** is the most Biblical approach to understanding the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ. The Premillennial and Pre-Tribulational view, which uses a dispensational approach to the study of the Bible, will tend to interpret prophecy plainly, or literally, and will keep God's purposes for Israel and for the Church clearly distinct so that they cannot become confused nor combined, as this would and does cause much confusion in interpreting prophecy.

Premillennialism - Teaches that Jesus Christ will return before the millennium for His Church. There are three Pre-Millennial views in relation to the Tribulation Period. There is the Pre-Tribulational view, the Mid-Tribulational view, and the Post-Tribulational view. A few hold that the Lord will rapture the Church in the **middle** of the Tribulation period ("Mid-Tribulational"), and some believe the rapture will happen at the end of the Tribulation ("Post-Tribulational"). Yet, both of these viewpoints tend to obscure the important Bible doctrine of imminence. This is because they put the Church through a time of judgment which will be unnecessary for believers who's sins have already been judged at the cross. Therefore, I believe, the best eschatological position that preserves imminence and encourages watchfulness is that which is known as the Premillennial, and Pre-tribulational view, which teaches the Church will be raptured *before* the Tribulation.

Peter says that there are some teachings of Paul, who explains the events of the End Times clearly, that are **"hard to understand,"** that is, for those who may be new Christians who need to be clearly and simply instructed about Bible prophecy. Yet, as Peter goes on to say, there are those whom he calls **"untaught and unstable people,"** who obscure Paul's teachings on the coming of Christ. They **"twist"** the Scriptures on Paul's teachings of prophecy, **"to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures" (2 Peter 3:16).** This is a great caution for us to choose the approach that takes the plain meaning of the words of prophecy and teaches God's truth from that standpoint. The coming of the Lord for His Church, the truth of the Great-Tribulation, and the return of Jesus Christ to establish His Millennial rule over the earth with His Church in Israel is vital truth that the world needs to hear today. As time is short, as believers, let's commit to **"speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine,"** (Titus 2:1) so that the Lord will find us to be faithful stewards of His truth when He returns.

Israel's Special Observance

In closing, remember to pray for Israel as they observe **Yom Kippur** along with Jews around the world. This observance is made by religious Jews who seek atonement for their sins committed during the year. It is believed that through a 24 hour period of fasting and refraining from physical pleasures as well as work that they may have their sins removed from the Book of Life. **Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)**, for 2011 begins tonight, at sunset, October 7 and concludes tomorrow night, the end of the Jewish Sabbath, October 8 also at nightfall. We should pray for Israel and the Jews, that they will come to know true atonement through the cross of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Prophecy in Perspective, Copyright, vol. no. 11 - October 7, 2011)



*Jews Praying in the Synagogue on Yom Kippur, by Maurycy Gottlieb (1878)
Photo from Wikipedea*

(Note: If you would like to interact with Dr. Downing concerning this newsletter, views, etc. you can "blog" with him at prophecyinperspective.com. Also, you can purchase his latest book, "Good News From a Far Country", a study in the book of Daniel [\$15] by contacting him.)