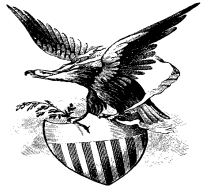


Light Brings Salt

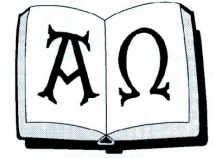
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Iron Range Bible Church

Dedicated to the Systematic Exposition of the Word of God
"Sanctify them in the truth: Your word is truth."



The Hope of the Ages

Dr. Mike Stallard

This article outlines the Bible's message of prophetic hope as it pertains to the future of this age, the Church, the nation of Israel, the Gentile nations of the world, and the created universe. The Bible has been and always will be a book of hope. Its hope is centered in its key figure, the Lord Jesus Christ, and what He has accomplished for us in His death on Calvary's Cross for the sins of the world. Beyond this, the promise of Jesus, "I will come again" (John 14:3) has given hope to millions of hurting people in this present evil age that their best days are yet to come. First of all, the panorama of biblical history gives great hope to the reader by showing the wonder of God's multi-faceted plan of creation and redemption. As it does this, it reinforces the notion that the triune God has an interest in both unity and diversity. As God's plan heads to ultimate fulfillment in Him and to His glory, one can easily see that it does so with respect to several different, but related, strands of history. What is fascinating is that the initiation of each strand in the Bible (creation, the nations, Israel, and the Church) finds the start of its ultimate fulfillment in reverse order in history.

For example, the Bible obviously begins with God creating the universe (Gen. 1). However, the restoration of the created order, itself corrupted by sin, is the last strand of God's plan of accomplishment as he brings about the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21-22). The second element in God's multi-faceted plan is the development within history of the nations (Gen. 10). These nations figure somehow into God's coming kingdom, being judged or rewarded based primarily upon how they have treated the nation of

Israel (Matt. 25). This judgment of the nations occurs after the Second Coming of Christ that is described in Matthew 24.

The third element in the many-sided historical blueprint of God is the raising up in history of the nation of Israel. This unique nation is not chosen due to its own goodness but because of God's sovereign choice in the world (Deut. 7:6-8, 9:4-6). The time of its appearance in history begins with the story of Abraham (Gen. 11:26ff). Its early development is revealed in the history of the patriarchs from Abraham down to the stirring of the Israelites under Moses (Exodus). However, the ultimate fulfillment of the promises given to Israel throughout the Old Testament including its national deliverance begins with the Second Coming of Christ (Lk. 19:12-27, cf. Dan. 7:13-14). At that time the Messianic Kingdom will begin headquartered in Jerusalem (Zech. 14).

The fourth element in God's plan of the ages is the founding of the Church in Acts 2. The Church as an institution is an entirely separate institution from the nation of Israel. God's wonderful design for the Church during the present age calls for the establishment of Jew and Gentile together in one international body of Christ. However, the Church is the first of the four mentioned elements to experience the beginning of its ultimate hope. This will be at the rapture of the Church when the Lord comes in the air for His own (I Thess. 4:13-18).

The above survey reminds us that the order of God's creative working is (1) the creation of the world, (2) the raising up in history of the nations, (3) the calling of the nation of Israel, and (4) the establishment of the Church. However, as the plan of God unfolds, the redemptive work of prophetic hope begins the end-time fulfillment in reverse order: (1) the rapture of the Church, (2) the

conversion and restoration of the nation of Israel, (3) the judgment of the nations, and (4) the renewal of creation.

At the present time, we find ourselves in the Church Age awaiting the predicted blessed hope of the Church, the coming of Christ to rapture the Church (Titus 2:13). This event precedes the seven year Tribulation Period described in Revelation 6-19 and the subsequent kingdom established by Christ Himself at the Second Coming. The Rapture, as the first phase of the Second Coming, is the wonderful event of hope that should be anticipated by all believers in Christ. This was a starting point for both Peter and Paul. In I Peter, the great apostle focused on the issue of persecution and suffering by believers. To those who were enduring mistreatment (1:6-7), Peter offered the hope of the coming inheritance in Christ (1:4), which would be activated or "revealed in the last time" (1:5). Peter encouraged Christians to bear their trials "tested by fire" with the hope of reward and honor at the "revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:7). Peter is strong-minded and clear. His basic message to mistreated Christians was "Gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:13). Hence, he could say "to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation" (4:13). The sharing of the sufferings of Christ means also the partaking of the "glory that is to be revealed" (5:1) and elders were expected to look to the Second Coming as their ultimate reward (5:4). Peter's final message appears to be a repeat of his opening exhortation to find encouragement in the midst of suffering based upon future hope in Christ: "And after you have suffered for a little, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you" (5:10).

Paul follows the same general outline in 2 Thessalonians. The occasion of the epistle is the persecution suffered by the Thessalonian Christians. Paul did not focus on any present inauguration of the Messianic kingdom to produce a sense of hope in the Thessalonians based on the present activity of a loving Church (as good as

that would be). Instead, he pointed to the Second Coming of Christ as the great hope and motivation for their present situation: "For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed" (1:6-10). Now this is not to say that Peter and Paul do not address other concerns even in these epistles. However, it is to show that, at least for Christians who were being oppressed for who they were, the presentation of hope is the Second Coming of Christ.

Food for Thought – Historical Perspective
Hugh Hewitt

The Boston Globe blasted Huck on foreign policy credentials today, which provides a summary piece of all that has ailed the former Arkansas governor for the past week. "That sound you hear rumbling out of Des Moines appears to be a monumental implosion," wrote Time's Joe Klein of the "Huckabust," as he called it.

Perhaps, perhaps not. Having spent the weekend with two very alarming books, I think it is reckless beyond measure to vote for a candidate as feckless about foreign policy as Governor Huckabee. In Douglas Frantz's and Catherine Collins' new book, *The Nuclear Jihadist*, the years 1977 to 1981 mark perhaps the worst series of foreign policy disasters in the history of the Republic, with the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the decision by Pakistan to embrace the nuclear proliferation plans of A.Q. Khan. There is more than an echo of Jimmy Carter's approach to the world in Mike Huckabee's rhetoric, indifference to the facts and lack of a foreign policy advisor/team of any stature. We can't afford another four years of populist foreign policy. With Pakistan with up to 90 nukes, and Iran on the brink, we can't afford one such year.

Here are the quotes I excerpted a couple of days back from George Weigel's stunning, relatively short meditation on the war in which we are engaged, Faith, Reason, and the War Against Jihadism:

The war in which we now find ourselves began before 9/11. We did not recognize its opening shots for what they were when fatwas authorizing the murder of all Americans were issued from caves in the Hindu Kush, or when American embassies were bombed in East Africa, or when, in the port of Aden, the USS Cole had a huge hole blown in its side by al Qaeda operatives who had rigged themselves into human torpedoes. The war is now being fought on multiple fronts, with more likely to come. Many are interconnected: There is an Afghan front, an Iraqi front, an Iranian front, a Lebanese/Syrian front, a Gaza front, a Somali front, a North Africa/Maghreb front, a Sudanese front, a Southeast Asian front, an intelligence front, a financial-flows front, an economic front, an energy front, and a homeland security front. These are all fields of fire --some kinetic, others of a different sort-- in the same global war, and they must be understood as such. Al Qaeda attacks on the United States and American diplomatic and military assets were, for example, planned in the Philippines and other parts of Southeast Asia. Places unknown to the vast majority of Americans are know among the most evil places on earth, as one U.S. Special Forces officer puts it; what happens in locales previously unknown save in the most recondite geography bees --North Waziristan- has direct effects on our armed forces in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere. What is being plotted in such places could have devastating effects on the homeland.

Bernard Lewis, the English-speaking world's pre-eminent scholar of the history of Islam, was reflecting on all of this and noted the difference between our times and the days when he worked for British intelligence, during the darkest period of World War II. **Then, he told the *Wall Street Journal*, "we knew who we were, we knew who the**

enemy was, we knew the dangers and the issues. It is different today. We don't know who we are. We don't know the issues, and we still do not understand the nature of the enemy. Not knowing, and worse, not wanting to know, is lethal. That was proven beyond any doubt on 9/11; any similar events in the future will provide an exclamation point to what we should have grasped by now.

The Bird that Lies and Steals

I John 1:9

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Many species of birds live in communities that are quite complex and even resemble human communities.

In the Amazon rain forests of Peru, twenty or more mixed species of birds will flock together in the lower levels of the rain forest canopy. Each flock has a leader and organizer - the bluish-slate ant-shrike. Each morning the ant-shrike will assemble its flock with loud calls.

This strange arrangement has a very good purpose. The ant-shrike watches over the flock like a mother watches her children. When a bird-eating hawk appears overhead, the ant-shrike shrieks a warning so that members of the flock can take cover. But as often as half the time the ant-shrike sounds the alarm when there is no hawk. The ant-shrike sounds the alarm to distract members of the flock when he sees that they have discovered some choice insects. In this way, the ant-shrike gets up to 85 percent of its food by sounding the false hawk alarm. Nevertheless, the rest of the flock put up with his lying and thieving because of his value as a hawk watcher.

Lying and stealing are, of course, wrong for human beings. And our Creator will hold us each personally responsible for our thoughts and actions. But His Son, Jesus Christ, took our sins upon Himself so that all Who believe in Him as their Lord and Savior will stand before Him cleansed of all their sins. Our Creator has promised this!