

“What” Are You Watching For?

A growing number of publications in and out of the religious world are raising concern that some type of apocalyptic end must be near. Several end-of-time magazines have sprung up over the past decade. Evangelicals have sensationalized their dispensationalist views through books and movies. Sociologists are increasingly fascinated with the *subculture of individuals* who develop followings when they predict an “end” event or even a date for the end to occur. The FBI has a dossier of such groups, fearing they might call for a sudden panic action such as mass travel to Israel, large liquidation of assets or possibly a disruption of the media. Apocalyptic clocks have appeared on the web, showing “midnight” is almost here.

“This is the first age that’s paid much attention to the future. Which is a little ironic since we might not have one.”¹ Since 9/11 the militant Islamic terrorist threat has brought the world to a new type of apocalyptic reality it never faced before.

“Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction.”² Every city is at risk to an invisible enemy. In the little country of Palestine over 2000 people have volunteered as suicide bombers.

Christians have preached for 2000 years that we must live in a state of an imminent end *because time was short* – “The end is near – again and again.” Adventists – those who preach of that soon return – had their roots in the Millerite movement, which had set a date for Christ’s return in 1844. Following that bitter disappointment, E. G. White in a very fascinating series of proclamations noted that Christ’s return was at the door: “We hear the footsteps of an approaching God.”³ Those clarion calls remained true to the imminent spirit of being ready.

It is a sad and dramatic study to review the apocalyptic mentality of the year 2003. The messages and warnings as to why a cataclysmic end is near is much the same between a Protestant minister and a secular commentator. They both talk about natural disasters, war, terrorism and morality. But are there no distinctive Biblical prophecies that alert God’s people to truly know when. Has God left us to struggle in the muddied waters of a 2000-year running apocalypse?

The sermons that declare a “stupendous crisis lies just ahead” are no different than the thought-provoking books and manuscripts from Godless pens that sensationalize a “stupendous crisis lies just ahead.” Both appeal to generic concerns usually based upon some “recent” dramatic event.

A Bible scholar recently noted: “The details about the final conflict’s climactic moments are not available.” Then he went on to say without justifying his comments, “Unquestionably, there will be significant, radical, and unexpected shifts in world religions, global politics and economic

¹ Arthur C. Clark, quoted in R. A. Swenson, *Hurting Toward Oblivion* (1999), p. 20.

² Blaise Pascal (1623-1662).

³ *Evangelism*, p. 219 (1914).

systems.”⁴ What does that all mean? It is nothing more, as usual, than a generic mouthful. Secularists say exactly the same thing. Is this all we’re “watching” for? Hasn’t God given very specific revelations within the vast prophetic messages as to exactly how the climactic moments will unfold, who is involved and how the great controversy will end?

There is another issue on which concerned Christians need to be jolted to their senses. When most of prophecy is relegated to history, it is a *disincentive* to “watch.” It numbs even the most ardent Biblical expositors.

Jesus told his disciples to “watch” and “tarry” when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane – “stay awake” and “patiently wait.” *Why were they to stay awake?*

In the parable of the ten virgins, the ten slept. The bridegroom tarried. At midnight the cry came, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh.” Who made that call? It wasn’t the ten who slept! It wasn’t the bridegroom! There were some who were awake, watching. Who were they? The 144,000 – those who were watching and giving the Loud Cry.

What were they watching for? When Jesus answered the queries of the disciples about the end of time, He didn’t “beat around the bush” with, “I can’t tell you the details!” He answered their three questions, filled in incredible details, then referred them – and us – to Daniel 8–12 (Matthew 24:15). That, in turn, refers us to the book of Revelation with amazing particulars – hundreds of them! – about the climactic moments of earth’s history, including timed prophecies.

We can remain with the secularist or we can “watch” for things so specific we will be able to give a rational “loud cry” of His imminent return.

It is time to move beyond a generic message to one that is filled with objective information, leading the world to crave the eternal wonders of glory. There is no reason we can’t be accurate with precise predictive knowledge as we move into 2004. Protestants prize and even flaunt Bible exposition but talk about it as if it were more of a literary work than a heart-changing, thought-provoking sacred document guiding His people every step in the final battle with sin.

Our over 2000 pages of research into Revelation is leading us to unquestionably conclude that there are details never dreamed of regarding coming events we urgently need to grasp and proclaim. Daniel is beginning to “stand in his place.” Truth that reveals how the tarrying time is to finish and the “*appointed time*” begins are opening up. Their relationship to the Jewish economy is taking on new meaning. It is time that the word “Advent” be rediscovered, cherished, used and preached.

“The sermons preached by some of our ministers will have to be much more powerful than they are now ... Every discourse should be given under a sense of the awful judgments soon to fall on the world. The message of truth is to be proclaimed by lips touched with a live coal from

⁴ Reference withheld.

the divine altar.

“My heart is filled with anguish when I think of the tame messages borne by some of our ministers, when they have a message of life and death to bear. The ministers are asleep; the lay members are asleep; and a world is perishing in sin. May God help His people to arouse and walk and work as men and women on the borders of the eternal world.”⁵

“The end is near! We have not a moment to lose! Light is to shine forth from God’s people in clear, distinct rays, bringing Jesus before the churches and before the world.... The instrumentalities to be used are those souls who gladly receive the light of truth which God communicates to them. These are God’s agencies for communicating the knowledge of truth to the world. If through the grace of Christ His people will become new bottles, He will fill them with the new wine. *God will give additional light, and old truths will be recovered, and replaced in the frame-work of truth; and wherever the laborers go, they will triumph. As Christ’s ambassadors, they are to search the Scriptures, to seek for the truths that have been hidden beneath the rubbish of error. And every ray of light received is to be communicated to others. One interest will prevail, one subject will swallow up every other,—Christ our righteousness.*”⁶

“Faith in the soon coming of Christ is waning. ‘My Lord delayeth his coming’ is said not only in the heart, but expressed in words, and most decidedly in works. Stupidity in this watching time is sealing the senses of God’s people as to the signs of the times.”⁷

“My brethren, read the book of Revelation from beginning to end, and ask yourselves whether you might not better spend less time in strife and contention, and begin to think of how fast we are approaching the last great crisis.”⁸

What are we to “watch” for? Many will say “the coming of Jesus” – Wrong. We are to watch for the signs that tell us He is about to come. That, then, gives urgency to our message to a dying world. That can bring conviction because there is *objective prophecy* being fulfilled. It will be then – and only then – that we can convincingly tell everyone, “Wake up – behold – the bridegroom comes!”

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⁵ *Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 36-37.

⁶ *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 259 (emphasis added).

⁷ *Review and Herald*, September 16, 1873.

⁸ *Ibid.*, August 20, 1903.