

Scriptural Truths

E-Mail Meditations

The Lord Will Come . . . Perhaps Today . . . Behold, I Come Quickly . . . Rev. 22:7

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The Preparations For The Lord's Coming

Introduction

I expect there are certain things which frighten us and from my communication with others, the two most prevalent are darkness and the fear of the unknown. I recall in pre-teenage years my Aunt Evelyn lived in an area where to get to the bus there was a road approximately two hundred yards long with big bushes on either side for the most of it. Auntie Evelyn used to walk me down that road for I was frightened in the darkened shadows.

It is a very faint illustration of the spiritual condition of unsaved people. Across the world each individual who has never accepted the Lord Jesus as the only way of salvation from eternal damnation is in a world of spiritual darkness (Eph. 6:12). They were and are so blinded by sin and deception by Satan that they have no realization that not only are they in spiritual darkness, but the darkness was and is in them (Jn. 11:10). The result is that they are always groping for some way to find satisfaction, but as the Rolling Stones sang so long ago, "I Can't Get No Satisfaction".

As was previously mentioned, the world had to be prepared for the coming of the Lord and this preparation involved social, political, matrimonial, religious and heathen worlds. Man needed to learn several truths: the things of this world do not satisfy; man has a deeper need that nothing of this world can fulfill; without God's revelation there is nothing but confusion; and the human heart despite culture, clime or upbringing, was and is corrupt.

In fine tuning arrangements for the coming of Messiah necessitated eight avenues coming together in perfection. They were the preparation of:

- a) The then present political world
- b) The Jewish method of enrollment
- c) The paternal relationship of Mary and Joseph
- d) The Jewish world, positively and negatively
- e) The Heathen world, positively and negatively
- f) The humanity being made conscious of their needs
- g) The needs of the human spirit
- h) The spiritual confusion
- i) The moral declension
- j) The hunger for decency and justice
- k) The spiritual hunger of the few

The Preparations

1) Preparations on the then present political level

- a) There was a decree given by Caesar Augustus several years earlier, but the determination by Rome meant nothing to God for the Baby will be born, “when the fulness of the time was come” (Gal. 4:4). Consequently, the fulfilling of the decree was delayed for some time.

2) Preparations by the Jewish method of enrollment.

- a) According to the Jewish ordering of things the enrollment had to be made in the ancestral city. However, behind this was the decreed prophecy given by God, “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Mic. 5:2). God had determined where the child was to be born and used the Jewish method of enrollment to accomplish His purpose.

3) Preparations through the paternal level of Mary and Joseph

- a) Herein lies, to humans, what would seem a major difficulty. Even if a mother was of the seed of David the right of kingship did not transmit to her, it could only come through the man. However, while Joseph was of the seed of David, God had put a curse on Jehoiakim. That evil king had burned the scroll sent to him by Jeremiah and God decreed that no son of his would sit on the throne. Joseph was of the line of Jehoiakim (Lk. 1:32) so no child of his could ever sit on the throne of Israel. It was impossible for a natural born child of Jehoiakim to be king, and so it seemed that all had come to a dead end.
- b) The answer was through the uniting of Mary and Joseph as espoused, but as yet unmarried, so that they were legally viewed as husband and wife and the child conceived by a supernatural means. Mary was a descendent of Nathan and no curse was put on that genealogy. Therefore, with Joseph being the husband of Mary, the legal line went to the Lord. Because the baby was conceived by an act of the Holy Spirit, God’s will was accomplished for it meant the Lord had a legal claim to the throne and maintained the integrity of the curse God had pronounced upon Jehoiakim.

4) Preparation from the Jewish world

a) Positively

- i) This was done through the dispersion of the Jewish people who, in each settlement, built synagogues. They held faith in the singularity of God, maintained a religious consciousness, maintained religious worship and a fervency for the scriptures. Because of the universal language of Greek they translated the scriptures into Greek.

b) Negatively

- i) This is shown in two ways, relative to the inadequacy of the religious system and the weakness of man to keep the law.
- ii) The inadequacy of the religious sacrificial system
 1. Those sacrifices gave God no pleasure (Heb. 10:6, 8) for they could never remove the burden of a guilty conscience, take away sins, permit man to come to God, nor give the power of new life to the offerer. The animals and birds offered in the sacrifices never knew that which they were doing. They provided a covering but never a perfect cleansing, and could never satisfy the claims of the Holy God.

c) The weakness of man to keep the law

- i) The law could never deal with the subject of man’s sinful nature nor permit all men at any time to come to God. It was a system which knew nothing of pity for failure of the law demanded one hundred percent perfection all the time. No matter how man might try or reset his devotions, he would fail for the law allowed nothing of failure.

d) The failure of Judaism was that it was characterized by:

- i) Legalistic formalism as seen in the Pharisees, but there was no life in it
- ii) Pessimistic skepticism as seen in the Sadducees, but there was no life in it
- iii) Spiritual mysticism as seen in the Essenes but there was no life in it

e) In the final analysis the Jewish religion (before the Lord came), although God given, left:

- i) Unanswered questions such as, “What of the cry of Abel’s blood” (Gen. 4:10). Was it ever avenged? What about the cries of Job, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!” (Job 23:3), and, “Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both” (Job 9:33).

- ii) Unfulfilled prophecies such as: The seed of the woman would bruise Satan's head (Gen. 3:15); a prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:15); "Behold my servant shall deal prudently" (Isa. 52:13); "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee . . . lowly, and riding upon a donkey" (Zech. 9:9)
- iii) Pointless ceremonies such as:
 1. What was the value of the Burnt offering (Lev. 1:3-17) if it was an end itself?
 2. What was the value of the great day of Atonement? (Lev. 23:27)
 3. What was the value of the Year of Jubilee? (Lev. 25:33)
 4. What was the benefit of the Red Heifer? (Num. 19:2)
 5. What about the garments of the priest and all the ceremony? (Ex. 28:4)
- iv) Unachieved purposes relative to the people such as, what about the promise of God to Abraham to give him the land? (Gen. 12:7)

5) **The Preparation by the moral declension**

- a) The ancient world was no different from today in its moral corruption. Sexual perversity and the open displays of corruption was accepted. One has only to read the history of some of the emperors, such as Caligula, to discover the treachery and deception of the aristocracy and the little value there was on human life. It was counted as dispensable in the blood baths of the arenas. There was virtually no justice in any court and a man lived or died by the pointing of the emperor's thumb. In the lowest level there was pleasure and excitement to the full, but it was a world of spiritual night and eternal darkness.

6) **The Preparation by the spiritual hunger of the few**

- a) Despite the accepted normality of corruption, there were those ancient Jews who still believed God and His promise of a coming Messiah. I imagine that so often they would awaken thinking, perhaps today. As time passed with days turning into weeks, and weeks to years, and years to long centuries, and seemingly nothing was happening. Life was so discouraging especially as persecution increased and Jewish people were slaughtered by the thousands. Despite all this, some like Anna (Lk. 2:36, 37) and Simeon (Lk. 2:25) looked for and longed for the coming Messiah.

7) **The preparation by the emptiness of the heathen world**

- a) There had been four great world powers which contributed in their own way to the preparing of the heathen world for the coming of Messiah. They were Egypt, Babylon, Greece and Rome. Each contributed something positive, but each had a major negative.
- b) The first great world power was Egypt, and as such, it gave the world a higher education. At Alexandria there was a magnificent library. In the scientific world we still stand amazed at the brilliance of their embalming process and in their building of the pyramids and obelisks. It was a magnificent world but it could not provide inward peace with God, a conscience cleared from the guilt of sin, the assurance of life after death, and nothing could give peace or satisfaction.
- c) Following Egypt was Babylon, and what contributions admitted to society. It was a magnificent place to live with the greatest of the fine arts and music, containing one of the ancient seven wonders of the world, the hanging Gardens, the structure of the city was perfect with its glazed tile buildings and arches. However, just like Egypt, they could not provide peace with God, a conscience clear from guilt, the assurance of life after death, and no matter how hard man tried he could not find peace or satisfaction.
- d) After Babylon became Greece, and I suppose of all the ancient world, this is the place I think I would have found most enthralling. Greece was also rich in it's culture having some of the greatest thinking minds the world has ever known, men like Socrates, and its poetry. From them we got the original Olympic Games where there was demonstrated the excellence of the human body, both male and female. But again, just like Egypt and Babylon, it could never provide inward peace or satisfaction.
- e) Finally, there was Rome and their contribution to the preparation for the coming of Messiah and the spreading of the gospel message can hardly be calculated. Because of the universal peace it provided and the enormity of its conquests, there was freedom for travel throughout the empire. This meant that whenever the gospel was being preached in those early days, men like Paul were able to travel without any fear or hindrance. There was great prestige in being a Roman but there was a dark and cruel side of the fierce fighting and bloodshed in the arenas. Despite all its prestige, par excellencies of laws, etc., again like the previous world powers it could not give peace or satisfaction.

8) **The Preparation by the spiritual confusion**

- a) Spiritually distorted and confused teachings ruled the ancient world. Which god was right? Was one better than the other? Are there certain god's for certain areas of life? The ancient city of Ephesus had the major Goddess, namely Diana; the city of Athens is reputed to have had 30,000 gods and goddesses; Rome had thousands of gods such as Isis and Adonis. Because there was no moral absolutes, man lived like animals and

the dumb idols which he worshipped. There was religion to the full, but it was a night of spiritual darkness leading to eternal doom.

9) **The Preparation by the hunger for decency and justice**

- a) Not everyone of course was blinded by the superficial excitement of arenas, art, and culture, for there were those who longed for some sense of decency and integrity in justice. They longed to find the deeper meaning of life and a way to overcome the conscious corruption within themselves. With this in mind, they thought to change themselves and society by self flogging; self discipline; the pursuit of knowledge, mysticism and enlightenment; only to find disappointment, failure, and emptiness. What a dark needy world it was as man longingly searched and spent life striving after something. They knew not what, and it was to lead to a world of spiritual night, leading to eternal darkness.

Summarized

When considering that ancient world, it was a very sorry place to live in, much like today. Politically the world was void of any integrity as was the justice system. Every aspect of life left a man dissatisfied. Religion may make the individual feel good but could never give peace with God, the assurance of eternal life, the clearing of a guilty conscience, and the peace within themselves. The fine arts were entertaining, the sports were fascinating, but at the end of the day there was no satisfaction. It was a world which characterized the parable which the Lord told concerning the prodigal son. He took all he could get, living life to the full, but found at the end of it all he had nothing. He found himself poverty stricken, hungry with nothing to satisfy, and no one to care in this cold and selfish world. It was a world without God and Christ.

Finally

Then one night while shepherds watched their flocks, suddenly a great light shone around them and an angel of the Lord appeared to them saying: "Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Lk. 2:10-11). There was the sound of voices pealing through the ancient air: "on earth peace, good will toward men" (Lk. 2:14). The light of the world had entered into the world; Christ had come; the Son of God had condescended and become incarnate, a baby born in Bethlehem. How wondrous is the gospel message deserving to be shouted from every mountaintop that Christ is all man needs to meet his deepest needs. He alone can provide salvation and satisfaction; He alone is the great King who had the right to rule; He alone had the abilities to fully not only speak for God, but being far superior to the Prophets, He spoke being God; He alone could be a perfect and perpetual High Priest. The answer to mans needs to be saved and satisfied can only be found in one who is uniquely God and man. What a glorious message of assurance and hope for every seeking individual.

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