

Prophecy in Perspective

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An email newsletter

Our Times-Prophecy in current events

It is amazing to me, as, I am sure to the regular readers of Prophecy in Perspective, how little we hear in the regular news media about Biblically centered events, and especially those taking place currently in Israel! One of these is a significant Jewish observance happening in Israel and reported by the Jerusalem Post. It is called Tisha Be'av. It is a day of fasting and lamenting. What this fast commemorates should make all students of prophecy sit up and take notice. The Jerusalem Post reports:

Tisha Be'av, one of Judaism's two full fast days along with Yom Kippur, is traditionally the date in the Jewish calendar on which the First and Second Temples were destroyed, respectively in the sixth century BCE by the Babylonians and the first century CE by the Romans.

Tisha Be'Av signifies the end of three weeks of mourning. Considered the saddest day of the year, many sit on the ground in discomfort to recall the destruction of the Temples. Throughout Israel, restaurants, bars and places of entertainment were closed on the eve of Tisha Be'av and the following day. According to a 1997 law passed by the Knesset, those that are open are subject to fines. The book of Eicha (Lamentations) was read during the evening at the Kotel (the Temple Wall) (The Jerusalem Post, Rachel Sarenka Smith, 8-9-11)



(From Left to Right) Here are moving pictures of Ethiopian Jews Worshipping at the Temple Mount.

We see also Jewish worshipers sitting on the ground commemorating Jeremiah's Lament of Jerusalem's destruction. Moving indeed is the picture of the young Jewish men praying at the wall of the temple mount. (Photos from the Jerusalem Post, 8-9-11) Here, God's chosen people remember and grieve over the demolition of the first and second temple and the current crises in Jerusalem. Many of them pray and look for rebuilding of the Third Temple and the coming of the Messiah. We rejoice to be able to say that their fervent prayers will be answered: Jesus is coming again!

Living in these crucial and violent times when things are growing more and more uncertain, we can rest in the wonderful truths of the unchanging Word of God. We can plainly see that God is still working in the affairs of man. As the Rapture of the Church and the coming tribulation period draws closer, it is encouraging to see the reality of the promise of the rebuilding of the temple being demonstrated in real observances in present day Israel such as those of the Tisha Be'av observance.

Christians who are looking for the Lord's coming should pray for the faithful Jews of our day. God is certainly moving among them and is drawing many of them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ who has already come to die on the cross for their sins. There seems to be something within Jews that continues to draw them back to the word of God, reminding them that there is yet a glorious future for the Jewish people. God has declared that His plan, is to bring the Jews back to their homeland and to restore them as His people. He has clearly expressed this plan as we see in the Prophecies of Jeremiah:

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.¹² Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.¹³ And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.¹⁴ I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive. (Jeremiah 29:11-14)

The Lord is working among the Jews today to do just that and is moving among them through His Holy Spirit to lead them to Know Christ. Many Jews who do not yet know Jesus personally, are expecting Him, yet, for now, they are unaware that the Messiah that was prophesied about in Zechariah 11-14 is the very Jesus who died for our sins. You might want to take some time and review these important chapters which report to us the events of the end days among the Jews. These chapters show the closing days of the tribulation in Israel, the return of Jesus Christ to the earth, the salvation of the remnant of the Jewish people at that time, and the establishment of worldwide worship in Jerusalem.

Upward Call-How to walk in view of Prophecy

Many people say that the study and preaching of Bible prophecy today is not of any practical use. Yet, the Bible tells us that the prophets wrote their predictions with us in mind. 1 Peter 1:12 tells us: *"It was revealed to them that in their search they were not serving themselves but you. These things, which even angels long to examine, have now been proclaimed to you by those who brought you the good news"* (Common English Bible).

The prophets of old were foretelling important things and events of the future that could not otherwise be known unless God supernaturally revealed them. Way back in the Bible times, God had you and I on His mind. He planned for us to have a source of truth called Bible prophecy to help us live victoriously in the perilous times in which we live today. This is why the study and preaching of Bible prophecy is never a waste of time or effort. God's word will never return void (Isaiah 55:11), and Revelation 1:3 clearly promises, *"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand"* (King James Version).

I believe then that prophecy had been given to help us understand the times we live in, because, the Lord wants us to know the times that signal His return. This will be an encouragement for us to live for Him and to excitedly win others to Christ through our dynamic and active witness in both our words and deeds.

Prophecy also encourages us to know that no matter what man does, the Lord is in absolute control and authority over the world. Therefore, we are to walk in full assurance that we are not in the dark about the dark times in which we live. We are to walk according to the infallible compass needle of God's perfect Word which will always direct us as to where we should go, what we should do, what we should speak and how should think. Therefore, prophecy is essential to living a practical, steadfast and expectant life as well as to be effective witnesses of the gospel in a world that is in the dark about its future.



The Church Today- Doctrine and Prophecy Today

Are we close to the time of the rapture of the Church? We know from the Lord that we are always to be watching and waiting for His return and expecting that He could descend in the clouds to catch us away at any moment. I believe the Bible may actually show that the Man of Sin, the Antichrist cannot be revealed until after the rapture. In 2 Thessalonian 2:3, Paul says: ***Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.*** There have always been people who have believed that the word "apostasy" in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 should refer to a general departure from the faith in the latter days of the church. Yet there is a growing sense among pretribulationists that the word "apostasy" should actually be translated "departure." This is the view of two well known and trusted prophetic scholars, Dr. Tim LaHaye and Dr. Thomas Ice. In an interesting article, Thomas Ice makes the case for this interpretation of 2 Thessalonians 2:3. I am including a portion of his article here (for full article go to <http://learnbibleprophecy.blogspot.com/2010/10/rapture-in-2-thessalonians-23.html>)

I believe that there is a strong possibility that 2 Thessalonians 2:3 is speaking of the rapture. What do I mean? Some pretribulationists, like myself, think that the Greek noun *apostasia*, usually translated "apostasy," is a reference to the rapture and should be translated "departure." Thus, this passage would be saying that the day of the Lord will not come until the rapture comes before it. If *apostasia* is a reference to a physical departure, then 2 Thessalonians 2:3 is strong evidence for pretribulationism.

The Meaning of *Apostasia*

The Greek noun *apostasia* is only used twice in the New Testament. In addition to 2 Thessalonians 2:3, it occurs in Acts 21:21 where, speaking of Paul, it is said, "that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake (*apostasia*) Moses." The word is a Greek compound of *apo* "from" and *istemi* "stand." Thus, it has the core meaning of "away from" or "departure." The Liddell and Scott Greek Lexicon defines *apostasia* first as "defection, revolt;" then secondly as "departure, disappearance." [1] Gordon Lewis explains how the verb from which the noun *apostasia* is derived supports the basic meaning of departure in the following:

The verb may mean to remove spatially. There is little reason, then, to deny that the noun can mean such a spatial removal or departure. Since the noun is used only one other time in the New Testament of apostasy from Moses (Acts 21:21), we can hardly conclude that its Biblical meaning is necessarily determined. The verb is used fifteen times in the New Testament. Of these fifteen, only three have anything to do with a departure from the faith (Luke 8:13; 1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 3:12). The word is used for departing from iniquity (2 Tim. 2:19), from ungodly men (1 Tim. 6:5), from the temple (Luke 12:27), from the body (2 Cor. 12:8), and from persons (Acts 12:10; Luke 4:13). [2]

"It is with full assurance of proper exegetical study and with complete confidence in the original languages," concludes Daniel Davey, "that the word meaning of *apostasia* is defined as departure." [3] Paul Lee Tan adds the following: What precisely does Paul mean when he says that "the falling away" (2:3) must come before the tribulation? The definite article "the" denotes that this will be a definite event, an event distinct from the appearance of the Man of Sin. The Greek word for "falling away", taken by itself, does not mean religious apostasy or defection. Neither does the word mean "to fall," as the Greeks have another word for that. [*pipto*, I fall; TDI] The best translation of the word is "to depart." The apostle Paul refers here to a definite event which he calls "the departure," and which will occur just before the start of the tribulation. This is the rapture of the church. [4]

...Conclusion:

The fact that *apostasia* most likely has the meaning of physical departure is a clear support for pretribulationism. If this is true, (Dr. Tim LaHaye and I believe that it is), then it means that a clear prophetic sequence is laid out by Paul early in his Apostolic ministry. Paul teaches in 2 Thessalonians 2 that the rapture will occur first, before the Day of the Lord commences. It is not until after the beginning of the Day of the Lord that the Antichrist is released, resulting in the events described by him in chapter 2 of 2 Thessalonians. This is the only interpretation that provides hope for a comforted people. Maranatha!

When the rapture occurs, there is no doubt that the world will be shocked at the sudden and seemingly unexplained disappearance of so many. I believe the rapture of the church will literally trigger the appearance of the Antichrist as the world will be in the most desperate and vulnerable state it has ever been in at that time. Millions of people disappearing, and the thousands of tragic events that will result from the departing of masses of people from planet earth will bring an unprecedented cry for a savior, a deliverer. Then, they will have their man, the Antichrist (See Revelation 13).

Knowing that these things will happen we as believers must be faithful to the Word of God and to the name of Jesus Christ. We should not be ashamed of His name or be afraid of using that name in everyday life and ministry. In a day when, for seemingly good and necessary reasons, churches and ministries are deleting or downplaying the mighty name of Jesus Christ and of His cross, we should remember that "*there is no other name given among men by which we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12). Today, the name of Jesus is said to be offensive. Yet if we do not take a stand for that name now, the name of Jesus will soon be illegal! One day the Beast will arise, and He will replace the worship of Jesus Christ with the worship of himself. The mark of the Beast will be associated with his evil name (Revelation 13:17). So, with these things in mind, as we are commanded in Colossians 3:17, "*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by Him.*"

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(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 [5] by contacting him.)