

WATCH, PRAY AND BE READY

Here we are again at the conclusion of another year and obviously the beginning of a new year. Much has happened this past year in all of our lives, as well as throughout the world both in the natural, physical realm and in the spirit realm. In all things, we must

always remember that whatever may have taken place, nothing took God by surprise. Everything that took place was a part His intricate, predetermined plan and timeline that will ultimately lead to the return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

As usual, it is at this time of year that we always hear “prophetic words,” declarations and “what God is going to do this next year” messages coming forth from the pulpits and other ministry platforms throughout our nation and the world. This is not necessarily a bad thing. However, there are two things that always come to my mind that I tend to ponder on for a while. The first is that from all these platforms we are told that these “prophetic words and declarations” are all directly from the Lord. Again, I am not disagreeing or negating these things. However, the thing that perplexes me is that, if they are all from the heart of God for this moment in time, then why are they all different and saying something different? Now, I understand that if it is a specific “Word from the Lord” for a specific congregation that it would be different. I am not referring to that. I am referring to the “prophecies” and “declarations” that are being spoken over the Body of Christ as a whole and those that are declaring “what God will do” this year. You hear different things depending on which “camp” you are in. If it is from the same God then why are they all different from each other? Why are they all not saying the same thing concerning this hour? That is my first perplexing thought.

The second difficulty I have is that when I think back to all the “prophetic words” and declarations declared at the beginning of this year (a year ago) I find it difficult to truly see the fulfillment of those words that were spoken. They were declared with great “authority” that God was definitely going to do “such and such,” this year!!! Many of those “words” were pretty generic. I have heard well meaning leaders try to “squeeze out” an explanation and try to “spin” it as though their declarations and prophetic words really were fulfilled. We know that the scriptures are clear that when one makes a prophetic declaration and it does not come to pass we know what should happen to the one bringing it forth – let’s just say that it is not good. Thank goodness for God’s grace and mercy!!!

Now, before you shut me down (which many of you most likely already did) and think that I am anti-prophetic, please, please, please, know that I am very much open to the prophetic – the true prophetic. Unfortunately, I believe that we, as members of the Body of Christ, have forced our leaders into thinking that they must come up with a “word from the Lord” or we will leave them and move on to someone else. We as the Body of Christ always seem to want to “hear a word from the Lord” from our leaders. We need to be awed by them. We need and want to be made to feel good about the upcoming year. We need to hear something!!!! This reminds me of the scripture found in 2Timothy 4:3-4 concerning “itching ears” - *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”*

Peter makes an interesting statement concerning prophecy in his second epistle. He writes, *“And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a **more sure word of prophecy**; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”* 2 Peter 1:18-21 (KJV).

Peter is referring to the time when he, James and John were with Jesus when Jesus was “transfigured” on the mountain. Peter actually heard the audible voice of the Father. He heard the Father declare that Jesus was indeed His beloved Son. Wow!!! Imagine that. Peter heard the audible voice of God. Yet in this scripture, Peter tells us that we have a “more sure” Word that supersedes even hearing the audible voice of God – the scriptures, the Bible, the Word of God. Notice, Peter refers to the scriptures as prophecy.

The scriptures are pure and they are infallible. Simply put, they are total truth. The scriptures are the voice and words of God. Psalm 138:2 tells us, *“For You have magnified Your Word above all Your name.”* Wow!!! Did you hear that? God Himself declares that His Word is to be exalted even above His Name. We must remember that His Word is His covenant with us. When we read that His Word is magnified over His Name, we are being taught just how serious God takes His covenant with His people. God wants us to know that the terms of His covenant (His Word) are irrefutable, immutable (they cannot and will not ever change) - they are everlasting. We can be totally confident and assured that what God told his people thousands of years ago concerning His promises that are found in his Word are still in effect for His people today and forever.

Every time we speak or declare the scriptures we are declaring a prophetic word from God, Himself. We are declaring covenant terms. Yes, there is the function and gifting of the prophetic. But if it truly is a function given by God and under His inspiration, it will always come from and line up with, His written Word. Here is where it gets a little “shady” when we say “lines up with God’s Word.” We must discern and make sure that what we hear is not going “beyond what is written.” Let’s face it. We can make anything seem to fit into God’s Word somehow or some way to make it seem like it “lines up.” This is where we must have, use and be walking in spiritual discernment. This is imperative for us as disciples of Jesus.

Remember, the sheep know their Shepherd’s voice. (John 10:14) They know His Words. They know what He would say. He may speak words of comfort when needed. He may speak words of encouragement as needed. He may also speak words of correction and reproof when the sheep are getting off the correct path. We must discern the “voice” we are hearing. Anything that may seem to “go beyond what is written” must be highly discerned. We must discern the “spirit” in which it is given. The scriptures tell us that one of the ways to discern the prophetic utterance is if it is spoken forth by two or three others– not just by one individual. The scripture tells us that “out of the mouth of two or three witnesses” let my word (in this case the prophetic utterance) be established. (Matthew 18:16; 2Corinthians 13:1) Hmmm!!!

I believe Jesus gave His disciples, including us today, the most profound and greatest prophetic word ever given. It is just as valuable for the beginning of every year, as well as for every day of that year. Throughout His ministry and especially towards the end of His ministry, Jesus expressed many times through parables and teachings that His disciples were to always “watch, pray and be ready.” What He meant by these words was that His disciples, both then and today, were to “watch, pray and be ready” for His return in which He will usher in the fullness of the Kingdom of God here on this earth. As His disciples we are to live our lifestyles as the spotless Bride of Christ always looking towards and always prepared and ready for His return. I believe these are key prophetic words for every generation, for every believer, every year and every day that we are upon this earth. These prophetic words are just as relevant today as they were back in the days when Jesus taught and declared them to His disciples. Unfortunately, today we want more. We are always looking for greater prophetic words. How much greater could any words be than that of Jesus?

Below are these Prophetic words of Jesus, as well as Paul and Peter, to “watch, pray and be ready.”

- Luke 21:36 (KJV) – **“Watch** ye therefore, and **pray** always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”
- Matthew 24:42-44 (KJV) – **“Watch** therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he

would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore **be ye also ready**: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”

- Matthew 25:13 (KJV) – “**Watch** therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.”
- Paul - 1Thessalonians 5:6 (KJV) – “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us **watch** and be sober.”
- Peter - 1Peter 4:7 (KJV) - “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and **watch unto prayer**.”
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We see in the Gospel accounts that the disciples had difficulty themselves with this command and warning by Jesus. As stated previously, Jesus told them to always watch, pray and be ready. Notice what Jesus said to them as they entered into the Garden of Gethsemane just prior to His arrest.

- Matthew 26:38 (KJV) – “Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and **watch** with me.”
- Mark 14:34 (KJV) – “And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and **watch**.”
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With all the teaching that Jesus did with them throughout their three years together concerning to “watch, pray and be ready” we see that when it was time to put what they were taught into action, they failed miserably. Apparently, they had listened to what Jesus said but they really didn’t hear what He was trying to teach them. Hmmm... We know that they all fell asleep at one of the most important moments in history even though Jesus had just told them to “watch and pray.” Jesus, in the following scriptures, mentioned the problem that the disciples were having and it may be true for some of us today.

- Mark 14:38 (KJV) – “Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The **spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak**.”
- Matthew 26:41 (KJV) – “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: **the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak**.”

Paul exhorts us in this same way as he writes in Romans 13:11 – “And that, knowing the time, that now it is *high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*” We must learn from their mistake just as the disciples had learned. It is time for us as the Body of Christ to wake from our slumbering and “watch, pray and be ready.” Will we be “watching, praying and ready” for **THE** most important moment in all of history – the actual culmination of history – the second

As we go forward into this New Year and as we hear all the wonderful prophetic words and declarations that will go forth, my desire is that we discern what we hear through the pure filter of the Spirit of God that has been given to each of us as born again children of the Most High God. I pray that we listen and discern through the filter of the “more sure” word of prophecy – the Word of God, the scriptures (both the Jewish scriptures and the New Testament). My encouragement for all of us as we enter into this upcoming year is to heed the prophetic words that Jesus declared to His disciples both at that time and that are still most relevant to us, today – “watch, pray and be ready.”