

Prophecies of Jesus' First, and Second Coming, Pt 6

September 12, 2020

This is the last installment of our series and I pray it has been a great a blessing to you as it has to me.

In my first career, I was an instructor/trainer in the corporate world. I had to learn very early how to deal with groups of adults; individuals with free will. Though part of the same company, and training class, each person was a 'free agent' and able to do pretty much what they wanted to do, or not do.

The problem with free will became most apparent when, in a 3-day program, it came time to let the class out on their first break. Since the courses were typically held in conference centers, there weren't only restrooms, there were computers, phones, colleagues, snack bars, etc. to attract their attention. Though they KNEW they were to return in "15 minutes" it could take 45 minutes to wrangle everyone back into class. It would blow my training agenda to smithereens!!

So, I found that creating a contract was important. During the first-day introductions, I would explain that we had an 8-hour per day commitment. That included 1 hour of breaks, each day, total. They could spend them as they wished. If the 15- minute break took half an hour, that would be the last break until the afternoon, and so forth. If they wanted to economize on the breaks; say 5 minutes each, they could get out 40 minutes early and beat the traffic. They'd then work as a group to structure their own 60 total minutes of break time per day into four breaks, to which they could all agree. Violating the agreement would render consequences that would affect everyone equally.

This worked out well because they became self-policing. Instead of my having to walk the corridors and point to my watch (instead of getting ready for the next session!!), they would grab their colleagues and get back on time.

So, what does this have to do with Jesus' second coming? Glad you asked! God made a contract and we are free agents in it. We have free will in God's creation. We can do, or not do, as we will.

God is both a creator and a father. The creator part is His awesome, all powerful, all knowing capacity. The father part is his love, patience, grace and mercy. As God was considering the creation of the universe, he had four choices:

1. Do nothing.
2. Create a world in which no evil exists. Only absolute perfection.
3. Create a world in which good and evil coexist, and give man no option to choose evil. Man would ONLY choose God all the time.
4. Create a world in which good and evil coexist and give man the choice; evil or good.

The Creator God made it all. The Father God wanted his prize creation to love Him...to choose Him...to love Him back. In choices 1, 2 & 3, there is no love in the equation. Only in #4 is there love. The most dangerous gift God gave man is freedom of choice. #4 is the only option in which we can express honest love toward God.

As a parent, you cannot constrain your children to the confines of your home all their lives in order to have their love. You must allow them to leave. If they love you, they'll come back to you. God wants us to always be with him. He loves us enough to let us choose.

God also made a contract with us. First, He gave us his Word: **John 1: 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through Him all things were made, and without Him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In Him was life, and that life was the light of men.**

God created it all, put us in it and gave us His Word. In His Word is the 'contract' of our relationship with Him. Throughout His Word are records of God telling of what He will do, and then accomplishing it in humanly impossible ways. When God's people love and obey Him, they are blessed.

Country singer, Randy Travis, recorded a song titled "The Box." A box discovered in their Dad's closet by siblings, after their father passes. The box

contains memorabilia Dad had kept all his life. Each letter, photo, and gift from his children was stored there, and the adult siblings came to understand how deeply their Father loved them....though he had seldom expressed it verbally. This song reminds me of God's Word; a timeless record of His love for us that we need to open daily. Not only does it give us history, it gives us the future.

Though we are given freedom of choice in God's contract, we are NOT free from the consequences of our choices. We see evidences of this in Israel's history of walking away from God and following false teachers and religions. There are blessings associated with loving God and the natural effects that coincide with walking away from Him. **John 14: 15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."** **Psalm 114: 1 The fool says in his heart, "There's no God." They are corrupt; they do vile deeds. There is no one who does good.**

In God's plan for the second coming of Jesus, there are key conditions that must come to pass. Some are well under way. Some seem to be nearing us, but we must be careful to view them through God's eyes and not our own. For instance, this Covid virus, while extremely serious, does not rival most of the epidemics, famines, and catastrophes in history.

Since the day that Christ said He would return, Christians have been eagerly watching for the Second Coming. Here are seven things that must happen before Jesus returns. The timing of all of this is NOT revealed to us. **Mark 13: 30 "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 31 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. 32 "But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone."**

1. A Jewish homeland will be established in Israel.

Before Christ returns, the Jews will be truly settled in their ancestral homeland. Jerusalem will once again be in Jewish hands. Many believe that this sign will come to pass soon as Israel is currently a Jewish state. Jerusalem, however, remains split between various groups. That said, with the United States finally moving its embassy to Jerusalem in order to line up with more than a decade of America's official stance that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel, Jerusalem is closer than ever to returning to Jewish hands.

2. The Gospel will be preached to the entire world.

Christ will not return until after the Gospel has been preached to the entire world.

Revelation 7:9 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

Revelation 5:9-10 And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

Daniel 7:14 And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Revelation 14:6 ESV Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people.

It's extremely difficult for Americans to imagine another nation that has almost zero exposure to the Gospel. Most of our communities have churches at their centers and there is hardly a sliver of our society that has not heard of Jesus. The number of the truly unknowing is growing rapidly, but most non-Christian Americans have made their choice.

According to www.joshuaproject.net, a “people group” is considered to be a distinct ethnic group of ten million or more. (for comparison, NJ has less than 9 million. PA has less than 13 million). There are approximately 17,400 ethnic people groups worldwide. Approximately 7,400 people groups are considered unreached

“Unreached” is defined as less than 2% Christ-followers and less than 5% Professing Christian. That means over 40% of the world's people groups have no indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize the rest of their

people group. Over 42% of the world's population live in these over 7,400 people groups. (about seven thousand PAs and NJs!).

Here are some sobering facts about just the 50 largest unreached people groups:

- These 50 unreached people groups are comprised of 1.48 billion souls.
- One in five people on earth live in these 50 unreached peoples.
- None have an indigenous church capable of taking the Gospel to the entire group. (technology is making inroads though)
- Primary religion: 23 are Muslim, 18 Hindu, 6 Buddhist, 2 Ethnic Religions, 1 non-Religious.
- 44 of these 50 unreached people groups are in the **10/40 Window**, 47 are in "sensitive countries."

3. Worldwide communications will exist before the final two witnesses.

When I first heard of this prophesy from the pulpit, I was a 20 year-old sailor sitting in Midway Baptist Church in Chula Vista, CA. We still dialed "O" for assistance with long distance calls. Fax machines were new and an extreme wonderment. Anyone with more than 3 channels on their TV was automatically your friend. When the pastor spoke of 'some future communication technology' that would facilitate this phenomenon, we were as frightened as we were curious.... Now, with the advent of worldwide communications, we see instant and global broadcasts every day.

Revelation 11: 4 These witnesses are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.

7 When the two witnesses have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will wage war with them, and will overpower and kill them. 8 Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city—figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—where their Lord was also crucified. 9 For three and a half days all peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will view their bodies and will not permit them to be laid in a tomb. 10 And those who dwell on the earth will gloat over them, and will celebrate and send one another gifts, because these two prophets had tormented them.

4. Natural disasters will be widespread.

The end times are going to be disastrous. There is a reason why the words “apocalypse” and “Armageddon” are associated with catastrophic destruction. During the end times, God will turn nature against mankind. There will be pandemics, flooding, fires, earthquakes, famines and what many scholars identify as meteorite strikes or even a comet colliding with Earth.

Please note that Satan has exercised his power over the earth, and those trapped in earthly thinking. Most of the ‘idols’ in man’s history have been the deifying of elements of creation; the sun, the moon, the stars, the soil, the waters, etc. Idol worship and cults teach man to do ‘good works’ to appease the false gods and gain favor. Man has sought earthly power over others and used earthly instruments of warfare to obtain it. Do you see the theme? God will use the elements of the earth to purge itself of evil.

Revelation 9:20 **20 The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk.**

These numerous disasters will take place all across the world and kill billions. Prophecies of these occurrences have probably been the most influential in causing overly anxious and well-meaning Christians to proclaim that Jesus must be coming very soon. I have a feeling that we have seen NOTHING yet!

5. War and violence will run rampant.

Not all of the disasters that come with the end of the age will be caused by nature. Many of them will be things that mankind brings on themselves. War and all sorts of violence will run rampant before Christ returns to Earth. Men and women will attack and kill their enemies, their friends and even their own families. Even as natural disasters raze cities, people will still continue to inflict violence on each other. Watching the news....it’s getting easier to envision this!

6. A charismatic and convincing false prophet will appear.

No sign of the end times has captured the imagination of the world as much as the anti-Christ. This figure will be as charismatic as they are evil and will lead

millions astray. They will cause the deaths of hundreds of thousands and turn innumerable people against God before Christ returns to Earth.

7. God's people will be hunted and killed.

They already are! They have always been! The year in which MORE Christians were martyred for their faith than any other was **last year**. Each year, this is true again.

Before Christ returns, God's people will be hunted and killed by nonbelievers. Those who dare to cling to their faith will find themselves unable to trade or do business with others. They will be driven out, seen as outcasts and eventually, they will be hunted down and killed. Given the rising rate of lethal Christian persecution in the Middle East, Africa and Asia as well as the ever-increasing ostracism and hatred faced by Christians in the West, the time when faith will once again become a matter of life and death for Christians may not be as far away as some believe.

When I speak with an anti-Christian, I quickly learn that they are anti-Semitic, as well. It's hard to explain to them that our relationship with Israel is not ONLY one of love and obedience, it is key to our survival. Israel is as important to America as the canary is to the miners. If Israel falls, the rest of us will. Is it any wonder that a mostly Christian America responded to the persecution of the Jews in WWII?

As the most powerful nation on the planet for more than 100 years, and the most fundamentally Christian nation on earth, the US military has proven to be the most influential force for peace the world has ever known. Where there is extreme persecution, our society has consistently supported the use of our military as a great equalizer. HOWEVER, we are seeing with increasing clarity how easily a leadership change can turn that on its head. 'Nuff said?

So, what are Christians to be doing until Jesus returns? In short, we are to be FRUITFUL. We were not saved to sit in a pew for longer than one sermon! After that, we are to be about the business of the Gospel. Jesus gave 7 commands in the New Testament. He also told us that, if we love Him, to keep His commands.

1. Love One Another

John 13:34-35 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have

loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

2. Pray for your Enemies

Matthew 5:44-45 “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”

3. Repent

Matthew 4:17 “From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (that means; turn away from sin)

4. Believe that Jesus is in the Father

John 14:11 “Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.”

5. Take up your Cross and Follow Me

Matthew 16:24-25 “Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

6. Go and Make Disciples

Matthew 28:18-20 “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

7. Pray Always

Luke 21:36 “But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Jesus’ work on the cross created a direct link between God and man. We are to be the fingers of God working to put the Gospel in front of every tribe, every tongue, every nation on planet earth. Over 99% of Christian missionary resources go to the saved, and yet, 42% of the world’s population hasn’t enough of a Christian presence to create and sustain a movement.

If Jesus was to check in with us today, would He find us fruitful?

**Lord Jesus, may we be about the Father's business all the days of our lives!
Amen**