

DESTINY BULLETIN

A commentary sent to the supporters of the ministry of Christian Destiny.

Dear “Special Friend” of Christian Destiny,

February 2005

HOW GOD OPERATES

PROPHECY: KEY TO UNDERSTANDING LIFE

A GREAT SHAKING IN THE LAND--Over and over again, we are hearing the questions: “Was this an act of judgment? Did God send the tsunami to punish these people? How could He allow the death of so many innocent children? If there is a God at all, why would He allow this?”

It’s easy to understand how the drama and pathos of such an overwhelming tragedy could drive us to ask such questions. The fact is that the world is not a benign and safe place in which to live. It has been a dangerous and violent environment since the great flood of Noah’s day. In fact, there is no record in the Bible of any natural catastrophe before the great flood. But after the flood, the world was so changed... so shaken up... that survival has been perilous at best.

In the Old Testament, on those few occasions where God did bring judgment through destruction (as with Sodom and Gomorrah, Nineveh, etc...), He sent a prophet – or even angels – to call them to repentance or warn of impending doom. That has not been the case in modern times. Rather, the dangers of living in a violent world have been the continuing result of prior judgments. The laws of nature that produce a dangerous ecology were set into motion long ago. Today, we live in a world in which sin and human aggression also result in the deaths of millions.

As horrible as this tragedy was, it is not the only tragedy that is ongoing in the world today. In the Sudan, over 2 million people have died as a result of war since 1983. In southern Africa, AIDS infections vary from 12% to 36% of adults, depending upon the region. One Christian relief organization estimated that 26,000 children die of hunger every night in the area of its ministry.

Does that mean that God is not a God of love? Certainly not! *“Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:15-17).*

We as Christians, grieve with those who have suffered loss, give of our means to help ease their suffering, and do all that we can to assure that the message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ is brought to them in terms that they can understand. Only then will they be prepared to counter human tragedy with divine triumph, to overcome the ultimate earthly loss with the ultimate blessing of eternal life.

• • • • •

Most of the people of our world are moving through a fog, asking, “Where am I going, and what really is life all about?” They search one book after another; they become involved in one conversation after another; they chase this and that amusement, trying to discover satisfaction. They are looking for reality and the answers to the basic questions of life. Still, these answers escape them. And so they continue to wonder, “Who am I, and what, really, is life all about?”

Now, the astonishing news is that you and I do not have to be overly perplexed by those questions. Why? Because God has given us a very wonderful source of knowledge that will never fail us. It is a source that tells us about the past and about the present, and especially about the future. And when it comes to the future, it is a source of knowledge like no other! That wellspring of knowledge is the Bible. The Scripture says: *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (II Timothy 3:16-17).*

There is a special emphasis given to us in the Bible, and that special emphasis is particularly strategic for those of us who, with inquiring minds, want to know what is developing in a world like this. That special emphasis is prophecy - the Prophetic Word of God. About that, the Bible says: *"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (II Peter 1:19)*. That verse means that we have a tremendous advantage when we pay attention to the Prophetic Word. We do well to take heed to that sure Word of prophecy. Prophecy is God, through His Word, telling us what has taken place, and how that will develop in the future. And so the Bible says you have a tremendous advantage if you pay attention to the Prophetic Word. This sure Word of prophecy is valuable for many reasons.

God Presides Above History

What can we learn from the Prophetic Word that can print itself upon our minds with great value in times like these? Many things. One of the most marvelous packages of knowledge that we learn from the Bible is that God presides above history. We can instantly learn, therefore, that the world is not out of control; that it's not careening along like a runaway vehicle, skidding on the water or on the ice. But history is moving in the direction that is the Divine choice. God has told us what the future is going to be. And, if we pay attention, we can be enormously profited. For instance, there are a thousand verses like this in the Bible, but each of us, I'm sure, is familiar with the 90th Psalm, which says: *"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Psalm 90:1-2)*.

What a beautiful and foundational statement on which to build our lives. *"From everlasting"* – that's history. *"To everlasting"* – that's prophecy. That prophecy is not just a dotted line extrapolating out into the future, whereby we hope for the best. But that prophecy is God saying, just like He has built the foundations of the world in days gone by, so He will build the foundations of the future. And if you learn what they are, and learn to trust God in the midst of it all, you'll be OK in the midst of all of the vicissitudes of life. That's why the Bible, knowing all forms of knowledge available to us, says: *"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6)*.

I have, therefore, a word of advice. Are you concerned about the future today and wondering about tomorrow? Are you worried about the world of economics, the world of military things, the world of international diplomacy, the developments in Europe, the new explosions in the Middle East, the new impressions of false philosophy, the weird decisions by the governments of the world? Do you wonder if you can make it through tomorrow, and where understanding for the future can come from? I have the answer. Take the time to look into the Prophetic Word. Listen to Jesus say: *"I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go... I will come again, and receive you to Myself" (John 14:2-3)*.

Listen to God say, *"You are all the children of light."* You need to not walk in darkness, but you can have the light of life (*I Thess. 5:5*). I promise you that, when you read words like that in the midst of a fluid society, those words engender faith. They engender confidence. You can walk with a sure step into a future of which the world knows nothing. Why? Because you are knowledgeable about the Prophetic Word, which teaches us, first of all, and perhaps most of all, that God presides over history. He's the one who does not slumber. He's the one who does not sleep. He's the one who makes His will come to pass, and nothing in the last analysis can thwart God's final design for the world. That's the first great principle that the Prophetic Word teaches us.

Israel Is His Chosen People

Now, let's think of a second principle that illustrates the value of knowing the Scripture. The Scripture says that God has His chosen people in the world. Listen to what the Word of God says with reference to that expression of His choice. God spoke one day to a man in the Old Testament. This man's name was Abraham. And He spoke most earnestly and said: *"Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee" (Gen. 12:1)*.

Then He uses the words, *"I will."* That's God stating what He is going to do in the future. That's prophecy. *"And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:2-3)*.

So what has God said? God has said that He has elected, in the pages of the Old Testament, to reveal Himself through Israel, His chosen people. God has elected that there shall be a people who are separated to His purposes, and who have a calling to carry out what His name means, and to tell the world what He intends to do.

Who then are God's chosen people? They are the people of Israel. That has implications for you and me as we shall see, but let's remember that God has chosen, through the pages of the Old Testament, to reveal His will through a nation. He didn't choose that nation because they were nice, or because they were good, or because they were deserving. He chose them because of His sovereign election. "You are it," He says. He has elected to use these people in days gone by. And I'll tell you something else. He will use them beautifully in days to come, to produce the greatest missionary force for Christ the world has ever seen. God has chosen certain things; we learn that from the Prophetic Word.

Now we've learned so far that the Prophetic Word teaches that God presides above history, and He will preside until the end of time, and then into the wideness of eternity. Things are not out of control. One of the founders of the United States said that there is a just God who presides above the destinies of nations. Where did he find that out? He found that out from the Bible. That's where he learned it, and besides that, it is true. We've learned also that God has chosen a people for His name, the people of Israel. And we shall discover that He still has a marvelous intention for His people, and will use them to accomplish a significant work for Jesus Christ across the world.

God Works In Different Ways

We've also learned that God works in different ways, in different eras of history. There is an era of history in which God says a certain set of things to the people of the world at that time. And because revelation is progressive, because the design of God continues to mount up like steps into the golden streets of eternity, we have called these different steps of His revelation "dispensations." For instance, listen to the third chapter of Ephesians:

"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given to me for you: How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote before in few words, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ). Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph. 3:1-6).

What does the Apostle Paul say? The Apostle Paul says that in past ages, such as in the Old Testament, when God worked particularly with the people of Israel, God did not let the people of Israel know how His plan was to expand as we moved into the New Testament times. In fact, tragically, Israel rejected its Messiah, the Lord Jesus. They said "No" rather than "Yes" to Christ: *"We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14)*. Consequently, out of his death on the cross, which was perpetrated by Jew and Gentile, God brought out of the rived side of the Lord Jesus, out of His broken body, and His shed blood, a marvelous message. And what is that marvelous message? Man is disqualified from salvation by works. He must come as a bankrupt sinner, and he must receive salvation by grace alone plus nothing. And so by grace, God is working in today's world, saving people who do one thing: believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. When a man does that, he is instantly, eternally saved, the issue of his eternal life never to be reviewed again.

Salvation by grace came out of Israel's rejection. So in this dispensation, God saves us by grace. But the Apostle Paul tells us an interesting thing. Not only does he save people by grace, but when He saves them, He brings them into a very special entity that is described in Scripture as "the Body of Christ." But we are especially told that the ontological essence of the Church, if you please, is: *"the church, Which is His body, the fullness of him that fills all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23)*.

So Christian, I have wonderful news for you. When you come to Jesus Christ, you get not just individual salvation, and you enjoy not just the emotion of a moment. But when you come to Jesus Christ, you are brought into a living, vital, breathing organism, the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is "where it's at." It's what God is doing.

God Has An Enemy

We must also remember that the Word of God tells us that in the midst of all of the things that God is doing,

He is persistently opposed by a very determined and very deadly enemy. Who is that? He is Satan. The New Testament says: *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).*

That’s what the Scripture says. In the Old Testament, we have the amazing delineation given to us by the Prophet Isaiah, as to how the Devil came to be. Isaiah asks the question: *“How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how are you cut down to the ground, which did weaken the nations!” (Is. 14:12).*

So the angel of light by the name of Lucifer, the “Prime Minister” of heaven, His Infernal Majesty the Devil, rebelled against God. He rebelled by saying in his heart, “Look, I’m going to take over the universe. I will sit in the mountain of God. I will be the one who rules it all.” God said, “No you won’t.” And so Satan was cast out of heaven. Jesus said: *“I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven” (Luke 10:18).*

The Prophetic Word tells us that the deadly intentions of God’s enemy are going to persist through this dispensation, and on to the very end of recorded time. Satan will continue to oppose the Lord. In Revelation Chapter 12, the Scripture says the Devil knows his time is short, and so he goes forth with great wrath (Rev. 12:12). In Revelation Chapter 13, we have the list of the things that the Devil is going to do. He’s going to put his king upon the throne, so there will be a one-world government, ruled by the Devil’s man whose name is the Antichrist (Rev. 13:2). He’s going to invent a world religion (Rev. 13:4-8). It will sound like Christianity; it will sound good; but it is a Satanic form of worship. It is the Devil’s religion. He will have a unified government; he will have unified religion. Ecumenism in its ultimate form is a satanic activity, designed to bring people together under the worship of Satan, the object being to extol the Antichrist.

The Prophetic Scripture also tells us that the organization of the Antichrist, backed by Satan’s power, will so expand his influence in the world, that he will be able to require everybody to take a mark in his right hand or forehead, without which he cannot buy or sell (Rev. 13:16-18). So the Scripture tells us that Satan will make his last attempt, his last ploy to take over the world, and he will do it by raising up his own king. Now how do we know this? We don’t know this because we invented it out of some science fiction project. We know it because the Prophetic Word tells us this. We never could know it otherwise.

Salvation Is By Faith

Finally, the Prophetic Word gives us a titanic illustration of the fact that salvation is by grace alone. There is a millennial reign of Christ. Christ rules in the world for 1,000 years. It will be a very remarkable time. But do you know something? At the end of the thousand years, the Kingdom is lifted and the world is allowed to rebel against God once again (Rev. 20:7-10). The people of the world, delineated to us in the latter chapters of the Revelation, will have seen Christ. They will have watched Him upon His throne. They will have seen the great King preside above the world. They will profess obeisance to Him. But in their hearts, there will be those who do not believe. And that is proven by the fact that, when given the chance, they will rebel against God.

There is a religion in the world today that pretends to be Christianity, but it is really neo-orthodoxy. In fact, it teaches that we are saved by a psychological experience with the personality of Jesus. And that’s not salvation; that’s only emotion. Salvation is by faith and by faith alone. And that is my earnest invitation to you. If you will receive Jesus Christ by faith in the finished work of Calvary’s cross, believing that what He did at Calvary was enough to save you, you will have life eternal. The Prophetic Word says you will never perish. You will have eternal life in heaven’s glory.

From the writings of Dave Breese, with Ed Hindson and Dave Weeden