

The "Why" of Prophecy

This past week the news in the U.S. has been consumed with the Bill of Rights. A judge has declared that the concept of the pledge of allegiance saying "Under God" was unconstitutional.

I find that interesting because God would not create such an interest in Britain. The Prince of Wales has, at various times, suggested that the Monarch should no longer be head of the Church of England. Nobody is really interested any more.

But in the U.S. I think most of us are aware of the consequence of that judgment and the way in which the news media was obsessed with it. Many are debating that we will have to take the phrase "In God We Trust" off our currency! It's very easy for us, as God's people, to get caught up in some of these debates because we have a vested interest in God, in His plan and purpose for the world. Events such as that come and go.

We had another major event of a different nature in the latter part of last year -- September 11th. It focused people's minds upon prophecy. Prophecy became a matter of discussion, not just amongst fundamentalist groups, but other people as well.

Prophecy forms a major part of God's Word. It has been estimated that prophecy comprises some 30% of the Bible. That is a considerable portion of God's Word, which means it is important to God, the One who inspired it. It indicates that God places importance on prophecy.

The second section of the Old Testament is referred to as "The Prophets." The Bible closes with a clearly prophetic book -- the book of Revelation.

Those who are concerned about prophecy, are often concerned about the "when" of prophecy. They want to make sure that they have the future charted so that they have their options covered, and they won't be caught in a situation they don't want to be in.

Oftentimes it is motivated by a desire for self preservation. Prophecy very clearly contains an outline of future events which are important to the Church. They need to be understood by God's people, but some people take it to an extreme.

There are those who want to focus on it to the point where their growth is impeded. They devote themselves to trying to chart out every last prophetic event or nuance in minuscule detail. Very clearly, the "when" of prophecy is a very effective hook in getting people's attention in terms of the truth of God.

But I repeat the point, that if the focus of a person's life remains upon the "when" of prophecy, their spiritual growth will be impeded or stunted. The "when" of prophecy is not all that we should be aware of in terms of the subject.

People like to know about the "when," but there are other aspects of prophecy that God considers to be of great importance. Many of the prophets of the Bible were not necessarily involved in the "when," but in the "why?"

Why is prophecy necessary? What is the message of prophecy? People who focus upon the "when" of prophecy so easily become stunted in their growth, not because the "when" is irrelevant or unimportant, but the "when" considered without the "why" loses sight of what it is all about.

What is prophecy about? What is the "why" of prophecy?

Who is the first prophet in the Bible? Most people probably think it is Samuel. Actually it was Abraham.

Perhaps we never think of Abraham as a prophet.

Abraham had come into contact with Abimelech, the king of Gerar.

***Genesis 20: 1 And Abraham journeyed from there to the South, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and stayed in Gerar.
2 Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.***

It was the prerogative of kings and rulers to take good looking ladies into their harems, so that they would become their wives. But God intervened, as He already had once before for Abraham.

3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, "Indeed you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife."

This is what God thinks of taking somebody else's wife!

***4 But Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, "Lord, will You slay a righteous nation also?
5 "Did he not say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she, even she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and innocence of my hands I have done this."***

He had a good excuse to come back to God with.

***6 And God said to him in a dream, "Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart. For I also withheld you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her.
7 "Now therefore, restore the man's wife; for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours."***

The term "prophet" in this verse is the Hebrew word "nabiy." That is the most common word used in the Old Testament for a prophet. It is not a strange translation. It is an appropriate translation. God called Abraham a prophet.

***8 So Abimelech rose early in the morning, called all his servants, and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were very much afraid.
9 And Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? How have I offended you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done deeds to me that ought not to be done."***

Abraham justified himself. But what did God say Abraham was to do for Abimelech? Abraham was to pray for Abimelech so that this sin could be forgiven. Abraham was involved in restoring a relationship. He had had a part in destroying a relationship himself, yet God said he was a prophet. He was involved in restoring a relationship.

So a very important aspect for us to bear in mind is that Abraham was involved in restoring a relationship between Abimelech and God. Abimelech was not to be destroyed.

The next occasion on which we find the aspect of a prophet is in the book of Deuteronomy. Prior to crossing the River Jordan into the Promised Land, Moses, who was 120 years old, told the children of Israel that he was about to die and be buried by God.

He instructed the offspring of the children of Israel who came out of Egypt, those who had survived the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. He gave his last instructions to them before his departure from this life.

Deuteronomy 18: 15 "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from

your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear,

16 "according to all you desired of the LORD your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.'

17 "And the LORD said to me: 'What they have spoken is good.

18 'I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.

19 'And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.

A Prophet was to be raised up. We know who that Prophet was. Jesus Christ fulfilled that role. God said that if people did not listen to what that Prophet had to say, His words would be required at their hands. They were to listen to Him. They were to build a relationship with God based upon what they were told.

So the Prophet that was to come was to be involved in building a relationship between those who heard Him and responded to the words that He had to say.

Moses continues:

20 'But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.'

If a prophet takes God's name, and says, "This is the word of the Eternal," he will die, because what a prophet had to do was to convey the word of the Eternal -- and only the word of the Eternal.

In the book of Kings certain prophets sought to do otherwise, with resulting consequences.

21 "And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?' -

22 "when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

So if somebody comes along and says, "The Eternal says such and such," and it doesn't happen, you are not to be afraid of him. He expands on that a little further, as we will see in a moment.

But this Prophet was going to be like Moses. You might ask yourself how much prophesying, in the traditional understanding of prophesying, did Moses undertake? How much of the "when" of prophecy did Moses provide us with? It was very little.

Yes, the chapters in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 relate the blessings and the cursings, which have a very important role to play in terms of the "when" of prophecy. One could include Exodus 15, the Psalm of Moses. These are some of the traditional aspects of prophecy.

But God classified Moses as a prophet because he conveyed the Word of God to the people. He taught and instructed them. The majority of the work for which Moses is remembered is in the establishment of a relationship between the children of Israel and God -- a relationship that they spurned and rejected, a relationship that we are to take hold of.

Moses was also used by God to reveal a means whereby the people of Israel were to relate to one another, and other nations. How? Through God's Law. A relationship with God and relationships with one another on the personal and collective level, were to be accomplished.

In Deuteronomy 13 we find that Moses had already amplified the understanding of a true or false prophet.

Deuteronomy 13: 1 "If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign,

2 "and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods' - which you have not known - 'and let us serve them,'

3 "you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

What is he saying? He is saying that the ability to foretell the future is not necessarily the sole preserve of a prophet of God. False prophets can also tell the future, sometimes with accuracy. Just because a prophet can tell you what the future contains, does not mean to say he is of God.

We are to be aware of what he is teaching us to do at the same time. Is he bringing you into a relationship with God, or is he taking you into a relationship with another god? Judge for yourself. God says: "*Does he teach you to obey My law?*" Because as we will see, prophecy is based upon the Law of God.

4 "You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.

That is to be the focus of our lives -- to be seeking to hold fast to the Eternal and serving Him!

5 "But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.

A true prophet is going to be directing you towards the way of life that God wants you to live.

How much of the "when" of prophecy did Elijah convey? He may have done a lot for the people of his day, but God has not recorded anything he said, except:

1 Kings 18: 21 And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him ...

He set it out in very clear terms so that nobody who was on Mount Carmel that day, or nobody who heard what happened on Mount Carmel that day, had any question in their mind as to who the God of Israel really was.

WHO ARE YOU GOING TO SERVE? You might say that is the "why" of prophecy. It is to build a relationship between the created and the Creator.

Isaiah reiterated this thought for us in another way.

**Isaiah 8: 16 Bind up the testimony,
Seal the law among my disciples.
17 And I will wait on the LORD,
Who hides His face from the house of Jacob;
And I will hope in Him.**

Isaiah is talking about a relationship that he has with God. He has hope and joy in his relationship.

**18 Here am I and the children whom the LORD has given me!
We are for signs and wonders in Israel
From the LORD of hosts,
Who dwells in Mount Zion.**

You might say that we are those people at this time. We are the children whom the Eternal has given. We exist as signs and wonders in Israel, of a relationship that we have with the Eternal of Hosts.

19 And when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter," should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?

What has gone wrong with society? What are they seeking? Isn't it God they are supposed to seek?

20 To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

It's a devastating evaluation of an individual. The individual thinks that they are proclaiming the Word of God, that they are proclaiming the future, and God says, *"If they don't speak in accordance with the Word and the testimony, it's because there is no light in them whatsoever."*

You might say the proof of a prophet is whether, in fact, he brings a person into a relationship with God through His Law, through His testimony, through His teaching.

Notice, at the very end of the Old Testament, the way in which God speaks of Moses in terms of that relationship. These may be familiar Scriptures, but it is worthwhile rehearsing them at times to see to what end God provided them for us. Having talked about the end of the human age, and the Day of the Lord, God says:

**Malachi 4: 4 "Remember the Law of Moses, My servant,
Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel,
With the statutes and judgments.**

Remember that law! Don't let it disappear.

**5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet
Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.
6 And he will turn
The hearts of the fathers to the children,
And the hearts of the children to their fathers,
Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse (utter destruction)."**

He said we are to remember the law of Moses. We are not to forget it. Then he links Elijah. What is Elijah going to do? He is going to turn the heart of the fathers to the children. He is going to build a relationship, one that is so often fractured and lost in this day and age in society. In some societies it does not exist at all. God says there is to be a relationship built, a relationship which is based upon the Law of God as given through Moses.

In Malachi God has talked about those relationships in terms of husbands and wives, in terms of children, and in terms of the community of the Church. We are to remember the laws that God gave to Moses. They are the basis upon which the work of Elijah can be accomplished.

The role of Elijah is to create and build relationships, without which this world would be destroyed by God.

On the other hand, they are relationships upon which God is going to build the World Tomorrow. God sees the establishment of relationships as so important that without them there is no purpose for the continued existence of humanity. It's a fairly sobering consideration.

You and I have been called to build relationships so that we can save the rest of humanity, so that eventually we can build relationships built upon the Law of God with the rest of humanity, and enable them to build a relationship with God.

We can describe THAT as being the "why" of prophecy. God was concerned about the relationships with His people, both among themselves and with Him. The prophets were inspired by God to bring the people back into a relationship with God based on His Law; a relationship that had been fractured in the Garden of Eden.

In fact, the acid test of a true prophet of God was not their ability to predict the future, but the teachings of the Laws of God, and the rebuilding of relationships of the people with their God.

There is one account that really emphasises this aspect of God's purpose for His prophets. The prophet Jonah was sent to Nineveh to foretell its destruction. He told them that Nineveh would be destroyed in 40 days.

Jonah 1: 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me."

As you know, Jonah didn't go. He went down to Joppa, down into a boat, and down into the hull of the boat -- and then down to the bottom of the ocean, from which God then brought him back.

Sometimes the English language loses things. In Hebrew it is constantly reiterating the aspect of Jonah doing exactly the opposite to what God instructed him to do. God said, "*Get up,*" and Jonah went down. He continued to go down until he could go no further. Then God pulled him back to the surface again, and God said, "*Get up.*" It was a very earthy and fitting description.

So, having been dragged up and left on the beach in less than savoury circumstances, the word of the Eternal came to Jonah again and said, "*Get up and go.*"

Jonah went to Nineveh.

Jonah 3: 4 And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

The king and the people heard this, and they turned to God. There was a very dramatic change. The result of Jonah's prophecy was the repentance of the people of Nineveh and the forestalling of God's destruction of that city. Even the king of Nineveh understood the need for a relationship with God and with his fellow man.

The people responded to that prophecy. In fact the prophet Jonah was the only person in the story who missed the point of what God was doing. Here was a prophet who was more consumed by the "when," rather than the "why."

Jonah said that within 40 days, Nineveh was going to be destroyed. God doesn't tell us that He told Jonah to say that. Maybe He did. Maybe He didn't. Maybe it was Jonah's own reading of the situation.

But what happened was that the people entered into a relationship with God, unfortunately for Jonah who wanted to see the see the destruction of the national foe, the national enemy.

Jonah himself had to learn something about his relationship to the people of Nineveh; in fact, to all people. The "why" of prophecy, the bringing of people into a relationship with God, was most important to the Eternal. It was more important than the "when."

A few years later, in 612 B.C. Nineveh eventually did get destroyed -- so completely and totally that until the 19th century, liberal biblical scholars used to say Nineveh never existed -- that it was a fiction of the Bible. They said that all of the references to Nineveh in the Bible were myth.

Then, somebody with a spade, found Nineveh! Many artefacts from Nineveh can be seen in the British Museum today.

The British Museum was established in the 18th century. Some people think the relics there have been around for a very long time. Some of them date back 3,000 4,000, 5,000 years ago into Egypt, Mesopotamia and places like that.

The last but one time I went to the British Museum I saw a display of Agatha Christie and archaeology. Agatha Christie's husband was a pre-eminent English archaeologist who spent most of his time excavating

from the 1930s through the 1950s in what is present day Iraq -- what was, in terms of the Bible, Assyria and Babylonia.

Most of the Assyrian artefacts in the British Museum, of which there are many, only came out of the earth from sometime in the mid 1930s through the 1950s. They were in the dirt, covered by the sands of time, until very recently.

There are all sorts of artefacts from Nineveh! The best ended up in the Baghdad Museum, not the British Museum. The Iraqi government employed someone who was very efficient in making sure that the best was kept in Iraq, where no one can see them -- certainly not if you carry a British or American passport at this point in time.

But Nineveh did end up suffering for its sin. It forgot its relationship with God, and went back into sin. It forgot what the basis of that relationship was about. And it was destroyed. The words of Jonah came to pass, although not necessarily as quickly as he had hoped. The people did build a relationship with God.

The book of Daniel is not included amongst the books of the prophets in the Hebrews Scriptures, although the Bible clearly sees Daniel as a prophet. Jesus Christ attested to him as a prophet. The Hebrews themselves understood Daniel to be a prophet. But he was included in the "Writings," in the section at the end of the canon known as the Restoration Books, because his prophecy was about the world-ruling kingdoms and the re-establishment of the Kingdom of God.

The book of Daniel has a lot to do with the "when" of prophecy. It is very important from that point of view. Let us pick up something in the midst of the longest recorded prophecy in the Bible. The prophecy starts at the end of chapter 10 and runs into chapters 11 and 12.

The verses of chapter 11 are so accurate that liberal commentators want to place Daniel after the event. They went to treat him as a historian, rather than a commentator. One Greek philosopher of the second century of this era, noted the incredible historicity of Daniel 11, and said, "*He was no prophet. He was a historian.*"

Let's look at the part AFTER what they consider is history:

Daniel 11: 29 "At the appointed time he shall return and go toward the south; but it shall not be like the former or the latter.

30 "For ships from Cyprus shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do damage. So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant.

31 "And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation.

32 "Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.

The people who are safe during this time of trial, which Jesus Christ referred to as end-time events, are those who know their God; those who have a relationship with Him, a relationship that cannot be corrupted by flattery.

33 "And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet for many days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering.

34 "Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help; but many shall join with them by intrigue.

Of the word "intrigue", one marginal reference says, "slipperiness, deceit, flattery."

35 "And some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time.

What is God concerned about? On one hand, He is concerned about the people who know Him. He is also

concerned about those who have understanding and who fall. He is working with them, to refine them and purge them, and make them white -- until the time of the end.

What is He preparing them for? What is this concept of refining, purging and making white? Is it not so that they can have a part as the Bride of Christ, and, by extension, be part of the Family of God?

That is what God is working at. Daniel is explaining WHY these things are happening. This is the reason. God is wanting to do something with humanity.

What we are describing is the preparation for a relationship with God. God is concerned about that relationship.

Peter, in his second epistle, makes this comment to us:

2 Peter 3: 9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

This verse speaks to Jonah in another way, because Jonah was sulking, thinking that God WAS slack not destroying these people! Jonah had forgotten something. God is not slack concerning His promise, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

God is going to destroy the earth.

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved ...

... all this physical universe, which fills our lives and our being. Since all these things will be dissolved ...

11 ... what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

What sort of relationship should we have with God? What should it be motivated by?

12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

We look forward to that because it will be filled with righteousness -- with that right relationship with God.

14 Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;

That should be the motivation of our lives. We know these things are going to happen. We may have difficulty working out the "when," but we know "why," and what it then demands of us.

The "when" is secondary in Peter's mind to the "why."

Let's go back to the book of Hosea. In chapter 5, God is talking about the problems that Ephraim and Israel have:

***Hosea 5: 5 The pride of Israel testifies to his face;
Therefore Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity;
Judah also stumbles with them.***

Judah also gets caught up in it.

6 "With their flocks and herds They shall go to seek the LORD ...

How lovely! They are seeking the Eternal. They are doing the right thing. They are doing what they should be.

You know I am kidding!

A couple of weeks ago there was a report in "The Times" in which a Church of England clergyman was suggesting that people PRAY that England beat Brazil in football in the World Cup! That is very relevant to verse 5 because that's the type of seeking that the Eternal is talking about. It is to go seeking after physical things. That is the limit of it -- a win at football, a place in the finals of the World Cup. They didn't get it.

It continues ...

6 ... But they will not find Him ...

... because they are seeking Him in a wrong way, after a wrong manner.

**6 ... He has withdrawn Himself from them.
7 They have dealt treacherously with the LORD,
For they have begotten pagan children.
Now a New Moon (a month) shall devour them and their heritage.**

The English language is a very expressive language, but at times we don't have enough words. Where Hosea is talking about seeking the Eternal, it is purely a physical, self-centred, looking out for the self; looking out for one's physical well-being.

**Hosea 10: 9 "O Israel, you have sinned from the days of Gibeah;
There they stood. The battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity
Did not overtake them.
10 When it is My desire (when the time is right), I will chasten them ...**

... I'm going to get involved in their lives and chasten them.

**10 ... Peoples shall be gathered against them
When I bind them for their two transgressions.
11 Ephraim is a trained heifer
That loves to thresh grain;
But I harnessed her fair neck,
I will make Ephraim pull a plow ...**

... much harder work than threshing grain!

**11 ... Judah shall plow;
Jacob shall break his clods."**

They'll be involved in really back-breaking work, because they have to learn something as a nation.

Verse 12 is a very key verse in the book of Hosea:

**12 Sow for yourselves righteousness;
Reap in mercy;
Break up your fallow ground,
For it is time to seek the LORD,**

Notice again the word "seek." This is NOT the same word as in Hosea 5:6. It is a totally different word. This word is a Hebrew word, "darash," which means to seek spiritual things; to seek the spiritual things that lead to a relationship with God.

What was it they were to do? They were going to get off the easy work, and now get into the hard work: the hard work of sowing for yourself righteousness.

Before you sow a field, what are you going to do? You have to plough it and harrow it. You have to break up the clods. God says, *"Israel, I am going to work with you. I am going to put you through some trials and tribulations, until the time you come to realise that what you have to seek in life, is the things of Me -- righteousness, mercy, justice.*

12 ... For it is time to seek the LORD ...

It is time to seek the real things of God ...

12 ... Till He comes and rains righteousness on you.

... until this right relationship comes.

***Micah 6: 6 With what shall I come before the LORD,
And bow myself before the High God?
Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings,
With calves a year old?
7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
Ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
8 He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the LORD require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?***

The word "require" in verse 8 is the same word that was translated "seek" in Hosea 12:10. What is God seeking in our lives? He is seeking justice, mercy and humility. He is seeking those qualities that are His, so that He can have a relationship with us, so that our minds can meet and gel.

Isaiah used the same term for "seek" in ...

Isaiah 55: 6 Seek ("darash") the LORD while He may be found ...

Seek the spiritual things of the Eternal.

6 ... Call upon Him while He is near.

How do we go about it? We give up the things of self ...

***7 Let the wicked forsake his way,
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;
Let him return to the LORD ...***

Let him return into a relationship with God.

***7 ... And He will have mercy on him;
And to our God,***

***For He will abundantly pardon.
8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD.***

The way Israel goes about seeking God is not what God is looking for. God is looking for a seeking that is on a totally different level.

God gives us prophecy to help us to understand the type of relationship that He wants to have with us -- the depth of the relationship that He wants with us; the basis of that relationship that He wants with us.

It's not just a rote repetition of the Law of God. It's an understanding of the spirit, and the weightier matters of the Law of God.

God's thoughts are not like our thoughts, nor are His ways like our ways. They are diametrically different.

***9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.***

Humanity seeks God, but he seeks God in the wrong way. The outrage that exists over things like the removal of "In God we Trust," in many ways is an outrage based on a wrong seeking of God. You are removing some of our foundation or some of our identity, whatever it may be.

The point that is so often overlooked in relation to prophecy is that we are to concern ourselves with the "why," and then the "when" won't surprise us.

The apostle Paul attests to that:

1 Thessalonians 5: 1 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.

I don't have to write to you about the "when."

2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

You don't know when that is going to be.

3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

People like to focus purely upon the "when." It doesn't solve the problem. God says the Day of the Lord is going to come like a thief in the night.

4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.

You are not going to be surprised by it, because you have a relationship with God. You understand WHY these things happen. You have a relationship with God and you are not going to be moved by these things. You have a relationship with God. You are seeking those things which are of God.

5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.

7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.

8 But let us who are of the day be sober ...

There is a proper sobriety; a joyful sobriety. How do we become sober?

8 ... putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

We bury ourselves in the things of God. We immerse ourselves in those things. We seek those things that are of God.

9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

That's a joyful experience! That's a good reason to be joyful.

10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

Focus upon that. These things are very important. God desires a relationship with us -- a relationship based upon His revelation to His creation, the work of His hands. God desires that. God wants us to seek that in a way that is pleasing to Him.

An elderly member was once quoted as saying that it is very easy to prophesy. All you need to know are the consequences for obedience and disobedience in the Law of God. If you stop to consider that, you will see that it is very, very true. The consequences of obedience to the Law of God, coupled with the Spirit of God, means that you and I can seek those things that truly are of God. We can have a relationship with Him. We can be prepared, and we can become, part of the Bride of Christ.

But if we reject the Law of God, all of the calamities that God has ever said will happen, will come upon us. Nothing, ultimately speaking, will go right. It may not be 40 days down the line, but it won't work out right, and there won't be a relationship with God.

So the challenge for each and every one of us is to be able to focus upon the "why" of prophecy. Why has God given us prophecy? Yes, He wants us to know about the future, but He wants us to be able to prepare for that future, to understand what is required of us, so that we can have a part in the Kingdom of God!

*...Peter Nathan
29 Jun 02*

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