



Prophetic Observer

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Keeping Time On God's Prophetic Clock

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A Miraculous Nation

by James Collins



Back in the winter of 1984, Pope John Paul II was scheduled to visit an Italian hospital. The pope was running late that day, so the hospital staff waited patiently for his arrival in the lobby. A doctor with a handful of paperwork took a seat in a wheelchair and busied himself writing notes. He was so caught up in his scribbling that he failed to notice when the pope finally entered the hospital. The pope walked over to the doctor and blessed him. The doctor immediately stood up and walked forward. Believing they had witnessed a miracle, everyone in the pope's entourage let out an audible gasp and crossed themselves.

Truthfully, I have never witnessed the miracle of a man

confined to a wheelchair regaining his ability to walk, but I have walked in a miracle nation. I have been to Israel. The reestablishment of Israel in May of 1948 is a modern miracle.

Since most end-time prophecies have to do with the nation of Israel, scholars before 1948 struggled to make sense of those prophecies. Writing in 1909, C. I. Scofield said, "According to the prophets, Israel will be a regathered nation restored to her own land." When Scofield wrote those words, Israel did not exist and there was no expectation that the nation would ever exist again.

In 1946, the founder of Southwest Radio Church, E. F. Webber wrote, "I cannot explain how, but at the end of this

age Israel will be a nation again.” Five years later, he wrote, “I visited Palestine in 1950 and saw the Jews returning to their promised land from every nation.” Imagine how excited Webber must have been to see Bible prophecy being fulfilled before his eyes.

First among the signs of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is the miraculous restoration of Israel in their land after more than twenty-five hundred years of being scattered among the nations. A remnant did indeed return around 500 B.C. under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. However, Israel was never an independent nation. They were ruled by the Persians, later by the Greeks, and then by the Romans. When the Zionist movement gained momentum at the beginning of the last century and Jews began to immigrate back to Palestine, the region was controlled by the Ottoman Empire. In 1917, the British conquered the Ottomans. Then the region was ruled under the British Mandate for Palestine. However, on May 14, 1948, when Israel declared independence, that all changed.

Israel’s rebirth was the most momentous prophetic fulfillment in recent history. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and other prophets predicted that in the last days, after many years of exile, the Jews would return. Isaiah even predicted that they would be born in a single day:

Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.

—Isaiah 66:7-8

In these verses, Isaiah prophesied that the final restoration of Israel will be astonishing, and that the nation will be “born at once.” In other words, the nation of Israel would be reestablished in a day. Then, like a woman who gives birth before she has labor pains, the nation’s birth pains will occur after it is restored. This prophecy found partial fulfillment on the fourteenth day of May in 1948 when Israel declared independence and will find its final fulfillment when Christ returns.

On May 15, 1948, the day after the nation was born, the birth pains started when five Arab nations attacked Israel. The birth pains have continued ever since with one war after another. The 1948 and 1949 War of Independence was followed by the Suez Crisis of 1956. Next was the Six-Day War in June of 1967. That was followed by the War of Attrition (1967–1970), the Yom Kippur War (1973), the Palestinian

Insurgency in South Lebanon (1971–1982), the Lebanese War (1982), the South Lebanon Conflict (1982–2000), the First Intifada or Arab Uprising (1987–1993), The Persian Gulf War (1990–1991), the Second Intifada (2000–2005), the Hezbollah War (2006), the Gaza War (2008–2009), and Operation Pillar of Defense (2012). Despite war after war, and terrorist attack after terrorist attack, Israel has amazingly withstood the onslaught because Israel’s fate is not in the hands of its enemies. Israel’s fate is in the hands of the God of miracles.

The prophet Jeremiah predicted that in the last days the regathering of the Jews in their land would come to be known as an even greater miracle than the Exodus (**Jer. 16:14–15; 23:7–8**). The Jewish people were dispersed to the four corners of the world for over two thousand years. During that time, they were hated, persecuted, and oppressed. Many, from Haman to Hitler, tried repeatedly to exterminate them. However, despite all those efforts, they never perished, nor did they lose their identity as a people. There were less than forty thousand Jews in Palestine in 1900. Today, there are more than 6 million who have come from all over the world. That is nothing short of a miracle.

Again, many prophesied events of the end times occur in Israel. These events could not take place if Israel did not exist. However, the miraculous nation does exist. On the seventy-third anniversary of Israel, everything appears to be falling into place for Israel’s date with destiny at the end of this age. Time is winding down.

Jan Markell, host of the national radio program “Understanding the Times,” said in a recent interview that the restoration of the nation of Israel is the “super sign” that the Lord is coming back soon. Author David Reagan agrees with Markell and calls the Jews “God’s prophetic time clock.” Regan explained, “What I mean by this is that the Scriptures will often tie a prophesied future event with something that will happen to the Jews. We are told to watch the Jews, and when the prophesied event concerning them occurs, we can be sure that the other prophesied event will also occur.”

Occasionally, I will hear someone say something like, “Wouldn’t it have been incredible to be alive in the times of the Bible and witness all of those miracles?” I submit to you that we are living in the times of the Bible and we are witnessing miracles. The miraculous rebirth of the nation of Israel is proof that Bible prophecy is being fulfilled, and the stage is being set for the grand finale of history. The Return of the Lord Jesus Christ is closer than ever.

Are you ready?

Keeping Your Ethical Edge Sharp

Pastor Larry Spargimino, Ph.D

Our world has a way of dulling what needs to be razor sharp—our ethical edge. God has called His people to holiness and sanctification. Writing to Christians scattered in Asia Minor, Peter says, **“As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Pet. 1:14–15).**

Yet, the church, as a whole, seems to be falling far short of God’s call to holiness. Protestia.com examines a new Barna poll and concludes, “The Christian church is seriously messed up. A new poll ... released by George Barna’s Cultural Research Center shows that professing Christians are developing more and more decidedly unchristian beliefs, demonstrating that many of these professing Christians are, in fact, un-professing pagans.”

Are we surprised? I doubt it. Like the man or woman who has been living a life of dissipation waiting for test results is not surprised when they come back positive. Christians have developed an anything-goes mindset when it comes to matters of faith, doctrine, morals, values and lifestyles. In other words, we’ve lost our ethical edge.

Does It Matter If a Christian Sins?

We must never diminish, neutralize, or downplay the grace of God. G-R-A-C-E is *God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense*. It is “unmerited favor,” a super-kind treatment that sinful humans don’t deserve and, even after they are saved, still don’t deserve. Justice is getting what we deserve. Mercy is not getting what we deserve. Grace is getting what we don’t deserve—eternal life. However, hyper-grace teachers leave out the truth that *it does matter* if a Christian sins, especially for Christians who are leaders. Their sin demoralizes the Christian community and weakens our testimony. Not only that, but their sin causes the enemies of God to take courage and to be emboldened.

In **2 Samuel 12** Nathan told David a parable. David took it to heart and condemned the man in Nathan’s parable, but in doing that David condemned his own adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah. Nathan said, **“Thou art the man!” (vs. 7).** The truth was crushing. **“And David said to Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord.”** To his credit, David did not order the execution of Nathan for disrespect but admitted his sin. **“And David said unto Nathan, I have**

sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die” (vss. 13–14).

David was the sweet psalmist of Israel, a **“man after God’s own heart” (Acts 13:22)**, who had a serious lapse into carnality. Even for those who are not kings, a Christian’s behavior affects what people think of God and His teachings—**“Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed” (1 Tim. 6:1).** I am not trying to slip in some legalism here, or set myself up as a paragon of virtue (I’m not and need God’s grace every day—ask my wife!), but may we all realize the serious consequences to our sins, especially public ones.

Bad Days

Have you ever had a bad day? People define a bad day in different ways. “My car won’t start.” “I didn’t get that job promotion I thought I deserve.” “My girlfriend gave me back my engagement ring.” “The Internal Revenue Service wants to do an audit.” “My department head says our department is lagging in sales.” Sometimes things like that pile up. We can have a bad day, or even a bad week.

But what is a bad day for a Christian? It’s a day in which something happens—either through a wrong choice or quite unexpectedly—that weakens our commitment to walk with Jesus Christ in obedience and truth.

We’ve met an old friend that we used to “party with,” and we celebrated like in the old days. Bad idea—and we are sorry. We looked at something we shouldn’t have—and we are sorry. We lost our temper and said something we should not have said. We could go on and on. Sometimes temptation comes suddenly, out of nowhere, with overwhelming force, like an F-5 tornado.

A bad day is like driving on an icy road. You start to lose control. What you do next is critical. Do you hit the brakes? Do you wrench the steering wheel in a sense of panic? All bad ideas. What you do initially determines the outcome—a bad wreck or just a little skid. Does Satan design and cause our bad days? That is debatable. But he is certainly able to use that

bad day for his dark purposes.

Choices

Joe was a superintendent at a construction site where a concrete slab was to be poured. The specifications called for rebar to be placed every sixteen inches, but Joe was told to space them every twenty-four inches. Joe knew that the general contractor would pay the inspector to report that rebar was placed according to specifications, even though that was not the case. What should Joe do? What *would* Joe do?

When should we decide to do right? Immediately, right now, if you haven't made the choice to do right. As I often tell young people, the back seat of a car is no place to decide how you feel about personal purity. Make your *choice* to do right before the crisis comes. *Choose* to do right before you are tempted to do wrong. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego acknowledged that God was able to deliver them from the fiery furnace, but even if He did not, they were resolved not to worship the image of gold (**Dan. 3:16–18**). This takes commitment and conviction. When the heat from the furnace becomes unbearable we might look for the water bucket of compromise.

Personal Accountability

Accountability is not a popular concept today. People like to think of themselves as “free spirits.” They don't want to be accountable to anyone, and certainly NOT to God. So they rebel against traditional Christian standards. But are they really free spirits? Are they really tethered to no one? Not really. They form their own groups, their own cliques, which are governed by their own “progressive” standards.

They are now accountable to those standards and are accountable to those in their group. They have their own “morality”—certainly not biblical morality, but their own standards of morality. So, they are still accountable. No one escapes accountability. We need to be accountable to God and to His faithful servants.

Mark and Judy had been dating for two years and were planning to get married in the summer. They both loved each other deeply and had both committed themselves to purity. That's not always easy, but intentional accountability can help.

During the Christmas break Mark, who was in college, flew back into a Texas Panhandle city. Judy would pick him up at the airport and they would make the three-hour drive back to their hometown in western Oklahoma.

The weather had turned ugly. Judy called Mark and said the weather man forecast a dangerous ice storm. Mark's flight

was the last one before they closed the Amarillo airport. He met Judy and they walked to the car, which was quickly getting iced over.

As they drove north, the road conditions quickly deteriorated. Should they stop and get rooms for the evening? A lot of people had the same idea. The hotels and motels were all full. They continued to drive and pulled into one that said “vacancy.” There was one room left—one room! They both loved Jesus and they both loved each other. Mark paid for the room. They went to the room. Mark was to sleep on the sofa and Judy on the bed.

They prayed. After that Mark called his friend Bill. Mark and Bill were buddies. Bill had been mentoring Mark and had explained the issue of accountability before the Lord. Mark explained the situation and said, “Bill, I am going to call you tomorrow morning at seven. I want you to ask me, ‘Mark, have you honored the Lord and been faithful to your future wife?’ If I don't call you by seven I want you to call me.”

Mutual accountability is not coercion. Both parties realize the need for accountability. It works and helps us to maintain high moral standards.

In seminary we were told not to moralize in our messages. I have deliberately trampled that advice. Careful Bible exposition is always appropriate and necessary. But the Scripture tells us, **“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1).**

In 1973, Dr. Karl Menninger shocked his psychologist colleagues by using the “S” word in the title of his best-seller *Whatever Became of Sin?* For the first time many of his readers were confronted with a concept that had all but disappeared from their profession.

In its May 25, 1987, cover story *Time* asked another probing question, “What Ever Happened to Ethics?” By then scandals were becoming an everyday news items. Since then the scandals have been erupting in Christian circles. High-profile Christian personalities have revealed, or been caught in, a variety of “indiscretions.” It is surely time to sharpen our ethical edge and to work daily to keep it sharp.

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