

What's Next?

I want to share a few thoughts that I believe the Lord has laid on my heart. If you've been reading books about blood moons or about the Shemitah year then today may hold more significance for you. Some have asked my opinion about all of this. I've not read the books but just to give you a quick summary. **As soon as the Jews settled in the holy land, they began to mark seven year cycles. Every cycle ended in a sabbatical year known as a shemittah year.** Just like the seventh day was a sabbath day, the seventh year was to be a sabbatical year, a year when the land rested from plowing and harvesting. The word shemittah means "release" or "to let rest" "to desist". It also can mean "shaking" or "jostle" or "throw down."

Counting from the destruction of the temple on the Jewish calendar, today marks the end of the most recent shemittah year. It ran from September 25, 2014 to today, September 13, 2015. Why would it matter to us? Well, a number of pastors and authors have looked back and seen a pattern in these cycles. September 2001 and September 2008 brought bad news to the stock markets and we all know what happened on September 11, 2001. The fact that this is the end of another seven year cycle, coupled with the appearance of four blood moons and a host of other things has prompted some to wonder if these are signs of the end times or the Lord's return or judgment coming on America. You may have heard all kinds of dire predictions about what may or may not be happening in the next few days or weeks.

You have to be wise and discerning. I remind you the apostle Paul said, **"Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ."** Colossians 2:16-17.

The tendency is to get so focused on the meaning of some of these things, or looking for secret things or the "mystery of the shemitah". Here is the mystery: Paul said it was "Christ in you, the hope of glory." He spoke of **"...the mystery of God, namely Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."** Colossians 2:2-3 Remember what I've told you so often before, the main things are the plain things and the plain things are the main things!

But I understand, the timing of all of these things makes some wonder, what's next? Is judgment coming? Is the Lord coming? What's next and what should we do?

I don't know if the Lord is coming today, tomorrow, next week, or in a thousand years. Jesus said he didn't know the day nor the hour, only the father knew. The disciples' asked, "Lord are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel? And Jesus told them, **"It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority."** Acts 1:6-7. I don't know when the Lord is coming, but I know he is coming. I don't know exactly when judgment is coming to this nation and to this world, but I know it is coming.

I've been saying for several years now that something is going to happen. We are in a hinge period in history. I've told you that every 500 years or so there has been a shaking, a revolution of sorts that effects us in monumental ways – often with political, spiritual, and financial upheaval. We are in one of those hinge periods. The world is so broken, the hearts of men and women have grown so dark and wicked, even the planet itself is groaning for redemption and change. You can read it in Romans 8:19-13. The bible says all of creation is groaning to be liberated from its' bondage to decay. Maybe the Lord isn't coming any time soon, but if not, I believe something is going to happen that brings judgment and adjustment and change to the planet, the culture and the world. I said it a few weeks ago on Wednesday night, something or someone is coming!

"Do you think judgement is coming to America?" Let me ask you a question. **Don't you think we are deserving of judgement?** We've been studying the book of Amos on Wednesday night. God judged Israel and Judah for their sins. Idolatry, hypocrisy, injustice, taking advantage of the poor, sexual immorality, violence against the innocent, human trafficking. They rejected the word of God. It got too hard to live by God's standards so they created their own version of the faith allowing compromise of their morals and values. Once you reject the word of God the next step was to reject the God of the word. God judged his people because of their sin and rejection. Reading Amos is like reading the newspaper today, so I ask you: Are there any of his commandments we haven't broken? The Lord said, "I am the Lord your God...You shall have no other gods before me." Exodus 20:3. He commanded that we not bow down to or worship any other gods, and yet we have made everything a god before the Lord God. We honor everything and everyone above Him. If God gets anything from us, it's the left overs of our life. America has driven God out of our daily lives and banned him from the public square. When we remove God and his order and his word from the supporting

pillars of government, society, marriage, family, education, ethics, business, we aren't going to like the mess we are left with! We have become idolators, enthroning ourselves and humanity in all of our fallen glory as the new gods.

Do I think judgement is coming to America? In Leviticus 18 God spoke to the Israelites and said, "I am the Lord your God. You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices. You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees." Leviticus 18:1-4. Then the next twenty verses deal with sexual sin of all kinds. It reads like a Maury Povitch show. God says, **"Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin and the land vomited out its inhabitants."** Leviticus 18:24-25. Do you think America is guilty of sexual immorality? Adultery, fornication, sex trafficking, sexual abuse of children, pornography and child pornography, marriage is becoming a thing of the past except for same sex marriage which has become the law of the land. God said the land itself would vomit us out. Creation and the whole planet grows, repulsed by the sins we commit. What do you think? Is judgment coming? (Amos 2:7-8)

Do I think judgment is coming to America? We read Proverbs last month. Anyone remember the seven things the Lord hates in Proverbs 6? **"Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers."** Proverbs 6:16-19. Check. Pick anyone you want, that's us. How about "Hands that shed innocent blood." 57 million babies aborted since Roe v. Wade. 3 million reports of child abuse each year involving 6 million children. Five children die in America everyday from child abuse and neglect. 1800 a year. 70% of those children are under two years of age. Something is wrong in America. We've got people more upset that Jim Inhofe is going to shoot pigeons than they are that babies are aborted and children die from abuse every day! We want a woman to have the right to abort her baby for any cause at any time but we want to lynch a dentist for shooting a lion who happened to have a name. I don't know why you would want to shoot a lion, or a pigeon, but I know why we should value human life! Because those babies were created in the image of God, unlike the pigeon and the lion. (Amos 1:13)

Do I think judgment is coming to America? God told Abraham, **“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you...I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”** Genesis 12:2-3 I believe God still blesses those who bless the nation of Israel and I believe America has taken steps in the wrong direction where Israel is concerned. I don't know all the negotiations and specifics of the treaty with Iran. That's part of the problem, no one does. I know lifting sanctions and freeing billions of dollars to go into the hands of a country that supports terrorism and is intent on the annihilation of Israel is a mistake. I know the plight of the Palestinians is tragic and complex, but recognizing the state before they recognize the state of Israel is a mistake. Ultimately, Israel will find itself standing alone in the world, with only God on their side and of course, that will be enough. Sadly, I fear for what happens to the nations that abandon Israel and we have taken another step in that direction. (Amos 1:9)

Do I think judgment is coming to America? It's inevitable. We get what we ask for, what we live for. If we sow to the wind the bible says we reap the whirlwind. The bible says **“Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned?”** Proverbs 6:27. You can't hold fire and not get burned. We sow and then we reap what we've sown. Do I believe Jesus is coming because there are four blood moons and the pope is addressing the UN and President Obama has locked up the Iran treaty and world markets are crashing and Jim Bakker is selling big buckets of food? No, I believe Jesus is coming because when he ascended into heaven an angel said, **“Why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”** Acts 1:11

I believe Jesus is coming back because the bible said, **“The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.”** 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

I believe Jesus is coming back because Jesus said, **“I am going...to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”** John 14:2-3

I believe Jesus is coming back because three times in the last chapter of the last book of the bible, he says to us, **“Behold, I am coming soon! Behold I am coming soon! Yes, I am coming soon.” Revelation 22:7, 12, 20.**

Is judgment coming? It should. Is Jesus coming? He is!

So what should we do? What’s next? I loved the MASH episodes when Maclean Stevenson played Col. Henry Blake. In one episode the unit was under fire from the North Koreans. They were pinned down in one of the tents and Col. Blake said, “They told us in officer training that the first thing people do in situations like this is panic.” Hawkeye said, “Well, it’s good to know we’re doing this in the right order.” What’s next and what do we do? Panic? Hide? Hoard? I don’t know for sure what’s next. None of us do. But here are a couple of things to do and to remember.

Don’t be afraid! In the verse we quoted from John 14 Jesus said, **“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.” John 14:1** Then he said in his Father’s house were many rooms and he was going to go prepare a place for us and then come back and take us to be with him. That’s not cause for fear! Jesus said regarding the signs that would point to the end of days or to his coming, **“When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” Luke 21:28.** We aren’t supposed to bow our heads in fear but lift our heads in anticipation of deliverance and the Lord’s return. The bible says God has not given us the spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind. Don’t allow fear to trouble your heart.

Discern the times. We aren’t supposed to be afraid, but we also aren’t supposed to be caught by surprise or unaware of the lateness of the hour. Jesus said “Watch out that you are not deceived...when you see these things...when you hear of these things...” He expected us to have our eyes wide open, aware of what was happening and the signs given to each generation.

The apostle Paul, in the same context of speaking about us being caught up to be with the Lord in the air, wrote **“But you brothers are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. ..so then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self controlled...” 1**

Thessalonians 5:4

We aren’t selling our belongings and standing on the mountaintop staring into the sky

waiting for his return. That's what the angel told the disciples not to do! They said, "Go back to town and get busy." Don't presume to know what only the Father knows, but don't fail to discern the times. Be alert and live a disciplined life knowing the Lord will come again.

Redeem the time. Ripe for judgement and ripe for harvest smell the same! Maybe judgement is coming sooner, maybe times will get more difficult, maybe Christians in America will face persecution, but all this darkness can be impacted by a little bit of light! You see, every generation is given a window of opportunity to proclaim the gospel. What an opportunity right now to redeem the time and bring in the harvest. Be salt and light!

Are these the closing days of time for planet earth? Maybe that's too broad a question. Are these the closing days of time for all of us living on the planet right now? Of course. A hundred years from now we will all be dead and somewhere, either heaven or hell. Personally we are running out of time. We must redeem the time. I don't know how much time we have before Jesus comes, but I know I don't have thirty more years to work for Jesus. I have to redeem the time! So do you. We need to carry the good news of Christ to every person we can while there is still time. Whether Jesus is coming tomorrow or this year or a thousand years from now, the reality is, he is coming for all of us sooner or later. We have to work while we can and redeem the time. The fourth thing you should do:

Examine your heart. I told you not to be afraid. Let me restate that: **Don't be afraid, unless you have something to fear!** Is judgment coming as soon as some say? Is Jesus coming this month? Even if he doesn't come for all of us, he may be coming for you, and sooner than you think. The question is are you ready should he come for you today? Have you repented of your sins and asked Jesus to save you? If you haven't, you should be afraid!

We worry about judgment because we think of trouble and tribulation. But think about THE judgement. Think about standing before God at the judgment having never dealt with your sin. Covered in shame, stained with sin and guilt you stand before God without excuse. Jesus died to save you and offered you forgiveness and salvation and you chose to reject his love and grace and carry on in rebellion against him.

Examine all the evidence you want for believing the end is coming this month, but I urge you this morning, most of all, examine your heart! John wrote, **"But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in**

him purifies himself, just as he is pure.” 1 John 3:2-3 You need to get your heart pure and the only way to do that is to ask Jesus to forgive you and to cleanse you from your sins. Repent and call upon him, asking for his mercy and grace. Get your heart right, get your life right, and then by his grace, keep your heart right. The worst thing you could do is repent and ask Jesus to save you and then a couple of months from now say, “Well, I guess they missed it. Jesus isn’t coming this time around so I’ll go back to living any way I please.” Hear me again, Jesus is coming. Someday you’ll stand either before him in judgment or beside him in glory. Surrender your heart to Jesus and then live for him! Keep your heart pure before the Lord! One last thing:

Pray! Judgment is inevitable. When it comes may depend upon whether we pray. Amos prayed and God relented but then finally God said, “I will spare them no longer.” There will come a point, a time, when judgment must come, but at this moment, this morning, we can pray and call upon the Lord and ask for his mercy and perhaps he will yet hear us and spare us, this nation and this world.