

God's News In The News

Week One Hundred Sixty-Three

God's Word For Today: Prophetic Shifts, Practical Living

Sign, Sign, Everywhere A Sign

If you are a fan of old classic songs, which pains me to say points to the fact that I'm stinking old, you'll probably be humming the line to a song by the Canadian rock group *Five Man Electrical Band* and was popular in 1971. The full history of the song isn't my point right now and no, it wasn't to get it stuck in your mind all weekend. It was just a way to remind us that everyone in the Bible prophecy movement now is looking for and "finding" signs. And I'm not saying that is a bad thing, it's just that these indications of God moving are increasing as are the people finding ways to get them out to the public. As I pondered some of the more current ones, I was struck by a thought that I am grateful for being aware that we serve a God that is one of constant communication and that He loves us enough to reveal His plans with us. That right there is a sign that is profound in its impact because other religions don't have that characteristic. I might add it's not a new concept as it started way back in the Garden of Eden. But I was struck by another notion, and that is what can we do with all this information?

Information Is Power

That is the phrase bandied about so often, especially in business circles at conferences all over the world, but I like how one author redefined it. He said that information is actually potential; it's what you do with it that can be powerful. And I agree with that statement, and to the Christian today, hearing about all these things that are prophesied to happen is just information if we don't find out what we should be doing about it. Discussing how this will happen or that will happen makes for interesting conversations and to some, dare I say it, their livelihoods in the world of online social media, to those of us who work by the sweat of our brows it becomes a lot of facts that can become so much clutter. If we are to believe even a secular philosopher or motivational speaker, we have a destiny. While I won't go down the path of debating the merits of manifesting things, we were born for a purpose and that is found in quite a few portions of the Bible, especially in this verse from **Jeremiah**:

For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans for prosperity and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. (Jer 29:11, NASB)

So how do we factor in all these prophetic words into those plans?

Coming Out Of Captivity

The above quoted verse is very popular in Christian circles and can be found in pictures on many a wall or even on bumper stickers. I am almost certain that it is highlighted in many a Bible in bright yellow or underlined with notes in the margins with personal insights given to believers during times of duress or uncertainty. And I'm not saying any of that is wrong, because His Word is living and has eternal power. However, we need to put it in context, and if we do, we can glean something even more powerful for the turbulent days we live in. Here is the rest of that portion of Scripture:

Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 13 And you will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. 14 I will let Myself be found by you,' declares the Lord, 'and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you,' declares the Lord, 'and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.' (Jer 19:12-14, NASB)

These verses were during the 70 years of exile when the nation of Israel was taken into captivity and living in Babylon. It was a time when they had to toil in a place that was idolatrous to a fault

and a place that wanted to make them conform to it if they wanted to survive. And it was also a time when false prophets rose up and predicted leaving their captivity sooner than what God told them they would. Jeremiah was actually telling them that they needed to stay the course and that God had a plan they needed to embrace even though it would take longer than they thought.

What Does That Mean To Us?

As I meditated on things this week, two episodes in the Bible kept coming back to me and those were of Joseph and Esther. I asked God why I kept getting them and He told me that both of these people had futures predicted for them, but both had to go through a lot to fulfill them, circumstances that did more than delay the eventual futures they were given. He told me that there were lessons to learn for our days in both and to discover what they were. While some have made parallels to people coming back into power, I am laying out more of personal parallels, and I might add practical ones. Joseph had delay after delay, at least delays from the human perspective. Esther was thrown onto a path she didn't desire and had to embrace it to fulfill her destiny. In both cases, they had to endure tests that didn't seem to indicate progress of any sort and, to the human eye were needless delays.

Looking At The Bigger Picture

Without telling every detail of the story of Esther, we need to factor in one very important thing and that is there are things we can't do anything about on our own. At least not in a physical way. We can't marshal the military to do anything by ourselves. We can't influence movers and shakers to speak to people with power to change things. We don't have the political, financial, or social platforms to move the proverbial chess pieces into place, at least most of us don't. And this is not to say we are powerless, but when I listen to all the prophecies about this person or that person doing this or that we as individuals, by and large are onlookers to the proceedings. I don't have generals on speed dial nor do I have the money to flash around to get a seat at the planning tables of the elite. That's not to say we are powerless to help, but it just a fact that the majority of people who support the plans we hear about have little earthly influence to make them happen.

For Such A Time As This

As in the case of Esther, we too are living right now as those who have a destiny to fulfill. And it can be frustrating that the most control we have is when we mow our lawns or wash our clothes. We want God to address the malfeasance in the halls of power and we certainly want those who are abused by the justice system to be set free. We want righteous leaders and are frustrated when our votes are made null and void. And we feel like all we can do is watch as nefarious plots unfold all around us in spite of prophetic words telling us God is working. We go to conferences where we hear people talk about what is really happening behind the scenes or we listen to their videos where they talk about the next big event on the horizon and we want to get involved, but as we push that lawn mower or load that washer, we wonder what, if anything we can do. Like Esther, we're just another pretty face in the crowd.

Joseph Spent A Lot Of Time Behind Bars

For someone who would one day be the second most powerful man in the world, he found himself in prison on the way to the throne room more than he thought. It's nice when the path to power is lined with flowers and made of gold. Such was not the case with Joseph. He was sold into slavery and toiled in an Egyptian household. He was falsely accused and thrown into prison. He was forgotten by a person who promised to speak for him for two years. I am sure that he questioned the dream he was given years before since it didn't appear he would ever get out of captivity to even talk to his father and brothers. He was left for dead for all Jacob knew. What

did he get for being industrious and helpful? Rotting in a jail cell was what he got. And day after day he never knew that the God he served was doing anything about it. Well, as they say, hindsight is 20/20 and it was his buddies in jail that were the key to his release and the unfolding of his destiny.

So How Does That Help Us Now?

In the case of Esther, we need to be willing to go into the halls of power and make our case. No, not that king, the King of Kings. We need to fight on our knees more and more until it seems we are wasting time interceding when we could be fighting another way. Time spent in God's presence is not time wasted. It is time well spent in the bigger scheme of things. Not just because it is the right thing to do, not because it makes us feel better, but because, as pastor and author *Jack Hayford* said, he's never seen a person who really prayed that only prayed. Or, as the pastor I grew up under always said, put legs on your prayers. Are you frustrated right now? Do you grow weary of hearing more and more prophetic words that don't seem to be fulfilled? Are you tired of delays, after delays? Well, take those feelings to God and see what He tells you. Like Habakkuk in the Old Testament, take out your frustrations to Him and then see how He responds. You'll be surprised what He tells you. So what else can we learn?

God Is Using Circumstances To Prepare Us

Going back to Joseph, we need to remember that he was just a young man working in his father's household who got strange dreams. And someone who didn't know when to share those dreams as we see when he just mentioned how his older siblings would bow down to him one day. Rough on the edges? You betcha. But yet, if he hadn't of upset his brothers, he wouldn't have made his way to Egypt. And if he hadn't of been accused of a crime he didn't commit, he wouldn't have met the baker and cup bearer in prison, men who had dreams that Joseph could interpret. These were not chance encounters at all. And those two years seemingly wasting away in that jail cell showed us yet again, how God constantly raised him to power everywhere he went. He was promoted in Potiphar's house, he found favor with the warden of the prison and was put in charge over the other prisoners. Joseph's character was tested and he never changed. And if he never met that cupbearer, he wouldn't have been asked to interpret Pharaoh's dream. Right now the lesson we need to glean from Joseph is to see our present circumstances as preparation for things yet to come. God is testing us to see what we're made of so He can promote us when the time is right.

Lessons Being Learned

I would be remiss if I didn't tell you that I'm not souring on the prophetic. To the contrary, I am still a big proponent of what God is doing in that arena. He is speaking more through His prophets if only to offset the constant, criminal, cacophony being spewed out in the demonic, diabolical, dissertations powered by the prince of the power of the air. In a wink and a nod to *William Safire*, these nattering, nabobs of negativism are doing their level best to literally suck all the joy out of God's children and really all who oppose their agenda. Is it really that bad? For those caught in endless doomscrolling, you know what I'm talking about. Let me tell you what you should be doing. Petition God's throne more and more until He speaks His updated plan with you. And as you toil in seeming obscurity and captivity, let Him remind you of the dreams He shared with you even decades ago, and let Him refine your character like gold in the refiner's fire until it reflects His clear image for you. Like Joseph, never forget who you are in these trying times when evil is called good and good is called evil. And take these practical steps to keep moving forward.