

What on earth is going on?

Perspective on recent world events

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NKJV used throughout, unless otherwise noted

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Summary: It seems with everything going on that a lot of people – once again – are saying we must be in the last 7-8 years before the Messiah lands on the Mt. of Olives. This sermon analyzes that sentiment, reviews the ancient history of the animosity between Israel and the Arab community, what our priorities should be, and what a good watchman is doing, and more.

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Hello, brothers and sisters of our Master Messiah Yeshua. Have you been watching the news lately? A lot has been going on. I'm going to talk about some of that today –and what it means for us, and what we should be focused on. There's a worldwide recession going on, many are unemployed, the Middle East is totally unstable at the moment, protests are spreading through our own nation, gas prices are shooting up, inflation seems poised to rear its ugly head, the USA seems to be plummeting in power, resources and influence – and so there's a sense of uncertainty, some angst, some excitement and some fear among God's people. Add the continued apparent fragmenting of God's children from one another - - and what can it all mean?

Hence the title – “What on Earth is Going on?”

As I talk to brethren, many are saying “it's obvious we're in the final few years before Christ's feet land on the Mt. of Olives. What say you? I certainly believe a lot of ministers would say we're in, or could be in, the final 7-8 yrs. What do you think the Christ Himself would say? How close *are* we? Can we know? What should we be focused on? And what on earth is going on?

I've been hearing a lot of people talking about everything “wrapping up” real soon and that seems to be the reason for their excitement. What *is* going on?

What we'll cover: Today, towards the end of the message, we'll discuss our focus. I'll also cover:

- some clarifications to common assumptions and myths
- The roots of the animosity we see in the Muslim world against Israel and the USA/UK
- Some cautions about dogmatism in prophecy. As one speaker said it recently, we seem to have a weakness for “prediction addiction”. Some speak dogmatically of things future, as if God has whispered in their ear.
- How the children of Yahweh have peace of mind even in these troubling times

So what do we see going on? I've mentioned some things already. We also hear more talk of potential war between Israel and its Arab neighbors, especially now that Egypt is in uncharted waters. It seems one Arab country after another is in revolt against its dictators or kings. Add to what we see in the news the massive weather changes, massive storms and flooding, snow storms, earthquakes – plus now we're being told the earth's entire magnetic fields and polarity may be shifting. Some claim that by itself could be triggering some of the world weather changes.

[After I had recorded this message, Japan has just been hit by a massive 8.9 earthquake –their largest ever, and the world's 6th ever largest in recorded history—plus devastating fires and tsunamis; Christchurch, New Zealand's big quake was just before that; and who can forget Haiti and Chile's massive quakes, plus many more which didn't get as much publicity.)

There's more:

- Many world economies (Greece, Ireland, Spain, many more) are on the verge of collapse (and many states in USA also). Our own country continues to pile up trillions more in debt.
- We're hearing calls for a new world currency other than the dollar. Not even the Euro is making it very well right now.
- Have you noticed more and more calls for a new world order? The world court in the Hague continues to grow in legitimacy.
- Our own military is stretched thin – and now there are calls to aid the rebels in Libya. Do we even know who the rebels are, what they stand for, and whether they'd be any different than we see now?

Even with this in mind, I think it's the wrong focus to be looking at time lines. We'll get into all that later in the message, but right now let's review the roots to the Arab and Muslim animosity to Israel. It goes back millennia, and then we'll circle back to the discussions about the time we have, what our Master said in Scripture about all that, and end with how all this is affecting our peace of mind.

But right here, let's start with the reminder that not all Muslims are Arabs. The “Muslim issues” are not confined to Arabs. The Turks – one of the descendants of Esau, who “nationally” was also called “Edom” – are Muslim but are not Arabs. One of the Turkish tribes was the Ottoman tribe, hence the name “Ottoman empire”. Some believe, though I think it's a loose connection – that the name “Ottoman” is tied to “Teman”, one of the grandsons of Esau. The connection has to be deeper than just the sound of course, and I do feel that based on the studies I've seen, that Turkey is one of the descendants of Esau. But not the only one! Teman was but one grandson of many, which included Amalek and many others. Remember Amalek? More on that later.

So people of Turkey are not Arab, but most are Muslim. Iran – the old Persian Empire – is Muslim but not Arab. Some eastern Europeans --Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia – all have 30-40% or more of their non-Arab population as Muslim. Throughout all of Europe – not counting Turkey – there are an estimated, are you ready for it – 53 million Muslims. For that matter there are Muslims in the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia, Pakistan – and they are Asians, not Arab. And finally, many Africans are Muslim, but are not Arab. Parts of Ethiopia, Somalia, even parts of Kenya, and other African nations – have some Muslims, but they are not Arab. We also have a growing Muslim population right here in the USA and many other countries. They are spreading with their high birth rate alone combined with their proactive agenda to promote Sharia Law and Muslim ideology.

The Roots of Arab and Muslim Animosity against Israel

Did you realize that many of the Arabs are related by bloodline to Israel? They're practically brothers and cousins. Keep in mind that we must not be anti-Judah – or anti nation of Israel. Yahweh is clear: He will bless those who bless Israel and will curse those who curse Israel (**Genesis 27:29**, spoken specifically about Jacob – or Israel). I'd rather be receiving blessings from my Creator rather than curses. I know there's a lot of anti-Israeli sentiment and anti-Semitism – but it's not a safe place to be.

I personally believe that nation over there we call “Israel” is just part of the end-time tribes of Israel. The modern day nation of Israel is primarily ancient Levi and Judah, although some members of other tribes also assimilated into Judah, such as the Apostle Paul, a Benjaminite. I do believe the other ten tribes are out there somewhere, for we can read in Genesis 49 specific prophecies for each of the tribes describing what they would be like in the last days. If we can believe God’s word and what He says, there must be modern day nations out there who are the tribes of Israel, though by another name now. So yes, I believe the USA and Britain, along with Canada, Australia and New Zealand are part of ancient Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh).

I believe many of the northwestern European nations are also modern fulfillments of the prophecies of Genesis 49, which describes each of the 12 tribes as distinct nations and people in the last days. See Gen. 49:1 in particular. I speak of France, Belgium, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Switzerland in particular. For those who say the Ten Tribes were lost – and have blended into all other nations – they have to ignore Gen. 49 prophecies for the end time. And it just sounds preposterous to me that Libya, Ethiopia and Egypt would be mentioned by name in the end time prophecies, but somehow other big and powerful nations like USA, Britain, Russia, China and others aren’t mentioned? They are, but just by names we don’t recognize. (Of course Russia and China are not part of ancient Israel.)

Let’s speak now of the Arabs, many of whom descend from Ishmael, the first son of Abraham through his Egyptian slave Hagar. Yet other Arabs come from other forefathers like Moab, Ammon and even from some of the sons/grandsons of Esau – like Amalek. Teman, whom many believe was the forefather of modern-day Turkey, was but one of the grandchildren of Esau. But for now, let’s talk about Ishmael.

ISHMAEL

Ishmael was the first son of Abraham (as Arabs see it) through the Egyptian Hagar, a slave girl to Sarah. Genesis 16:15 – “*so Hagar bore Abram a son...*” That’s what Scripture says. Ishmael certainly was Abram’s son. God had promised Abraham a son. But when many years went by without Sarah conceiving, even faithful Abram and his wife Sarah waived, and thought they should work out the promises of God; that they should try to bring about Yahweh’s promises by their own works, instead of by God’s gift. And so they reasoned they needed to do something. They agree to have a child by proxy, through Hagar. So Ishmael was born to Hagar, for Sarah (originally).

Even when Yahweh reaffirmed the promise of an heir was to be through Sarah/Abraham, we still find Abraham protesting to Yahweh, “Oh that Ishmael might live before You” (Gen. 17:18). But Ishmael was not the promised son by grace and miracle. Ishmael means “God (El) will hear”.

The Quran teaches that Ishmael was Abraham’s legitimate firstborn. Arabs claim *they* are the ones with the right to call Abraham their father. They hallow the tomb of Abraham and Sarah in Beersheba. The Quran teaches that even Moses and others were truly the original Muslims, but Jews corrupted the one true way – and thus the Quran and Islam continues the bias/hatred of Jews by their teaching.

Ishmael went on to be a thorn in the side of Isaac’s descendants, though not as bad as Esau was. Modern Ishmael would include the Bedouin nomads of the desert – and I think perhaps the Saudis. Ishmael was prophesied to have 12 princely sons (Gen. 17:19-22). God promised Ishmael that kings

would come from his line (Gen. 25:13), and even to this day there are long-lasting Arab monarchies. The ones who stand out were Nebajoth, whom Josephus the historian claims were the Nabateans of his day. They were famous shepherds, traders and built the city of Petra. Kedar – the fine archers of the deserts. Most of the descendants have intermarried into the Arabic peoples we see in northern Saudi Arabia, though we're not sure.

Though Ishmael was born 13 years ahead of Isaac, and though Ishmael was born first, he was not the promised son by a miracle. But remember Sarah and Abraham had agreed, based on the laws of their day, that the son of Hagar would be their own son. That bond – and inheritances that went with it – could only be severed by letting Hagar go; giving her freedom from the slavery she was in. It has everything to do with the laws of their day. God agreed with Sarah that Ishmael should be sent away (**Gen. 21:12-14**).

I believe Ishmael never got over that and felt cheated the rest of his life. Can you see why there is a sense among Arabs that they have been robbed? For millennia, they've taught that to their kids and continue to teach in their *Madrasas* (schools) that they've been robbed by Israel. When I was in Israel in 1973 and 2009, I heard this over and over first hand from many of the Arabs I spoke with. Many Arabs hate Israel and America. They don't realize that even USA and Britain are descendants of Joseph, and the nation called "Israel" is really ancient Judah. But even so, many Muslims call America "the Great Satan" and Israel "the little Satan". Those radicalized Muslims hate us. Don't forget that. Their resentment runs deep – and goes all the way back to Ishmael, and – as you'll see – Esau, Amalek, and Ammon, and Moab and others.

Ishmael and Isaac were half-brothers, with the father Abraham in common, and should have been close. Nothing like that developed, however.

So Ishmael, Abraham's first son, was out! When God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, notice God's words: "I want you to sacrifice your son, *your only son Isaac*,..." "Your *only* son?" (**Gen. 22:2,12,16**). Wasn't Ishmael also his son? Not according to Elohim! Yahweh had made it clear that "in Isaac shall your seed be called" (**Gen. 21:12**). Ishmael was the result of human effort, and not the son of the promise through whom the Messiah would come later.

But to this day, Muslims feel *they* will produce the true Messiah in the end time – "the 12th Imam", or the *Mahdi* who will unite all Muslims into a fighting force once again and be a type of Messiah.

So Ishmael felt like he had been shafted. Like the country song out there – "you [Isaac] got the goldmine and I got the shaft". That's how Ishmael and Hagar his mother were feeling.

ESAU/EDOM

It gets worse. Isaac – the one who preempted Ishmael -- then has 2 twin sons of his own and the story repeats itself, this time with his sons Esau and Jacob (Yacov). Twins are usually very close to each other, but not this pair. *Esau was born first and therefore had the birthright* and the right to the promises. But even before he was born, before Esau had done anything good or bad, Yahweh had declared that He was going to give superior blessings to the 2nd born (Jacob – who nationally becomes known as Israel.) Was that fair? God can do what He pleases. It's not for us to question. We'll see what is said in Romans 9:6-17 shortly. Again, this can explain a lot of the animosity that eventually plays out – and has yet to fully play out in bloodshed such as the world has never seen.

Turn to Genesis 25. We'll see Isaac is 40 years old when he marries a Syrian, or Aramean, named Rebekah. Are we seeing how these peoples are interrelated? Hagar the Egyptian gives Abraham his first son Ishmael, forefather of many of the Arabs of our day. Isaac marries a Syrian (some translations say "Aramean") named Rebekah. Remember Arameans spread all over – to modern Iraq and westward to Syria. So once again, there should be a sense of kinship between Israel and Syria and the rest of the Arabs, but that's not what we see.

Anyway, back to Isaac and Rebekah. Their first born Esau fathers several sons and grandsons – including Teman who may be the ancestor of modern Turks. He also had a grandson named Amalek and others.

Isaac was 40 when he married Rebekah. Twenty years later, when Isaac's 60, Yahweh blesses them with children. Let's read it in Genesis 25. As usual, I say "Yahweh" where the Hebrew says YHVH, instead of "the LORD".

Genesis 25:19-26

"This is the genealogy of Isaac, Abraham's son. Abraham begot Isaac. 20 Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as wife, *the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian* of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian. 21 Now Isaac pleaded with Yahweh for his wife, because she was barren; and Yahweh granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived. 22 But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If all is well, why am I like this?" So she went to inquire of Yahweh.

23 And Yahweh said to her:

"Two nations are in your womb,

Two peoples shall be separated from your body;

One people shall be stronger than the other,

And the older shall serve the younger."

24 So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb. 25 And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau. 26 Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

Twins are usually very, very close. But not these twins. Esau – and one of his grandsons Amalek – would have loved to kill his twin brother Israel (Jacob). That is very hateful indeed.

If you keep reading, you see how Esau despised his birthright and sold it for a bowl of lentil soup (Gen. 25:29-34). Don't be hard on him. You and I have often treated our even greater spiritual birthright with as much disregard when we so casually sin and disown our Maker. But my point is, long before he sold his birthright – even while he was still in the womb – Yahweh had already rejected Esau. The Edomites continued to be a thorn in Israel's side. And no wonder.

The apostle Paul goes into all this in **Romans 9:6-17** and I recommend you read that passage again.

So some teachers and ministers say this refers to Turkey today – the main descendant of Esau through Teman. But there were other grandsons like Amalek, as I mentioned earlier. The apocryphal book of Jasher, mentioned twice in scripture, says Amalek most successful among Esau's progeny in instilling hatred for Israel. God Himself is recorded as having given instructions to eradicate Amalek from the face of the earth (Ex. 17:14-16; 1 Sam. 15), but some survived. I would not be surprised to

someday find out that many modern day Hamas and Hezbollah are descendants of Amalek. I can't prove this, but they fit Amalek's profile. Amalek constantly criticized his brothers for being too easy on Israel. They were the first to go to war against Israel after they crossed the Red Sea (Ex. 17). But even Balaam curses Amalek, and says; "though you were the first among nations, you shall be the last" (Numbers 24:20). Ex. 17:16 says Yahweh Himself will be at war against Amalek from generation to generation.

Out of Amalek came King Agag and the Agagites, whom Saul failed to eliminate (1 Samuel 15).

Remember another famous Agagite? And what did that Agagite do? I'm speaking of Haman the Agagite, who tried to kill all the Jews. See book of Esther. (Some researchers feel he could have been related to Agag of 1 Samuel 15. Others say "Agag" was more of a title, like Pharaoh.) Anyway, Haman was intent on a form of racial cleansing way back then in what is now the modern country of Iran. But from their point of view, fair is fair. Israel had tried to wipe out Amalek on God's orders after all. Are we seeing the roots of this conflict?

The Amalekites, contrary to popular opinion, were probably never totally wiped out. *Remember it is recorded that even righteous King David received tribute from the peoples of Amalek (2 Sam 8:11-12). So they were not eradicated.*

I sometimes wonder if modern day Amalek can't be found among the Hamas and Hezbollah folks. Just a thought. Maybe this is just coincidence, but even in Hebrew Bibles, the word for "violence" in Hebrew is pronounced "Hamas" in Hebrew (Chamac), and in places in Habakkuk and other texts that prophesy of violence, the Hebrew word is pronounced "Hamas". Examples are Hab. 1:2, 3, 9; Joel 3:19. Mere coincidence? Possibly. Again, we're talking about 2 different languages, so perhaps it is just a coincidence. But still, it's worth noting.

MOAB AND AMMON

Later we read of LOT, the nephew of Abraham, who loses his entire family and his wife – except two of his daughters – after God destroys Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim and 1 other small town. Lot's daughters were sure the whole world had been destroyed (**Gen. 19:30-38**). So they got their father drunk and in 2 successive nights became pregnant from their dad, in order to keep the human race alive. The first one born was named Moab and the 2nd was Ben-Ammi, the father of the Ammonites. (The capital of Jordan is Amman to this day.) So some of the Arabs today come from this union of the nephew of Abraham with his own daughters. Again, though – they had lost everything the family had had before that, in the conflagration that was Sodom.

Are we seeing a trend here? The biggest fights in the Middle East are largely between family brothers and cousins! Israel vs. his brother Esau and his relatives Ammon/Moab, Amalek, etc. And they all claim Abraham either as their father or close relative in the case of Moab and Ammon.

There's so much more, but I just wanted to point out the roots of the animosity. It's going to take the return of the true Messiah – and the resurrection of Abraham – to bring the Jews, Arabs, Turks, Iranians, Egyptians and so on – to come together as one family someday, and they shall, someday. That's part of the good news ending, but before that, there is coming a time of trouble such as the world has never seen. Besides what we can read in Matthew 24, Daniel 11 and 12, read Psalm 83.

Psalms 83:1-8

Do not keep silent, O God! Do not hold Your peace,

And do not be still, O God!

2 For behold, Your enemies make a tumult; And those who hate You have lifted up their head.

3 They have taken crafty counsel against Your people,
And consulted together against Your sheltered ones.

4 They have said, "***Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation,
That the name of Israel may be remembered no more.***"

5 For they have consulted together with one consent; they form a confederacy against You:

6 The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab and the Hagrites;

7 Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek [one of the descendants of Esau];

Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre;

8 Assyria also has joined with them;

They have helped the children of Lot [Moab, Ammon]."

It's significant that Egypt is not mentioned *here*, though it is clearly mentioned in Daniel 11 as one that does not escape the wrath of the king of the North. But Jordan is mentioned – Moab and Ammon. Edom is – Turkey and some of the Arabs (again, remember Turkey is from Teman, just ONE of the grandsons of Esau.) v. 6 – Hagrites, probably refers to descendants of Hagar; again – the Arabs. Ishmaelites would be the greater Arab world. Amalek – could be Palestinians. Gebal, verse 7 – there were 2 cities called Gebal, one in modern day Lebanon, and the other – which I think this one refers to, southeast of the Dead Sea – modern day Arab areas. Let's now turn to Daniel 11 and 12.

Let's move on now to other situations in the Middle East.

King of the North, King of the South (Daniel 11)

I know the "party line" teaching about King of the North, King of the south. I can preach it. But right now I think we should ride loosely in the saddle of prophecy unless Yahweh or one of His angels has personally spoken in your ear. I'll say more as we go along.

Daniel 11:40-45

40 "At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him (king of the South) like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through. **41 He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon (Jordan?).** 42 He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, **and the land of Egypt shall not escape.** 43 He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; also the *Libyans and Ethiopians shall follow at his heels.* [be in submission to him?] **44 But news from the east and the north [Russia? Iran? India-China-Asia?] shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many.** 45 And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.

There were no chapter breaks in the original scriptures. Let's keep reading in Daniel 12.

Daniel 12:1-3

"At that time Michael shall stand up,

The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people;
***And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation,
Even to that time.***

And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book.

2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,

Some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.

3 Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament,

And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.

Are we sure we know who the “King of the North” is, and who the “King of the South” is? I know, I know – many are sure they do know. But I’ll say *at least be prepared for something diametrically different to actually happen, compared to the traditional explanations we’ve always been given in the past. That’s all. Be nimble. Be ready for something different than what we’ve always supposed – or you may be caught off guard and unprepared.*

Now add to that this fact: the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood has called for Jihad against Israel, and he calls for attacks to recapture Jerusalem. Scripture is clear: Jerusalem shall be surrounded by armies. But those “armies” may initially be a peacekeeping force under European or UN control. **Is it possible that we’ll see Israel be forced to give up Jerusalem and become an “international city” in return for the right to build a temple on the Temple mount**, next to the Dome of the Rock? If that happens, some major concessions will first have to be made, because right now, Jews find it next to impossible to even be on the temple mount. I also heard first hand, many times when I was last in Jerusalem in 2009 that a “good Jew” would not want to go there anyway, as they consider the temple mount area defiled by the Dome of the Rock.

The Quartet – USA/UN/Russia and the EU – are pushing harder than ever for a 2-nation arrangement with Jerusalem becoming an International city. Germany is right in the middle of this as well. So is the Vatican; much more so than one might think.

Third Jewish temple on the Temple Mount?

Scripture does say that **the temple sanctuary** is to be measured, but not the court – “for it has been given over to the Gentiles” (Rev.11:2). The area that was the “court” is where the Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa mosque now sit. I’ve been on that spot many, many times. I’ve been in Jerusalem for almost 3 months of my life and I know it well. I personally believe there *will* be a physical, beautiful third temple with live animal sacrifices going on for a time.

A group called “the Temple Institute” is feverishly preparing clothing and articles of worship for a third temple. You can Google them yourselves and see what you find. I have personally seen and photographed the many dozens of gold and silver items required for worship already being created and stored, ready for the temple. I’ve seen the trumpets, the shofars, the table of showbread, the golden menorah, the priestly garments, the musical instruments, the harps and lyres – I’ve seen them and have pictures of them. The Temple Institute is actively preparing on a feverish pace. I’ve seen their head Rabbi and was in the Institute when he dropped in. They want and expect a temple.

Where does this leave us? The whole world is in a very precarious position. Numerous ministers are calling it: saying the Christ will return very likely within 7-8 years, or 7-15 years. It is true that “things are a-changin’” mighty quick over there. I’d like to be first to say I hope our Savior does indeed come in 7-8 years, but I caution you on pinning too much of your hopes on that timetable.

Our hope should never be on a timeline or time table but on the being of our Savior. Our peace of mind should never be placed on having practically “reserved our spot” at the Place of Safety – but we have peace of mind because our minds are stayed on HIM, not a place.

Watchman, and Thief in the Night, and WHEN will Jesus return?

I personally do not think we are in the final 3 or 7 years yet. *I hope and pray my hunch is wrong. I long for the return of our King and would love to have had Him already here.* So why do I say it could yet be a while, especially with the warnings against anyone saying “the Lord delays His coming”? Here are a few reasons why I say it just very well could be longer than 7-10 more years before we hear the last trump of God and see the return of the Messiah. Someone, by the way, can give his/her reasons why there may be more time, without being one who is saying “the Lord delays His coming”.

- Jesus told his disciples that He is coming at a time “you think not”. *Right now everyone is saying the final 7-8 years will be 2012-2020.* So if Christ returns around 2020, then He would be coming at the time everyone thought. People have said for years that 2012 is going to be a significant year that could herald in the final 7-8 years. So I go with what Messiah said, that He’ll come at a time we least expect Him. *Everyone’s expecting Him soon now, or by 2020, so by Messiah’s words – that’s probably not going to be when He actually comes.*

- Paul, on the other hand, teaches us that Children of God should not be caught off guard.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. 2 For you yourselves know perfectly that **the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.** 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. 4 **But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.** 5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are neither of the night nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.

Putting the two concepts together, it appears the awake children of God will be ready to respond to whatever transpires. But perhaps what will transpire will not be exactly what we expected. But we’ll be ready to pivot and move as required. Many of God’s children will be asleep however, and will have no idea of anything until they are hit with sudden destruction. All ten virgins of Matthew 25 were sleeping when the call came, after all.

- **I say this: EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED.** Be ready to pivot and move, as you see things happening. ***But don’t expect the sequence of events to be exactly like we’ve always been taught.*** Otherwise, how can it seem to come suddenly and as a “thief in the night”? The fact is, most prophetic speakers I’ve heard *don’t* have a good track record with their predictions and prophecies.

What does “expect the unexpected” mean? Here are a few examples.

- We’ve been taught there will be a 10-nation European Union that will be “the Beast” power in the end. I say, maybe – maybe not. I’ve said for years that Rev.13:3, 7-8 says this end time beast power will be worshiped by *the whole world*, every nation – not just Europe. The world is already divided into 10 regions. Catch my drift? I don’t

know. God hasn't whispered in my ear. I'm just saying – expect the unexpected. *This 10 nation union we're looking for may be global, not just European. Pivot. Be nimble.*

- The end time religious leader may- or may not be - a pope. If he is to unite all major religions, as I think the end time False Prophet will, can he be a pope? Be nimble in your thinking. Be open to other possibilities so you don't miss him when he appears.
- **The King of the North:** we've said was United Europe and King of the South, we've said is united Islam. What if that's not the case? Be ready for the unexpected.
- **666.** Are we so sure we understand this correctly? In a future sermon I may show you some interesting new possibilities I'm being shown and are being discussed, that, if true, would totally alter our traditional explanations and prophetic scenarios. I'm not saying I agree yet with what I've seen, that is so different – but I'm prepared to be a watchman looking in all directions, ready for new possibilities and timetables.
- **Christ returning to His temple.** Obviously that has to include returning spiritually to the church, His temple (1 Cor. 3:16). We are the temple. Some have taught against a literal 3rd physical temple. I say, be flexible. Maybe he's coming to both a physical and spiritual temple. I do know that many orthodox Jews expect the Messiah to come to a temple. It would certainly be easier for them to accept Him this time, as prophecy indicates they will this time around, if He does come to a literal physical temple.
- **“The End time Babylon** is a united Europe under the Catholic Church”. That's been the party line. I say now - be nimble. What if that's dead wrong? Will you be caught off guard if that scenario *doesn't* play out?
- **“The Elijah has already come”** – and then people say it was John the Baptist, others name other church leaders who have since died. I personally think there *is* yet a coming Elijah (Mal. 4:5-6) just “before the great and dreadful day of Yahweh”, who will “come SUDDENLY to His temple” (Mal. 3:1-2) when He does, not 20-30-40 years after that so-called Elijah died. But if the Elijah of Mal. 4 was 100% fulfilled by John the Baptist, I can accept that too. Be nimble. Be ready to recognize the Elijah if and when he appears. That Elijah will reconcile fathers and sons and turn people strongly back to a strong relationship with their one true God. Did John the Baptist *fully* accomplish either prophecy?
- **What if “the Place of Safety”** of Revelation 12:13-17, which so many count on, ends up being something very different than we have believed? I do not want the Place of Safety idea to become your god, where you pin your peace of mind, or what you look forward to. Pray that you be counted worthy to escape these things, as Messiah told us, then leave it in His capable hands (Luke 21:36). When was the last real solid prayer session that you had? We are to pray we be counted worthy to escape.
- **Most of all, remain nimble on TIMING.** How many times, over the past 40-50 years now, have we heard, “Surely this is the last 7-10 years. I'm not setting any dates, but this sure looks like the wrap-up to the return of Christ”? *Be nimble. Your and my end could be tonight with a heart attack.* Our next moment will be the

judgment. *Be ready, don't get ready (Matt. 24:44; Luke 12:40)*. If the Messiah doesn't come for another 20-30 or more years, so be it, be faithful, living as we should. Certainly what we should be doing, and can be doing, is repenting and getting closer to Him in obedient living, led by His Spirit. I have a lot of growing to do in that area and you probably do too.

Understanding "The Thief in the Night" word picture

Yeshua said He would come unexpectedly as a Thief in the Night. I'm sure it also refers to what we westerners think, but it's actually much more interesting and pertinent than that. The interesting thing about this description is that the people of His day knew what that meant. Yeshua is our High Priest spiritually of the Melchizedek priesthood. In temple days, a priest was assigned on a rotating basis to watch that the fire of the altar did not go out at night. But sometimes that priest would fall asleep on the job. So without notice and without warning, the temple High Priest (the *cohen gadol*) would sometimes check on them at night – at midnight or 2 or 3 a.m. to see if they were awake and doing their job of keeping the fire burning – or if they were asleep. If he found the watchman of the fire asleep, the High Priest would gather some burning coals from the altar and lay them on the priest's garments. The priest would be caught off guard as his clothes caught fire. Typically as the story goes, that priest would cast off his robe and flee into the night naked.

The High Priest was called "the Thief in the Night" back then. Everyone back then knew that term. You did not want your high priest coming to you as a thief in the night. Instead, you wanted to be vigilant and ready to respond to Him when He came. Who's our High Priest of the Melchizedek priesthood?

No wonder we're told not to be found sleeping. No wonder we're told to watch our garments. Maybe Rev. 16:15 will make more sense now.

Revelation 16:15

"Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walks naked and they see his shame."

We are to keep the flame of worship alive, not to become cold and uncaring, or even lukewarm. We are to be busy doing our job

Being a Good Watchman

I want to say it one more time – be a good watchman. **FIRST of all, watch your own garments (righteousness), which we just read in Rev. 16:15. Luke 21:34 says to "take heed to yourselves..."** Do we see the emphasis? Master goes on to say that we shouldn't fall into a good-time-Charlie attitude, or be weighed down by life's concerns and be caught off-guard. When it does come, it will hit like a SNARE – BAM- like a mouse trap that snaps shut quicker than any mouse can react. WHAM (Luke 21:35)! So He goes on: Luke 21:36 – "watch therefore and pray always, that you may be counted worthy to escape these things that will come to pass."

Do we see the emphasis? Watch and Pray. ***Watch yourself. It's not so much about watching the news.*** Brethren, the "news" you think you're keeping up with has been so doctored and edited

anyway. The real news is going on behind closed doors and we seldom are allowed to know the really big news going on.

Also watch your relationships -- with Father, and your Savior, as well as with fellow believers. Those who fear God “spoke often to one another” (Mal. 3:16) and God takes notice of that. Reconcile with anyone and everyone you can. If we don’t forgive others their trespasses against us, our sins against God won’t be forgiven either (Matthew 6:14-15). It’s that simple. I’m on a campaign to reconnect with those over the years I either had offended or been offended by. I don’t want to be as Esau – hating his brother. Love is active. I can’t choose my brothers and sisters. But I can choose to live in harmony with them – or not. So relationships – that’s the first thing we must watch.

That means now is the time to deeply repent, cleanse our hands and minds and hearts. Now is the time to actively be reconciling where we can. Now is the time to be repenting, praying, and being a zealous seeker after our God. Now is the time to finally be overcoming some old sins that bedevil us.

Then, as you *additionally* watch world events – secondary to our relationships – ***be a good watchman. A sentry, a guard, a watchman must be looking in all directions, constantly*** – not just one direction. He realizes the attacker will likely come from an *unexpected* direction. That’s why I say when it comes to prophecy, be prepared for many of the end time events to perhaps develop differently than we had thought. Maybe even everything. Be nimble. If it pans out the way we had always thought, so be it, wonderful. If not, we’re not caught off guard.

I will also say this: beware of ministries which focus entirely or mostly on prophecy. Someone just wrote me to say “Prophecy is not my strong point”. Do we know anyone who can say prophecy is their strong point? You won’t hear me say that! Many say it, but are their scenarios panning out? No! So far, we’ve been very much a “non-prophet organization”. Unless God has spoken in your ear, beware of preaching prophetic sequences and timetables dogmatically. In fact Yahweh warns us about those who say they come in His name, and preach prophecy as if God has personally revealed this to them. I speak on prophecy – as I’m doing even now – but if anything, I’m giving cautions against dogmatisms.

Mark 13:33 – “Watch therefore, for you do not know when the time is” (or the timetable). In fact, Yeshua says five times in Mark 13 to watch, for we won’t know the timing. (Mark 13:9 (yourselves), 33, 34, 35, 37). Matthew 24:44: “you therefore BE ready, for the Son of Man comes at an hour you do not expect.”

I’d like you to read, on your knees as you pray about it, **Luke 12:33-45**. There we see a lengthy and even repetitive exhortation by our Master to be a good watchman. The good watchman is awake and opens the door when His Master comes, unlike the Laodiceans who don’t hear the knock at the door or for some reason won’t open it. He also warns those who know better – to really watch it – or when He comes He’ll thoroughly thrash that servant who didn’t do what he knew to do. I preach to myself. Those who teach will be liable for more than those who don’t.

But the message is consistent:

- It will be unexpected in time, like a thief in the night, so the good watchman is not just watching for the expected – but also for the unexpected.
- We need to be awake, though it is unexpected in timing (Luke 12:35-38)
- We need to be doing His work, busy, and treating one another well (Luke 12:42-47).

- We need to recognize shifts in world events, like watching shifting weather

One More thing: God's Children should not be as distressed at end-time events

God's children should be at peace, even while we feel badly for what the world is going through. We know that for several years before our Savior returns to earth that the world will be embroiled in the time of worst trouble it has *ever* seen. Even God's children may have to go through at least the beginnings of that – and some of us may have to go through all of it. Yes, pray that we be counted worthy to escape these things (Luke 21:36). Those who will be worthy to escape these things will obviously be the ones who need no further refining in the fire. Father knows them intimately. They are close to each other and to Him. But remember, many of the righteous will be persecuted and even beheaded. Our “party line” teaching has usually implied that only the weaker Christians, the Laodiceans, will be the ones beheaded. But is that what *you* read in Rev. 20:4? How is it weak to be willing to lose your life for His name's sake and for refusing the mark of the Beast?

So the end times will be rough indeed, but we know they're coming and so now is the time to be strengthening our faith in Yahweh, and in our Messiah. We know times of war, severe earthquakes, famines and testing are prophesied. As we see them happening, we lift up our eyes and look to Him who will restore peace to the earth when He comes. Now is the time to be seeking Him with all our hearts – and to keep it up to our last dying breath—whether or not the Son of God returns in a few years, or in 7-8 years, 15 years, or 30 years or more!

Don't focus on trying to figure out prophecy. Focus on your relationship with Father! This ministry is all about relationship. I've said that from day 1. *How* could you and I possibly have peace in these otherwise troubling times?

Isaiah 26:3-4

You will keep him in perfect peace, *whose mind is stayed on You,*
Because he trusts in You.

4 Trust in Yahweh forever, For in Yah, Yahweh, is everlasting strength.

When we really come to know the power, the love and the providence of our heavenly Father and our Savior – we won't need to have any angst over what's happening all around us, because our minds are stayed on Him, and trust in Him as Isaiah 26 says.

**But, Woe to those who say “The Lord Delays His Coming”.
Will there be an apparent “delay”?**

One more thing: Woe to those who teach we have all the time in the world, and the Lord delays His coming (Matthew 24:48; 2 Pet. 3:4-9). So I don't want to go there. But I have to teach what scripture teaches. *He comes at a time we think not (Mark 13:33)*. He comes at a time that is preceded a few years before by apparent peace and safety. Right now, it's all about turmoil and war, and hardly any “peace and safety” happening. I personally do not want to ever say God is delaying His timetable, or delays His coming. I think God will send Jesus exactly when it's time.

But, there is one thing very interesting: *Scripture itself* speaks of what *appears* to be a delay. And yet Scripture also speaks of “cutting the time short” (Matthew 24:13). So my point is: it will be able

to be “read” both ways. Read what follows out of our own Master’s lips. I think it will be because He *seems* to be delaying that we, as His Bride, the true spiritual church, become so apathetic that we actually *sleep*! It’s hard to stay on guard forever! Could it be that because after the Bride got dressed for the wedding, trimmed their lamps and even went out to meet the Bridegroom – and the Groom doesn’t show up – that the 10 virgins went back to bed? Ponder that.

Matthew 25:1-5

"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. 3 Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, 4 but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. **5 But while the bridegroom (KJV: tarried) was delayed, they all** slumbered and slept." **

Did you let that sink in? “While the bridegroom was delayed...” or “tarried”. Folks, this is in Jesus’ own words! You know the rest of the story, I hope. **The five foolish virgins were not used to going to the one true source of the Oil of the Holy Spirit – to our Father and Savior. They were used to being spoon fed and thought others could share God’s spirit with them.** But eternal life – and the flowing of God’s Holy Spirit -- is about knowing Yahweh and Him knowing us personally. It’s a one-on-one relationship. Your church isn’t going to be able to do that for you. That’s something we each have to do on our own. Nobody can build that relationship for me. And being busy with church things isn’t enough either. It’s about each of us having our own personal one-on-one time on our knees before heaven’s throne. You can’t do that for me and I can’t do it for you. Notice that when the five foolish came back and banged on the door begging to be let in to the wedding, the Bridegroom (our Savior) says, “I never knew you.”

Also interesting about Matthew 25 and the ten virgins is that it ends, how? Verse 13: “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which your Master is coming”. The Greek word here for “watch” according to Vine’s Expository Dictionary is *gregoreuo*, which has more to do with watching one’s own spiritual condition, being SPIRITUALLY awake and alert, and certainly that is the context of this parable. It’s the same word used in 1 Pet. 5:8, where we are to be VIGILANT, for the Devil goes about as a roaring lion. It’s not so much about watching the news as it is watching your relationship and life of obedience and submission to our King.

But my point was – in Matthew 25, our Master Himself says the words, “while the Bridegroom was delayed...” in verse 5.

Revelation 10:6 says “...that there should be delay no longer...”. Why would that be said? Yeshua HIMSELF said in Luke 20:9 that the owner of the vineyard went away “for a long time”.

Habakkuk 2:3

For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. ***Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry.***

Hebrews 10:36-37

36 For you ***have need of endurance***, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:

37 "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.

You've heard me say over and over in the past – “don't get ready, be ready”. Your and my end time could come tonight. My next moment – and yours too – could be standing before the judgment seat.

Our salvation is not in knowing what is going to happen and when. Our salvation is not in having lots of gold or to be independently wealthy, though many are suggesting we should diversify to include some gold in our investments. Our salvation is not in our physical preparations to outlive a famine or insurrection. Our salvation is in knowing your and my Savior intimately and personally. That has been the focus of this ministry.

Now, of course there is reason to have some reserves of some money and food: “rainy day” provisions and cash. That's being prudent. But in the end, this coming time of trouble that is prophesied will be so severe and intense that one will be kept safe ultimately by divine protection and providence. There are prophecies of people throwing their worthless gold into the streets! You can't count on physical measures or money or food in these times! Read Zeph. 1:17-18 and Ezek 7.

Ezekiel 7:19

**19 'They will throw their silver into the streets,
And their gold will be like refuse;
Their silver and their gold will not be able to deliver them
In the day of the wrath of Yahweh (the LORD);
They will not satisfy their souls, nor fill their stomachs,
Because it became their stumbling block of iniquity.**

God has not Gone Mute

So let's be aware of what's happening without anxiety. Nor should we spend too much time on timelines and trying to figure everything out. Spend the time instead on your knees in seeking your Creator. Spend time on relationships. Spend time on service. Spend time on things that really count. Focus on being vigilant and keeping the fires of zeal alive.

Our father will reveal His will and what will happen to us – in His time, in His way. He has not gone mute.

Amos 3:7

Surely the Lord God does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.

Yahweh told Abraham about destroying Sodom and Gomorrah. He told Moses many things ahead of time. He told Jeremiah what would happen to those running to Egypt. God hasn't gone mute. We are the ones who have been “hard of hearing” (Matthew 13:58) and who seek those with pleasant messages (2 Tim. 4:4; Hebrews 5:11). Paul experienced an angel standing beside him, reassuring him of his safety (Acts 27:23). One time Paul even had Jesus Himself stand by him (Acts 23:11). Peter – TWICE – had an angel free him from jail (Acts 5:19; Acts 12:8-13).

I don't believe those stories have ended. I believe we will also have more and more experiences like that. But those spiritually asleep will miss them! Peter said, quoting from Joel 2, that in the last days “your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams...” – Acts 2:17-18.

If you don't believe any of this, then for sure you won't see it. I personally do believe we will experience angels appearing to us, opening prison doors and commanding us to continue to preach and testify of our Master and His way – like the apostles of Acts 5:19 did. I do believe we will have visions. It's prophesied. But until then, men and women should not pronounce specific prophetic things in Yahweh's name – unless they're prepared to do so at their own peril.

Having said all that, I think scripture shows us there will be a rapid series of events that will get everyone all hyped up, like we see happening now, and then a significant lull – so people start thinking “that was a false start”, it's not about to happen after all. Then the church takes a nap (Matthew 25:1-13). Then *wham...* sudden destruction (Luke 21:35-36).

One final point: Respect the government God has placed over us

I think we can mention it when our government is doing things we just don't understand. But brethren: it goes against scripture for people and ministers to say things disrespectfully about our President or Congress, or to refer to them by malicious names or degrading names. Brethren, let's knock off the disrespect. It is ungodly and not pleasing to Father. I'm no fan of our recent presidents, but I'm commanded to respect them.

Our forefathers had to deal with the likes of Nero, and Caligula and other Roman dictators who made sport out of torturing and killing our brethren. What does Paul teach? What does Peter teach?

1 Peter 2:17

Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

Romans 13 also speaks of the profound obedience and respect we must have for those in authority, unless they order you to break God's higher law of course. We must obey God rather than man in cases where government is making us do something contrary to God's word – but then we must submit to the penalties imposed. The Apostles all submitted to their beatings and persecution, even with praises and joy.

So – watch yourself. Watch your relationship with God and mankind. Strengthen your marriage. Reconcile with those you've been offended by or have offended. And watch world events the best you can – but be watching in all directions, not just the party line things and places to watch. Expect the unexpected. Be nimble to react – but react in faith and peace of mind.

That's all for now. Yes, these are exciting times. We certainly are closer now to the Messiah's return than we were yesterday. But let's stay vigilant and awake to our spiritual condition and in our relationships. May Yahweh bless you and be with you as we prepare for a coming new world.

Until next time, your brother in Christ – Philip Shields.