

SABBATH THOUGHT 2023-04-01—WATCHFUL UNTO SALVATION

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

There are many Scriptures that command us to watch. What are we to watch? Notice what Jesus said about His return:

MATTHEW 24:37-41 Now as *it was in* the days of Noah, so shall *it* also be *at* the coming of the Son of man. 38 For as in the days that *were* before the Flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark; 39 And **they were not aware** until the Flood came and took *them* all away; **so shall it also be at the coming of the Son of man.** 40 Then two shall be in the field; one shall be taken, and one shall be left; 41 Two *women shall be* grinding at the mill; one shall be taken, and one shall be left.

Obviously, there are those who think “My lord delays *His* coming” (Matt. 24:48). Jesus continued:

MATTHEW 24:42-46 **Watch**, therefore, because you do not know in what hour your Lord is coming. 43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have been **watching**, and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 44 Therefore, you also **be ready**. For **the Son of man is coming at a time that you do not think.** 45 Who then is **the faithful and wise servant whom his lord has set over his household, to give them food in due season?** 46 Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord when he comes shall find so doing.

Jesus did not say to watch because He was concerned about end-time events—He warned against being caught unaware when He RETURNS. He hinted at this when He said, “**you do not know the day nor the hour in which the Son of man is coming.**” (Matthew 25:13). But did it jump out at you when He said He will return when the SAINTS **least expect** (“a time that you do not think”)¹? In fact, Jesus said in Luke 12:40 that He will return when we **think it is not possible**. That should give everyone pause regarding any predictions of His return.

Instead of giving specifics about His return, He repeatedly emphasized to “**Watch** therefore, *and* **pray** at all times that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and **to stand before the Son of man.**” (Luke 21:36). God’s children are to come *out* of the world “so that you **do not take part in her sins,** and that you **do not receive of her plagues.**” (Rev. 18:4).

The real message of Jesus is to be spiritually, not physically, preparing for His return because there is a grave danger of being deceived² or drawn into the cares (or sins) of the

¹ Also Luke 12:40.

² Warnings against being deceived are mentioned four times in Matthew 24 alone (vv 4, 5, 11, 24).

world³. BEING PREPARED PHYSICALLY DOES NOT MAKE ANYONE **WORTHY** OF ANYTHING. We are only “worthy ... to stand before the Son of man” if we are *spiritually* prepared.

This is the message of the parable of the master of the house. The lord expected the master of the household to provide spiritual “food in due season.” (Matt. 24:42-46). What is the season? The TIME PRIOR TO HIS RETURN! We must watch to avoid being deceived or distracted and overcome by the cares of the world. WATCHING IS ABOUT SALVATION—it is not about the fulfillment of the events in biblical prophecies. This same message is repeated over and over (1 Cor. 16:13; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:2, 4-6, 8-9, 11; 2 Tim. 4:5; 1 Pet. 4:7; Rev. 3:2-3; 16:15). The purpose of the end-time prophecies is to point us to the RETURN of Jesus Christ and spiritual preparation. Has not every generation of saints believed the return of Jesus Christ was imminent? Even though we are still waiting today, the message has not changed:

2 PETER 3:10-14, 18 However, the day of *the* Lord shall come as a thief in *the* night in which the heaven itself shall disappear with a mighty roar, and *the* elements shall pass away, burning with intense heat, and *the* earth and the works in it shall be burned up. 11 **Since all these things are going to be destroyed, what kind of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,** 12 **Looking forward** to and striving for the coming of the day of God, during which *the* heavens, being on fire, shall be destroyed, and *the* elements, burning with intense heat, shall melt? 13 But according to His promise, **we look forward** to a new heaven and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. 14 For this reason, beloved, since you are anticipating these things, **be diligent, so that you may be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless.** ... 18 Rather, **be growing in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.** To Him *be* glory both now and into *the* day of eternity. Amen.

The *ekklesia* (“called out ones”) are the temple, or household, of God⁴. We need to conduct ourselves in holiness and godliness and be without spot and blameless. No one knows when Jesus Christ will return but He promised it will happen when we **think it is not possible**. Even if we knew the exact timing of His return, would it make a difference in what we are doing? Spiritual preparation does not come by watching world events and trying to line them up with prophecy. Have you ever known of any speculations about end-time prophecies that have come true? I have never heard of a single one.

Whether or not it is intended, the *result* of such preaching is almost always **fear**. Is that how Jesus wants us to be? In a constant state of fear? No! “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of sound-mindedness.” (2 Tim. 1:7). Some preach that God’s children should prepare for the end-times by having caches of gold, cash, food stores, water, etc. Who has the means to obtain all those things? Who has the resources to store them? Who can have enough to last until the return of Christ? I have never heard

³ These are the seeds that fell among thorns in the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:3-20).

⁴ 2 Cor. 6:16.

one of these messages where the preacher says, “Do not worry, I will provide you with these things if you cannot afford them.” Shame on those who preach such things to brethren who cannot afford it. Shame on those who preach fear to the saints. Shame on those who preach physical instead of spiritual preparation. That is the antithesis of Scripture. Jesus Christ said we cannot change one hair on our head⁵. What purpose does it serve to preach speculations of world events fulfilling end-time prophecies when they cannot be PROVEN? Such messages are only fear-mongering and distract from tending to our spiritual household.

The biblical message is not one of endless prophetic speculations. Trying to predict the fulfillment of prophecy is, at best, a fruitless effort because no one can know if their speculations are correct until the events actually happen. At the worst, it is a message that salvation is dependent upon physical preparations and one that spreads fear. God will fulfill His prophecies in His own time and in His own way. Our Savior commands us to be watchful of our spiritual condition so that we can “stand before the Son of man” and receive SALVATION! God’s children must:

MATTHEW 6:33-34 ... **seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness**, and all these things shall be added to you. 34 Therefore, **do not be anxious about tomorrow**; for tomorrow shall take care of the *things* of itself. Sufficient for the day *is* the evil of that *day*.”

It is a serious responsibility to speak in the name of the Lord. This is especially true during God’s holy time on Sabbaths and holydays. Speculating about how end-time events might fulfill prophecy is not “[teaching and preaching]⁶ the **truth** in love.” (Eph. 4:15). Speculation has no part with God’s Word of Truth because it is nothing more than conjecture and fear-mongering. Notice what God says about speaking in His name⁷:

DEUTERONOMY 18:20-22 But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. 21 And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? 22 **When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously**: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

Even if opinions and speculations come with a disclaimer that they are merely personal thoughts and ideas, is it appropriate to conjecture about prophetic fulfillments? God gave us His Word (“All Scripture *is* God-breathed”—2 Tim. 3:16) and the Holy Spirit to understand it. No one should ever preach a message of fear and speculation is simply adding unproven personal opinions. Notice what Scripture says about adding to or taking away from the “words of the **PROPHECY**” in the Bible:

⁵ Matt. 5:36.

⁶ Gk. *altheuo* = to be true in doctrine (teaching) or profession (preaching). See Gal. 4:16.

⁷ Also, Deut. 13:5; Jer. 14:15.

REVELATION 22:18-19 For I jointly testify to everyone who hears **the words of the prophecy** of this book, **that if anyone adds to these things**, God shall add to him the plagues that are written in this book. 19 And **if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy**, God shall take away his part from *the* book of life, and from the holy city, and from the things that are written in this book.

All prophecy points to the return of Jesus Christ who brings salvation to God's children. Peter said we should pay attention to "the confirmed prophetic Word" which is like "a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and *the* morning star arises." (1 Peter 1:19). The morning star is obviously Jesus Christ⁸. Prophecy shines a light for us to see our Savior in this dark world. While prophecy clearly describes a time of serious trouble, the saints are not to fear any of it.

Preaching physical preparation for the coming end-time events of prophecy is not a message of God because it produces **fear**. Even if (or when) God reveals all the details of the world events that will fulfill prophecy, it will not tell us what happens to us *individually*. Some will live through the Tribulation and Day of the Lord because Jesus promised the gates of the grave will not prevail against the *ekklesia*⁹. Others will be killed for their testimony against the world as witnesses (Gk. *martus* = martyrs) of God the Father and Jesus Christ. Understanding prophetic end-time fulfillments, even if it was possible, does not reveal the path each of us must follow individually. Few of us walk the same path even though the destination is the same. The one thing common to us all in the day of salvation is that we "... overcame him [*Satan*] **through the blood of the Lamb**, and through the word of [our] testimony; and [we] **loved not their lives unto death**." (Revelation 12:11).

Do not be concerned about end-time events suddenly occurring around us. God will provide for His people so we need not fear. Real fear is being caught "unawares" when Jesus Christ returns. Seek first the Kingdom. God will provide the means to get there no matter how rough the path might be.

May God's grace and peace be upon you!

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⁸ Rev. 22:16.

⁹ Matt. 16:18.