

**Weekly Bible Study Series, Vol. 8, No. 28: 21 October 2007**

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## GETTING READY OR GETTING CARELESS?

**Today's Text:** Daniel Chap. 12

### Extracts:

*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. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. ... "But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase" [Dan. 12: 1-2, 4]*

*Mitt Romney, a former Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (January 2003 - January 2007), is currently campaigning for the Republican Party's nomination for the 2008 US Presidential Elections. An established millionaire, he and his wife are estimated to be worth close to US\$250 million.<sup>1</sup> During a recent campaign trip to Iowa State, he wanted to buy a cup of coffee for the Mayor of Dewitt. However, when he put his hand into his pockets, he could not find enough money to pay for the coffee! One of his aides then threw him a five dollar bill!<sup>2</sup>*

*A cup of coffee certainly costs less than five dollars and yet the millionaire could not pay for it. Was it that he could not afford it? No. Rather, he was caught unprepared for the situation that he faced. He had wealth but lacked cash. Did he do it deliberately or carelessly? The likelihood is that he was careless for not checking his pockets before leaving home that day. As a rich man, he could have assumed that he should have money in his pockets at all times.*

*We can learn a spiritual lesson from that story. Salvation is our goal and the end times are here. If God were to call us home today, this moment, would we be caught unprepared? Have we been running after the material blessings of this world while neglecting the pursuit of everlasting life with Christ? Do we have too much religion but no Christ? Those and more are the issues that we shall examine in today's study, based on the 12<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the book of Daniel.*

<sup>1</sup> 'Mitt Romney,' [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitt\\_Romney#\\_note-personalworth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitt_Romney#_note-personalworth)

<sup>2</sup> Harold Greene, 'Wealthy Romney Borrows Money to Buy Coffee,' <http://cbs2.com/video>, October 17, 2007, 5.00 p.m. PT

## 1. Preparing for a journey of no return

Each time I see on television people running away from a natural disaster or war, I pay great attention to the items that they are taking away. A few people may travel empty-handed but most people carry bags or something. I have always wondered how they took the decision on what to take away. Their departure may be temporary for some. However, most of them may never return. For such people, it is a journey of no return.

You may find yourself preparing for such a journey. For example, it could be a planned *emigration* to another country, such as those who win the US Green Card Lottery. It may be an escape from *political or religious persecution*, such as the Jews that escaped to America from Hitler's pogrom before, during and after the Second World War, 1939-45. It could be a *natural disaster*, such as an earthquake or hurricane or a tsunami that renders our present abode no longer fit for human habitation. The one that none of us can escape is *death*.

No matter the nature of the journey, there are certain things that we need to consider, some of which are as follows:

### a) *Emotional commitment*

A journey of no return is not like going to work every morning and coming back in the evening. There is no coming back. You have no choice about it. You have to go, whether you like it or not. When the *Tsunami* struck in Asia some years ago, the surviving victims had no choice to stay. When death strikes, we have no choice to refuse it! Therefore, you have to be emotionally prepared to accept the irrefutable reality that you cannot avoid it. It must happen.

With specific reference to death, most of us are hardly prepared for it. For example, when the prophet Isaiah brought God's word to King Hezekiah of Judah to set his house in order and get ready to die, the king "turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the Lord, saying, 'Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what was good in Your sight,' and (he) wept bitterly" [2 **Kgs 20: 1-3**]. Did God not know this before He sent the prophet to the king? Why did he weep bitterly? It was because he was emotionally not ready to die! We all want to go to heaven but nobody wants to die!

Emotional commitment is anchored on our certainty of where we are going and what awaits us there. For example, when prophets and brethren persuaded Paul not to go to Jerusalem where certain death awaited him, he told them, "None of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God."

Then, emphatically, he declared to them, “(You) will see my face no more” [Acts 20: 17-26]. On arrival in Jerusalem, however, Roman soldiers kept him in a castle to save his limbs from his Jewish enemies. There, the Lord appeared to him to assure him that he would also bear witness of Him in Rome [Acts 23: 11]. Some years later, he was killed in Rome. Clearly, Paul was emotionally committed before his death [whether in Jerusalem or Rome] because he knew that he had finished the race (of life on earth) and that there was laid up for him the crown of righteousness that the Lord had prepared for him as well as “all who have loved His appearing” [2 Tim. 4: 8].

*b) The logistics*

Once we are committed to such a journey, we must take practical steps to move. In other words, in God’s language to King Hezekiah, you must set your house in order. Many of us make elaborate plans to prepare wills and provide for family and others. Some people renew or strengthen their relationship with God. A great many others, however, behave as if it does not matter. After all, do millions of people not believe that there is no hereafter? Are there not people who believe in God but not in the return of Christ to judge the world? In the words of Jesus, His return will be like in the days of Noah, when people carried on with normal life (eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage) and then the floods came and swept the unprepared away [Matt. 24: 37-39].

*c) Our departure date and mode are uncertain!*

We may know about hurricane seasons but we may never know what will happen should they strike our town. With special reference to death, we know for sure that we shall die but we do not know when, where or how.

In this study, we shall concentrate on physical death. The seeming contradiction about death (certain yet uncertain) has lured many people into a false sense of complacency. They will tell you that wars and rumours of war have always been there throughout human history. They will attest that no flood can exceed the one in Noah’s day which destroyed all living creatures on earth outside of Noah’s ark. Therefore, even if Christ will return, it will not be soon. Well, I have bad news for such people! *We may be the generation that will see His return.*

**2. The tell-tale signs of end times are already with us!**

On the Mount of Olives, the disciples asked Jesus two different questions, namely: (1) When would those things be, and (2) What would be the sign of His return and of the end of the age [Matt. 24: 3]. The first question is answered in **Luke 21: 20-24** where Jesus said, “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near... and Jerusalem will be trampled by

Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” In August 70 A.D., the Romans under General Titus, the son of Emperor Vespasian, besieged Jerusalem and destroyed the temple.<sup>3</sup> Since then, it has not been rebuilt. Today, the site where the temple used to be in Jerusalem has the Dome of the Rock, a most holy place for Moslems. That fulfills Christ’s prophecy that the Gentiles would trample upon Jerusalem until their times are fulfilled.

Writing about the Jews as God’s chosen people, Paul said [**Rom. 11: 25-29**]:

*I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery... that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.’*

Daniel’s prophecy addresses the time of the fulfillment of God’s covenant to His chosen people. Daniel was told, “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 at that time*. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book” [**Dan. 12: 1**]. We know that each time Michael the archangel is mentioned in the Bible, it is in connection with a major spiritual battle. For example, when there was war in heaven, he led God’s angels against Satan and his wicked forces [**Rev. 12: 7-9**]. When Satan contended for the body of Moses, it was Michael that withstood him [**Jude 9**]. Therefore, Michael’s appearance to watch over the Jews marks the coming of the end.

The modern state of Israel was born on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1948 in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah: “Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such a thing? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or *shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labour, she gave birth to her children*” [**Is. 66: 8**]. Since then, we know the several wars that Israel has fought with and won over its Arab and Moslem neighbours. Can you then imagine the trouble that will follow when Israel tries to rebuild the temple on the Temple Mount, the site for the first temple built by Solomon on Mount Moriah?

Recent developments suggest that God’s word will soon be fulfilled. For example, as Grant Jeffery has pointed out in his new book:<sup>4</sup>

- There is palpable consciousness among the Jews that the Messiah will soon come. So, Jews from all over the world (Russia, North Africa, Ethiopia and even America) are migrating to Israel;

<sup>3</sup> Grant R. Jeffery, *The New Temple and The Second Coming*, Frontier Research Publications, Inc., 2007-Introduction.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. Cit.*

- A new Sanhedrin has been reconvened and it is training Levite priests to reinstitute animal sacrifice;
- Jewish authorities are preparing to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. They have recovered or recreated sacred worship vessels from the ruins of the ancient Temple.

Let us add even more telling evidence from the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy. The angel that spoke to him said, "But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, *until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase*" [Dan. 12: 4]. Let us examine the trend in those two signs of the time of the end:

a) *Many shall run to and fro*

The world has become more uncertain from wars, natural disasters, terrorism and racial/ethnic tension/cleansing. People have been displaced as a result and, in fulfillment of prophecy, many are running to and fro. For example, according to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), there were as of the end of 2006 about 32.86 million "people of concern" in the world, that is, those who had been displaced as refugees or had become stateless, and so on. That is almost double the figure of 16.75 million in 1994.<sup>5</sup> When you add the possible fall-outs of global warming on coastal or drought-prone lands, you can expect a greater acceleration in the global disturbance of human populations. Who says that the end is not now here?

b) *Knowledge shall increase*

The rate of inventions and innovations between 1900 and now has dwarfed whatever there was before then. For example, air travel started only in 1903 and by 1969 man had landed on the moon.<sup>6</sup> There were neither ATMs before 1968 nor cell phones before 1973. World Wide Web (www) did not exist before 1991. People under 20 years of age may not know anything about cablegrams or telex, and fax is being displaced by e-mail attachments. Who knows what comes next?

In answer to the second question of the sign of the time of the end, Jesus told His disciples (among other things) [Matt. 24: 32-34]:

*When you see all these things (signs), know that it is near- at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.*

<sup>5</sup> [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)

<sup>6</sup> All examples taken from 'Famous Inventions: A-Z,' <http://inventors.about.com/library/bl/bl12.htm>

We are the generation that has seen the signs referred to by our Lord. A generation spans sixty to one hundred years. So, even if you count that generation from the rebirth of Israel (1948), we are talking of 2048 or thereabout. No one knows *the day* or *the hour* of Christ's return [v. 36] but we have enough evidence to speculate about the time and season. The end times are here!

### 3. Conclusion: How are you preparing to meet Christ?

The Jews are feverishly preparing to receive their Messiah. Christians are feverishly preparing for the return of the Messiah. On the day He comes, both will find that they have actually been expecting the same Person! That is why the remnant of 144,000 saved out of Israel during the great tribulation will be joining the uncountable Gentile multitudes “of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, *standing before the throne and before the Lamb*, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘*Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb*’” [Rev. 7: 1-10].

Daniel spoke of the resurrection of “those who sleep in the dust of the earth.” Some will resurrect “to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.” The first group are called the wise that “shall shine like the brightness of the firmament” and “like the stars forever and ever” because they turned many to righteousness [Dan. 12: 2-3].

We do not know when and how we shall die. Some of us may die naturally (through old age or illness) or prematurely (by accident). Some of us may die at home, surrounded by family while some of us may die by drowning at sea or in plane crashes, and our corpses may or may not be found. Some of us may not die before the coming of Christ but will be raptured [1 Thes. 4: 16-17]. Some of us may pass through the great tribulation [Rev. 7: 14]. No matter when or how you will die, you shall soon come before the throne of the Lamb for judgment. Where will you like to spend your eternity? Are you getting ready or still getting careless?