

Eat Any Good Book Lately?

Friday afternoon, I received a phone call from our brother Byron Norrod from California. I love talking with him as we both tend to get wound up on sharing God's word God's Spirit fills the conversation. I wish I could have recorded the call as it contained a sermon or two. I told Byron, he lit the fuse for this week's lesson, but I did not know what it was yet. Well Byron, it is 12:26 AM and the keyboard is heating up. As usual, hopefully the title has your attention.

You may recall that last week, we mentioned covering the topic of the Two Witnesses. From our lessons, we know that so much of our instructions are in order so that we may build upon them as God intends us to grow in our spiritual walk toward His Kingdom (Beatitudes from Matthew 5-7). As the Two Witnesses are a prophecy and set for the future, it may make sense to look at the witnesses God has in place now. We will lay a foundation for being a witness but first, we will touch briefly on prophecy.

We have had a couple of studies on the odds of Biblical prophecy happening and you can research it for yourself online. The odds are astronomical in their coming

to pass. J. Barton Payne's *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* lists 1,239 prophecies in the Old Testament and 578 prophecies in the New Testament, for a total of 1,817. These encompass 8,352 verses. The Bible accurately depicts and foretells of specific events years and sometimes centuries before they occur. Some estimates have at least two thousand coming to pass and being fulfilled to the letter with no error. The odds of these prophecies being fulfilled by chance without error is less than one in ten to the 2000th power! For the mathematically challenged, that is one with two thousand zeros. It is therefore a reasonable statement (fact) that when God says something, it happens. All of God's prophets *are* 100% accurate.

God put His prophecy in His Bible not necessarily to know before hand of what will occur, but for us to recognize Him foretelling us of the events as they happen. All too often, we become so fixed on the prophecy, trying to figure out there "where's and when's," we miss the message of why. We can become so blinded trying to figure out the "mystery" for neglecting the more important spiritual mission at hand. Again, I am not negating any focus on prophecy, but we must stay focused on *our spiritual condition*.

Prophecies can be unclear so we do not concentrate on how it may happen, but we can be alert of what may happen. This does not mean we bury our heads in the

sand at world events, but we do not get stuck on the particulars. If God wants us to have information, crystal clear, He certainly puts it in His word. How many times are, “keep, do, obey” MY Commandments listed in scripture? Because we are His, He gives us what we need to know. Prophecies are another way that He makes Himself known to us.

John 8:28- “Then Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you yourselves shall know that I AM, and that I do nothing of Myself. But as the Father taught Me, these things I speak.”

John 13:19-20- “I am telling you at this time, before it happens, so that when it does happen, you may believe that I AM. Truly, truly I tell you, the one who receives whomever I send is receiving Me; and the one who receives Me is receiving Him Who sent Me.”

It is far more important to know and recognize the prophecies and get ready for them, rather than focus on their interpretation. If we know in advance what is coming, we can better make ready ourselves for the spiritual condition we need to

be in. I know we have been beating that drum for quite some time, but if we if we are ready, we need not be concerned with when they come about.

Matthew 25:13- “Watch, therefore, for you do not know the day nor the hour in which the Son of man is coming.”

Even the disciples, who had Jesus Christ among them, did not fully grasp all what Jesus told them. It was not until His resurrection that they fully believed in Him. Human pride will elevate itself to think one has prophecy figured out, but if the disciples did not understand, how egotistical does that make us? This should be enough on prophecy for now and I hope we can understand the priority of building on critical matters and more important salvational issues.

So, what does eating a good book have to do with anything?

Revelation 10:8-11- “Then the voice that I heard from heaven spoke to me again, and said, “Go, take the little book that is open in the hand of *the* angel who is standing on the sea and on the earth.” And I went to the angel, *and* said to him, “Give me the little book.” And he said to me, “Take it and eat it; and it shall make your belly bitter, but in your mouth it shall be sweet as honey.” Then I took the

little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it; and it was sweet as honey in my mouth; but after I ate it, my belly was bitter. And he said to me, "You must again prophesy against many people, and nations, and languages and kings."

What does eating a "little book" have to do with being a witness? The "little book" this scripture is referring to is God's Word, the Bible. Additionally, why would you want to eat something that will make your stomach bitter? Just Who is this Angel giving John these instructions? We can find out Who by going back to verse one.

Revelation 10:1-3- "Then I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud, and *with* a rainbow on his head; and his face *was* like the sun, and his feet *were* like pillars of fire; And he had in his hand a little book *that was* open. And he placed his right foot on the sea, and *his* left *foot* on the earth, And cried with a loud voice, as a lion roars. And when he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices."

Who ascended to Heaven in a cloud? Whose face is as bright as the Sun and feet like pillars of fire? Whose voice is as loud as a lion's roar? The Lion of Judah! The symbolism is apparent. Jesus is holding His Word, the Bible. When He said to

“take and eat it,” it sounds as if He was repeating His instructions to them at the Passover meal when He was crucified.

Matthew 26:26- “And as they were eating, Jesus took the bread and blessed *it*; *then He* broke *it* and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.”

Mark 14:22- “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread; and after blessing it, He broke it and gave it to them, and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.”

John was not the first person in the Bible to be told to “eat” God’s words. We read in Ezekiel 3 that God had him eat a scroll before sending him out as a witness.

Ezekiel 3:1-4- “And He said to me, “Son of man, eat what you find. Eat this scroll, and go speak to the house of Israel.” So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll. And He said to me, “Son of man, cause your belly to eat, and fill your belly with this scroll that I give you.” Then I ate *it*; and in my mouth it was like honey for sweetness. And He said to me, “Son of man, go! Go up to the house of Israel and speak to them with My words.”

Even the description in Ezekiel 1:26-28 is like the description of the “Angel” in Revelation 10:1-3.

Ezekiel 1:26-28- “And from above the expanse that *was* over their heads *was* the likeness of a throne, like sapphire stone. And on the likeness of the throne *was* a likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I *saw Him* appearing as the color of polished bronze, looking like fire within it all around. From the likeness of His loins even upward, and from the likeness of His loins even downward, I saw *Him*, looking like fire, and there was brightness all around Him. As the rainbow appears that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of His brightness all around. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And I saw. And I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking.”

Both John and Ezekiel were to consume His Word, His very essence for the mission at hand. God was preparing His servants, His messengers for His work. A firearm is useless unless it is loaded with ammunition. So many people tend to shoot their mouth off without having their brain loaded. We cannot be an effective witness without being filled with the word and knowledge of God.

Jesus is The One in the Bible who gives us His words. We know that Jesus is the Word.

John 1:1-2- “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”

The Bible *is* His Word and His word *gives us life*.

John 6:63- “It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you, they are spirit and they are life.”

He gave His words to the prophets, to His disciples and to us, that we may be witnesses unto Him.

Isaiah 43:10- “You *are* My witnesses,” says the LORD, “and My servant whom I have chosen; that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I *am* He. Before Me no God was formed, nor shall there be after Me.”

Luke 24:47-48- “And in His name, repentance and remission of sins should be preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. For you are witnesses of these things.”

Throughout scripture, God’s called were sent out as witnesses. By eating the “little book,” Christ was telling John to absorb, consume, to grasp and understand His Bible. We too must ingest the Word of God, understand, and know what it says. When we open our hearts to Him, and we repent and are baptized, we receive His Holy Spirit. This infilling with a *contrite spirit* within us will pave the way to our spiritual growth and service to God. It is not possible to be a witness *for* Him unless *we know Him and His word*.

Isaiah 66:2- “For all these things My hand has made, and these things came to be,” says the LORD. “But to this one I will look, to him who is of a poor and contrite spirit and who trembles at My Word.”

In knowing scripture and seeking God’s will, we will have the ready answer for those He may send our way (**1 Peter 3:15**). Sharing the word of God is the work of His church, especially those who are tasked with being a shepherd (Pastor, Elder, etc.). It is so critical for times such as these that we send anyone who seeks His

truth, to His word and that we understand it. Lawyers do not necessarily know every law in the book, but they know *how* and *where* to look. We on the other hand have the gift of God's Holy Spirit who will guide us in our speaking.

Luke 12:11-12- “But when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how or what you should reply in defense, or what you should say; For the Holy Spirit shall teach you in that same hour what needs to be said.”

Of this we can be confident that when the time comes, the words of The Lord will flow through His Spirit within us, if we are consuming His Word. We can see from Revelation 10:8-11 that John was an apostle *and* a prophet as he authored the Book of Revelation. So much prophecy is described in Revelation, both past and *yet to come*.

We also noted that the Scripture says by eating this little book, it will become bitter in our belly. This means that there are consequences we will face if we accept to follow God's truth and His Son. It may become gut-wrenching to us within our families and the former social circle of friends we have.

Matthew 10:37-38- “The one who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and the one who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And the one who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me.”

Matthew 16:24-25- “And Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and let him take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life shall lose it; but whoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it.”

When we first come to God’s truth and way of life, we can be filled with joy and zeal. It will require our daily efforts. Hopefully, everyone counts the cost before putting our hands to the plow.

Luke 9:23- “Then He said to all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and let him take up his cross daily, and let him follow Me;”

Luke 9:62- “But Jesus said to him, “No one who sets his hand to the plow, and looks back at the things behind, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

There will be consequences for choosing this lifestyle. Persecutions, trials, and suffering will inevitably follow. It is not an easy road to follow or for the faint-hearted.

2 Timothy 3:10-12- “But you have closely followed my doctrine, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, Persecutions *and* sufferings—such as happened to me in Antioch, in Iconium, *and* in Lystra. *You know* what sort of persecutions I endured; and the Lord delivered me out of them all. And indeed, everyone who desires to live godly in Christ Jesus shall be persecuted.”

1 Thessalonians 2:13-14- “Because of this, we give thanks to God without ceasing: that when you received *the* Word of God, which you heard from us, you did not accept it as the word of men, but even as it is in truth—*the* Word of God, which is also working in you who believe. For, brethren, you became imitators of the churches of God in Judea which are in Christ Jesus; because you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they also *suffered* from the Jews;”

The bitterness can come in once we realize that we will no longer do the former things we may have once enjoyed. It may not be us who becomes bitter but

someone close to us, a spouse, a co-worker, friend or other relative. It can even disrupt families or cause strife in the workplace. I know several of you have had issues with getting the Sabbath off and taking time for God's Holy Days. But your faith has paid off. God know the needs of those who are genuinely loving and seeking Him.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10- “But He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you; for My power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore, most gladly will I boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ may dwell in me. For this reason, I take pleasure in weaknesses, in insults, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.”

2 Thessalonians 1:4-5- “So that we ourselves are boasting about you in the churches of God because of your endurance and faith in all your persecutions, and in the tribulations that you are bearing. *Your faith and endurance are a visible testimony of the righteous judgment of God, so that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.*”

There may come a time when we are persecuted and hated so much it could very well cost us our life. But we are in Good Company.

Matthew 24:6-9- “And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars. See *that* you do not let *these things* disturb you. For it is necessary *that* all *these* things take place, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in *different* places. Now all these *things are* the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to affliction, and shall kill you; and you shall be hated by all nations for My name’s sake.”

John 15:18-19- “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have personally chosen you out of the world, the world hates you for this.”

If they hated Jesus before us, He said we will be hated too. But we have His promises and protection along our journey. We need not fear.

Luke 12:32- “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father delights in giving you the kingdom.”

Hebrews 13:5-6- “Do not *allow the* love of money to influence your behavior, *but be* satisfied with what you have; for He has said, “In no way will I ever leave you; no—I will never forsake you in any way.” So then, let us boldly say, “*The Lord is* my helper, and I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”

Our endurance will pay off in the end.

Matthew 24:11-14 “And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many; And because lawlessness shall be multiplied, the love of many shall grow cold. But the one who endures to *the* end, that one shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be proclaimed in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come.”

Mark 13:13- “And you shall be hated by all men for My name’s sake; but the one who endures to the end, that one shall be saved.”

The journey we are on is not an easy one, but the rewards are eternal. Putting away our old lifestyle may be difficult at first, but by living by the word of God, things we thought we needed will fade away. Unlearning what we may have learned our entire lives is replaced with the truth of God’s Word. By feeding on God’s words,

we overcome any “nausea” or “bitterness” we may have originally encountered after our change to living God’s way of life. With His words “in us” as He is “in us” through His Holy Spirit, we will be prepared for future prophecies, and we will gain the strength and confidence to share His truth when we are called to do so.

As God told Ezekiel in **Ezekiel 3:10**- “And He said to me, “Son of man, receive all My words which I shall speak to you. Receive them to your heart and hear with your ears.”

When we receive His words into our hearts, we are receiving God’s character, His laws, His covenant with us, and His way of life. This is why it is so particularly important for us to have the contrite spirit we speak of so frequently. There is no room for foolish pride.

Matthew 12:34-35- “Offspring of vipers, how are you able to speak good things, being evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings out good things; and the wicked man out of the wicked treasure brings out wicked things.”

Our hearts must be prepared and in the right condition before we can frankly speak a word of God's. It is our mission as a witness to the truth of God to share it readily and correctly. The entire Bible is a witness of our Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father. If we are truly "Christians" as so many call themselves, we need to be focused on emulating and showing Christ in us. Walking in the footsteps of Jesus requires us to live and do as He *did* and instructs us in His word. This nullifies anyone who wants to worship God their own way.

John 8:30-32- "As He spoke these things, many believed in Him. Therefore, Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in Him, "If you continue in My word, you are truly My disciples. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free."

For what lies ahead, now is our training time. It is our time for getting ready for what we will be doing in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ' Millennial reign. Knowing and having His word in our hearts will increase our discernment and guard us against false prophets and teachers. The world and our nation are upside down and it will get worse.

There are many duties associated with being a witness. We are also a watchman, a servant, a steward, and a shepherd to those in our family and to those in our

church. It is this audience we need to guard. Having His word in us will enable us to better see things through His eyes. Eat any Good Book lately? Bon Appetit.

Amen.

BL-01/13/24

