

PROPHECY AND THE LOCAL CHURCH

Intro: Express appreciation to the Convention, its leaders and its delegates -- also for the program and for the singing.

Dr. Walvoord -- I miss him more than you do! My first theology teacher, and a dear friend through the years since Seminary days. Get his trilogy on the Church,  
the Nations,  
and Israel in prophecy! They should be in every Christian's library.

The rain -- was comforted to read the other morning in the book of Job . . .

"I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause, Who doeth great things and unsearchable, marvelous things without number;  
and the first thing mentioned:

"Who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields" (Job 5:8-10).

If you have felt divine disapproval, it will help you to remember Matthew 5:45 -- that . . .

the Father "sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

A children's story that fits in here -- after all of the heavy things we have been discussing this week. Many of you will remember it.

A little boy's mother gave him a brown roll for his breakfast. The little boy said, "Thank you, mother. Thank you for my nice brown roll." The mother said, "Don't thank me, thank the miller."

The little boy ran to the miller. He said, "Thank you, miller. Thank you for my nice brown roll." The miller said, "Don't thank me, thank the farmer."

The little boy ran to the farmer. He said, "Thank you, farmer. Thank you for my nice brown roll." The farmer said, "Don't thank me, thank the rain. I only planted the wheat."

The little boy saw the clouds in the sky. He saw the raindrops falling. He said, "Thank you, rain. Thank you for my nice brown roll." The rain said, "Don't thank me, thank the sun. I only helped a little."

Just then the sun began to shine. The little boy said, "Thank you sun. Thank you for my nice brown roll." The sun said, "Don't thank me. Thank God who made me."

The little boy went back to the table. Then he said, "Thank you, God. Thank you for my nice brown roll."

My daughter-in-law in California was reading this to our granddaughter who caught the rhythm of the story, so that when she came to the end our granddaughter added, "And God said, 'Don't thank Me!'"

My little granddaughter is a brilliant child, but her theology leaves much to be desired.

No equal time for grandparents tonight.

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Our subject: Prophecy and the Local Church.

\*\* I am not going to take up with you tonight the order of prophetic events.

Just so you will know where I stand . . . it was 28 years ago this past May that I was graduated from Dallas Seminary and I have never felt the slightest inclination to change my view that the next great prophetic event for us to expect is the rapture of the Church!

I was a pre-tribulationist then -- and I still am!

I believe that the Scriptures teach that the Tribulation Period will begin after the Church is taken out of the world. I believe that the Tribulation will be brought to a close by the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth to reign for 1,000 years!

I believe that after that Satan will be loosed for a short time, after which he will be cast into the lake of fire.

Afterwards the Eternal State will be established with the New Heaven and the New Earth.

I feel about prophecy like Dr. Ironside said when asked how often he revised his books. He said, "Never. I wrote them according to the Word the first time, and will only revise them when they change the Bible!"

It is hard for me to understand men who go here and there with the prophetic Word when it is just as settled as what the Word teaches about God, or Christ, or salvation, or anything else!

\*\* Neither am I going to try to tell you pastors tonight how much you should preach and teach prophecy.

BUT . . . when you think of how much of the Word of God has to do with things not fulfilled as yet, if we are to be like Paul with the Ephesian elders when he said,

"For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

A faithful pastor has to be a teacher of prophecy or there is a big gap in his ministry! The Holy Spirit will direct you as to the place that prophecy should have in your ministry because our

Lord said, "He will show you things to come" (John 16:13).

One word of warning: Never use it as a gimmick! People are often more interested in hearing about the Antichrist than they are about Christ. Let's not be guilty of catering to that distorted desire.

\*\* THE ONE THING THAT I DO WHAT TO EMPHASIZE TONIGHT IS THE RESULT THAT PROPHETIC TEACHING SHOULD HAVE UPON US AND UPON THE MEMBERS OF OUR CHURCHES -- THE PEOPLE WHO SIT UNDER OUR MINISTRIES.

And this is not just for the pastors who are present. It is important for all of the people of God to see from the Word what prophecy should do to us when it is taught under the blessing of the Spirit of God!

Think with me about some of the key passages dealing with the rapture which we all love:

- 1) John 14:1-3.
- 2) 1 Thess. 4:13-18.
- 3) 1 Cor. 15:51-58.
- 4) Titus 2:11-14.
- 5) 2 Tim. 4:1-5.
- 6) 1 John 3:1-3.

There are many others -- single verses planted here and there, as well as passages. Read them over often. Memorize them. Talk about them. Get them into your heart.

BUT NOTICE THIS: EVERY PASSAGE DEALING WITH THE COMING OF THE LORD HAS SOME PRACTICAL EMPHASIS CONNECTED WITH IT!

Have you noticed that?

We cannot take up all of them tonight, but I want to take up five, very briefly, and trust that you will go on your way tonight with your heart set on these things.

I. A KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH OF THE COMING OF THE LORD WILL HUMBLE YOU.

Turn to 1 John 3:1-3.

Note how John seems to be amazed with what the Lord had already done for him without expecting anything else.

No combination of prizes should even be mentioned along with such a prospect. Who could ever understand such truth without falling before the Lord in complete unworthiness that such a thing could happen to us!

If Jacob felt unworthy in Gen. 32:10, how should we fell

about this?

II. A KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH OF THE COMING OF THE LORD WILL MAKE YOU HOLY.

You do not have to leave 1 John 3:1-3 to see this. Look at v. 3.

See also Paul's words to Titus in Titus 2:11-14.

Why be holy? Because we want to be ready.

Dr. Chafer and his comment that we will probably talk through all eternity about what we were doing when the Lord came. What if we always have to change the subject?

Peter: "Seeing then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness" (2 Pet. 3:11).

III. A KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH OF THE COMING OF THE LORD WILL GIVE YOU HOPE.

A. In trial and suffering. Cf. Jn. 14:1.

Cf. Rom. 8:18, 28, 29.

Also Peter in 1 Pet. 4:11, 12.

It means that there is a divine, eternal purpose behind all of our tribulations.

B. In death.

Cf. a verse which transformed my whole view of the coming of the Lord: 1 Cor. 15:19. Refer to the comment that was made in the Church of the Open Door in L. A.

The classic passage is 1 Thess. 4:18.

IV. When I was in Seminary I was taught not to stretch a point for the sake of alliteration. Maybe you will think that that this next point is stretched a little, but I hope that you will see how it fits by the time I am through.

We have talked about humility,  
about holiness,  
about hope.

Now let me say this:

A KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH OF THE COMING OF THE LORD WILL MAKE YOU HURRY.

If you knew that the Lord Jesus Christ was coming tomorrow, what would you do tonight? Who would you get in touch with? How would it change your plans?

Do you know that He may come tomorrow? He might even come tonight!

What am I talking about? I'm talking about the way we serve the Lord.

Is there an atmosphere of urgency, Pastor, about your work, about your study, about your praying, about your times with your people, about the people in your community who do not know the Lord?

Listen to Paul in 1 Cor. 15:58.

Last night we heard President Gray read 2 Tim. 4:1-5 --  
URGENCY!

Finally . . .

V. A KNOWLEDGE OF THE COMING OF THE LORD WILL MAKE YOU LOOK FOR HIM -- OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Pastors, don't we often realize when we get away from home how easy it is to lose sight of the Lord while we are seeking to serve Him.

I love that story which is told by Vance Havner about the pastor who was failing to exalt Christ -- and he found a note on his pulpit Bible one morning.

Have you noticed that there is a special way in which the coming of the Lord is referred to in Scripture? Note these passages:

- 1) John 14:3, " . . . that where I am, there ye may be also."
- 2) 1 Thess. 4:17, " . . . caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord."
- 3) John 17:24, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory . . ."
- 4) Rev. 22:20 -- the next to the last verse in the Bible: "He who testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Concl: You believe that He is coming, but can the practical results of your faith be seen in your life? This is what we need to be concerned about. When others can see the effect that it has had upon us, the Spirit of God will use this to convince them that what we believe is going to take place SOON!