

GNITN

#331

Prophecy Isn't Bad News

We've Come A Long Way, Baby

For those of us who still remember a time when hearing about a pregnant relative having a newborn child was an ancient rotary phone call away and there were no group calls or answering machines if you weren't near that phone. No caller ID was available so it was always an adventure when the phone rang to decide if you wanted to answer it. Of course it would keep ringing until the person calling gave up since voicemail was also nonexistent. Remembering a person's phone number was a matter of having a really good memory or being fastidious in writing them down. But not to worry, you could always let your fingers do the walking with the handy, dandy white and yellow pages. Television was also somewhat primitive with only three channels and in my case, only in black and white. If you missed the nightly news, well you had to check out the newspaper or rely upon the local gossip to give you a recap. In school you had to rely on paper everything. Making copies on a small scale was a matter of the mimeograph machine and there some of us who actually liked the smell of those copies. Did I mention cameras with actual film in them?

It's Easy To Find Depressing News

Technology has afforded us with so many advantages it's difficult to even detail them all. If I needed to use one word to summarize our world it would be instant. Patience is indeed a virtue and it isn't unusual for actual knockdown, drag out fights over not getting your fast food order correct or someone getting their order before you do. Did I mention microwaves? And with the Internet being so advanced we rely on it for more than we even realize. Going back to the previous talk of communication, those darn cell phones rule our lives now. But the upside is we are connected in ways with those we love that joy and smiles are easier to find daily. Email and texts and video chats along with group meetings and working from home are advantages of technology helping us to stay in constant contact with our world. While I could go on and on with how much information is at our fingertips and how life-changing a video or picture taken at the right or, for some people the wrong time, there are serious downsides to the instant news cycle, and there are a lot of problems to all that connectivity. You see, finding bad news has never been so easy as well. And true privacy has gone the way of the dinosaurs. If you want to be left alone, you almost need to be stranded on an island after a plane crash with a soccer ball named Wilson. It's a great day to be a hypochondriac, and if you don't know what that means you can look it up on your cell phone.

Let's Talk Bad News

As I scanned all the headlines I saw a lot of talk about WWII. Will it develop from Ukraine where all those nuclear missiles are supposedly in play with the big bad Russian bear involved. Will the Middle East drag the world into its end-time, apocalyptic scenarios with Iran and all of their proxies breeding terrorism locally and globally? I know you won't like me, but is there another pandemic brewing in some lab in China that will paralyze the globe for two or more years? How about an economic earthquake that can shrink your 401k into a 201K or worse? I spent an awful lot of time mentioning all our electronic gadgets and it goes without saying that

we are way too dependent on electricity these days. I heard talk about that darn gas giant getting all blustery and shooting off a massive solar flare that would take out all things based on electricity including batteries. Civil unrest and the reasons for it are looming everywhere you look, and not just in America. Pick an issue and a mob can organize within minutes and riots will break out over it. The things you depend upon very day could fall apart in an instant. A housing market crash, a downturn in the economy that would cripple jobs, hyperinflation making currencies useless, a virus that sweeps through our lives taking from us loved ones and even our health. Political unrest with technology deciding who our leaders are making us helpless to remove those who rule with an iron fist. And while I'm on a roll, I might as well broach the myriad of conspiracy theories abounding. Chemtrails, UFOs, government psyops, "accidental" train derailments, food and coal plant fires, reptilians hiding in plain sight. Are we living in a parallel universe or even in a matrix and don't know it? The list could go on and on, but the point is if you want bad news, you can find it so much easier these days.

Prophecy Shouldn't Be Bad News

My point in all of this is that as believers who know that prophecy is a real thing and not fake news or misinformation, we can get down or depressed by what we see unfolding around us. Much of what I described earlier is seen in the detailed list of signs Jesus told His disciples on the Mount of Olives when they asked what they would see at the end of the age. And then reading the book of **Revelation** gives us a boatload more of things on the prophetic horizon that could send any same person into a tailspin of bad news. Even the foreshadows of these apocalyptic events are pretty intense and even the best of doomsday prepping won't help those of us who can't drop a billion dollars on a shelter in Hawaii. But knowing the future is not all there is to prophecy. The heart of prophecy is love and a major part of telling us the future is rooted in His love for us. He wants us to be prepared for harsh times just as much as He wanted Egypt to make it through the 7 years of famine. And He helped the Jews in captivity for 70 years in Babylon by giving them words of encouragement through His prophets.

Plans For Good

Context is king was a line that was given to me over and over again in Bible college and it really is good advice when studying the Word of God. So when I wanted to give us a prophetic piece of Scripture, I landed on a portion in the book of **Jeremiah** that deals with coping with bad news. Prophetic words like this came during that aforementioned exile:

"For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. (Jer 29:11, NLT)

We usually quote this verse, but not the context surrounding it. Here is verse 10:

This is what the Lord says: "You will be in Babylon for seventy years. But then I will come and do for you all the good things I have promised, and I will bring you home again. (Jer 29:10, NLT)

You see, unlike the false prophets who abounded in Babylon who were telling people things like they were going to leave captivity earlier than 70 years and other such lies, Jeremiah told them to live out their lives in Babylon and learn lessons from it, chief of which was to never be idolatrous as a nation again. On a day-to-day basis, he told them to live in a Godly manner, making the best of things because their futures would change at some point.

What Personal Plans Does He Have For You?

This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 “Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6 Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. 7 Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.” (Jer 29:4-7, NIV)

What is God saying to us now as we see so many calamities coming at us, some at break neck speed? The same advice Jeremiah gave to Israel will serve us well regardless of the fact we aren't in the exact same circumstances. Go to God daily and ask Him what you should do and then do it. What ministry or ministries does He want you to support or even be a part of? Does He want you to go on short term missions trips? Or are there urban outreaches right where you live? What the prophet was telling them was that the circumstances they were in wasn't changing just like the future prophecies in front of us aren't as well. They are set and have been for a long time. But because we know about them we can indeed live our lives in a Godly manner just as the Jews did way back in that foreign land. We too are to live as those in a strange land:

Dear friends, your real home is not here on earth. You are strangers here. I ask you to keep away from all the sinful desires of the flesh. These things fight to get hold of your soul. 12 When you are around people who do not know God, be careful how you act. Even if they talk against you as wrong-doers, in the end they will give thanks to God for your good works when Christ comes again. (1 Pet 2:11-12, NLV)

And while we can't influence things around us on a national or global level like some, we can pray about them and let God intervene. Such Godly habits will move the hand of God in these areas and at the same time develop the faith in us to move mountains in our own lives. That's a future we can certainly live with.