

THE COMING OF MESSIAH – God’s Word Fulfilled

12-11-11

Today is a day for rejoicing and for being thankful because God watches over His Word with the specific thought of bringing it to fulfillment. He has given us numerous prophecies, which have been written down so we can study them and so we won’t forget them. And in His perfect timing He fulfills those prophecies.

The way for us to properly celebrate Advent is by preparing our hearts for a fresh visitation from God. Malachi was the last prophetic voice of God in Israel until John the Baptist came along, almost 400 years later.

God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for the Messiah’s coming by calling for the people to repent and be baptized. In this way, their hearts would be open to what God would be saying to His people.

In the same way, the Holy Spirit is seeking to prepare our hearts for a fresh visitation of God because He wants us to truly be ready for the second advent of Christ. (PPT-1)

At His first advent, Jesus descended the hill called the Mount of Olives and Luke tells us that Jesus gazed at the city of Jerusalem and He wept over it saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, **because you did not know the time of your visitation.**” **Luke 19:42-44** (ESV)

Not knowing the day of God’s promised visitation is not a problem of ignorance. The people had been given the Scriptures. And through the Scriptures God had adequately supplied everything they needed, but the people responded carelessly to what the prophets had written down. They were too busy just living their lives.

No! It’s not the problem of ignorance. It’s an issue of not watching. It’s failing to truly look for His coming.

Both Simeon and Anna were watching for Messiah’s coming.

Luke 2:25-32 – “At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying, “Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised. I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for all people. He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!” (NLT)

Luke 2:36-38 – “And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.” (ESV)

Concerning the last days, Jesus said, “Watch out!”

Matt. 24:4 – “Jesus answered: ‘**Watch out** that no one deceives you.’” (NIV)

Mark 8:15 – “As they were crossing the lake, Jesus warned them, ‘**Watch out!** Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod.’ ” (NLT)

Negatively, leaven refers to a morally corrupting influence. So, Jesus was pointing out that there were morally corrupting influences in religion and politics that we should watch out for. Both parties, however, opposed Jesus.

Matt. 24:42-43 – “Therefore **keep watch**, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into.” (NIV)

Matt. 25:6-13 – “At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’ Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’ ‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’ But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others also came. ‘Sir! Sir!’ they said. ‘Open the door for us!’ But he replied, ‘I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.’ **Therefore keep watch**, because you do not know the day or the hour.” (NIV)

Matt. 26:40-41 – “Then he returned to the three disciples and found them asleep; and he said to Peter, ‘How is it that you three were not able to **keep watch** with me for even one hour? **Keep watch and pray** that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (TEV)

The reality is these young disciples of Jesus had endured a long day. They were tired just recently shared a meal with Christ. They were sleepy, which was very likely due to a spiritual attack. Besides, watching and praying is work and not necessarily a priority.

I don’t think any of us want to miss the day of God’s visitation for Vashon Island? So, if we don’t want to miss God’s time of visitation, we will need to heed the message of John the Baptist and prepare our hearts so we don’t miss Him. Carefully looking at the prophecies concerning the coming of Messiah will help us prepare our hearts.

How do we look at and respond to the prophecies of Scripture? Have we carelessly read them in the past and then responded to them with indifference?

1 Thess. 5:16-24 – “Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. **Do not scoff at prophecies, but test everything** that is said. Hold on to what is good. Stay away from every kind of evil. Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. **God will make this happen**, for he who calls you is faithful.” (NLT)

From the very first mention of the promised Redeemer in Genesis 3:15, the revelation concerning the arrival of Messiah became more and more specific, defining the race and nationality from which the Savior would come, namely the descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, then God identified the Messiah as coming from the tribe of Judah; then from the family of David; then the very town of His birth, Bethlehem; and then as the Messiah’s advent drew nearer, God sent His angel Gabriel to Mary to announce His supernatural conception by the Holy Spirit, making Him the unique Son of the Living God.

Gabriel also gave them the name by which He should be called. His name was to be Jesus (Savior) for he would save his people from their sins.

Isaiah prophesies concerning the Messiah approximately 700 years before Jesus Christ was born. **Isaiah 61:1-2** – “The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me, for the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed. He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of the LORD’s favor has come, and with it, the day of God’s anger against their enemies.” (NLT)

Very often our human rationale takes Scripture and attempts to make it say what we want it to say. And that was the problem for Israel at the Lord’s first advent. When Isaiah prophesied God’s favor for Israel and God’s anger against their enemies, they immediately thought of their enemies on the human level – the occupation of Roman soldiers.

When John the Baptist was in prison and heard all about the things Jesus was doing, he sent his disciples to ask Jesus, “Are you the Messiah we’ve been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?”

Our tendency is to appraise our situation and if it’s uncomfortable, confining, or painful, we want to know if God is aware and we wonder if He cares. We wonder if salvation or deliverance should come from another direction.

But Jesus simply responded to that question by telling John’s disciples to go back and tell John what you have seen and heard – just exactly how Scripture is being fulfilled. “The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor.” **Matt. 11:5**

What we see here is that John fulfilled the Scriptures by lifting his voice, crying out to the people to prepare their hearts for the coming of Messiah, so they wouldn’t miss the day of their visitation. Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures in detail and in the process, purchased our redemption.

Now, the question for us in these last days is “Can we be the modern voice crying out “Prepare the way of the Lord?” Can we rise to the occasion in this 21st Century by letting people know that Jesus is coming soon?

We know that God is going to fulfill the Scriptures concerning Israel’s future. The signs of the times are present. God will not be mocked! He will have the last word.

Throughout Christ’s ministry, we know that Jesus never sought to overthrow the Roman domination of Israel. His mission was to reconcile men to God through His personal sacrifice on the cross. And in dying on the cross, He dealt with man’s greatest enemy – sin (the rebellious nature received from Adam). Sin prompts the sinful acts we commit and its unconfessed sin, in thought, word, and deed that produces the separation from God that we experience.

Redemption has been purchased by Christ through His death on the cross so that through receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior and trusting in His atoning work on the cross, any individual can experience the reality of that redemption.

Once we place our faith in Christ, living in victory over our enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil becomes a possibility.

The political and religious leaders in Israel focused on what they wanted to see in the Scripture and failed to take the whole counsel of God into account. Notice that Isaiah begins his prophecy with God's description of the nation's spiritual condition.

Isaiah 1:4-18 – “Oh, what a sinful nation they are— loaded down with a burden of guilt. They are evil people, corrupt children who have rejected the LORD. They have despised the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him. Why do you continue to invite punishment? Must you rebel forever? Your head is injured, and your heart is sick. You are battered from head to foot— covered with bruises, welts, and infected wounds— without any soothing ointments or bandages. Your country lies in ruins, and your towns are burned. Foreigners plunder your fields before your eyes and destroy everything they see. Beautiful Jerusalem stands abandoned like a watchman's shelter in a vineyard, like a lean-to in a cucumber field after the harvest, like a helpless city under siege. If the LORD of Heaven's Armies had not spared a few of us, we would have been wiped out like Sodom, destroyed like Gomorrah. Listen to the LORD, you leaders of “Sodom.” Listen to the law of our God, people of “Gomorrah.” ‘What makes you think I want all your sacrifices?’ says the LORD. ‘I am sick of your burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fattened cattle. I get no pleasure from the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to worship me, who asked you to parade through my courts with all your ceremony? Stop bringing me your meaningless gifts; the incense of your offerings disgusts me! As for your celebrations of the new moon and the Sabbath and your special days for fasting— they are all sinful and false. I want no more of your pious meetings. I hate your new moon celebrations and your annual festivals. They are a burden to me. I cannot stand them! When you lift up your hands in prayer, I will not look. Though you offer many prayers, I will not listen, for your hands are covered with the blood of innocent victims. Wash yourselves and be clean! Get your sins out of my sight. Give up your evil ways. Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows.’ ‘Come now, let's settle this,’ says the LORD. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool.’” (NLT)

It's important to see that none of Israel's religious activities of worship altered that condition. Sin is the real enemy, not Rome!

In this passage of Scripture the Lord addresses the issue of Israel's spiritual condition as well as Israel's economy and foreign relations. Everything was in sad shape because Israel was trying to carry on without addressing the real issue – sin.

When we address the real issue of sin in our own life, God extends His mercy and grace to wash away our sins cleansing our hearts. We then have the gracious ability to give up our evil ways, to do good by seeking justice and helping the oppressed, by defending orphans, and fighting for the rights of widows.

May each of us truly prepare our hearts for God's visitation! And may we all respond to the outpouring of His Holy Spirit in these last days. Amen!