

What's Past Is Prologue for the Biblical Watchman

By T.W. Tramm

IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING that the past nine months have been a challenging stretch for those of us watching for Jesus' return. The coming and going of various watch-dates has, at times, felt like being on a roller coaster with intense highs and lows, as well as some uncertainty about what lies around the next bend. What has increasingly occurred to me, however, is that the "ride" we've been on (including the lows) is an integral part of God's unfolding plan, a necessary phase of preparation for the event we're all anticipating—the catching away of the bride.

How have the "lows," i.e., the uneventful watch dates, served the Lord's purpose?

They have...

- Served to separate the bystanders from the bride. Owing to all the hype around the shemitah-collapse and blood-moon phenomena last fall, millions who would not normally take an interest in Bible prophecy (or God) were watching the feasts. When nothing happened, many immediately stopped watching and shifted their focus back to where it was before—the world. Jesus is coming for a bride who is steadfast and unwavering. The rest of humanity, as it is written in Scripture, is to be taken by *surprise* (Rev. 3:3, 16:15; Matt. 24:37-39).
- Served to perk the ears of the still-sleeping believers. Think about it: Even though the warning calls of the past nine months turned out to be false alarms, they nonetheless awakened some "with ears to hear" who are now watching and preparing for the Lord's return. The fact that the feasts have been uneventful is a blessing in disguise for these newly awakened, as they would have been surprised by the proverbial "thief in the night" had the Rapture occurred then.

Lastly, one of the most significant and fascinating ways the uneventful watch dates have served God's purpose:

- They served to fulfill the Scriptures regarding a perception of "delay." In Matthew, the ten virgins perceive that the bridegroom is "tarrying" and so go back to sleep (25:5). In Luke, Jesus warns that if the watchman of the house assumes the Lord is delaying and stops watching, He will show up at a time unanticipated (12:45, 46). The fact that the Lord issues these warnings tells us He had foreknowledge that circumstances in the last days would cause many to *assume He is delaying His return*. While Scripture isn't specific as to what these circumstances are, unfulfilled feasts in a jubilee year—which is precisely the time one would *expect* feasts to be fulfilled—seem a likely possibility.

Regarding the perception that the Lord is delaying, notice what He says to the watchman “manning the tower” in Habakkuk:

“For the revelation is yet for an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it [seem to] tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry” (Hab. 2:3).

Paul essentially quotes the above verse in Hebrews, adding the pronoun “he” as a reference to Messiah:

“For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Heb. 10:37).

While I’m certain these verses have spoken to many in numerous ways over the centuries, I’m convinced the Lord had those “manning the final watch” in mind—those who would be dismayed at the uneventful passing of particular watch times—when He inspired these words in Habakkuk. The Lord’s message to the last-days watchmen (paraphrasing): “*I know that it seems like I’m delaying, but hang in there just a bit longer and you’ll see I’m coming on time after all—only in an hour you’re not expecting.*”

What about that? Does Scripture support the notion that *even the watchman* would not know the “day or hour” but only the *season* of the Rapture?

One can argue it does.

Notice, for instance, that in Matthew Jesus says: “You ALSO [servant/watchman/believer] must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him” (24:44 emphasis added).

Of course, one can also argue that the Rapture *will* coincide with a feast. My word to the wise, in view of the hour in which we find ourselves, is that one cannot afford to be dogmatic either way. As I’ve written previously, I believe that the jubilee year, as a *foundational or underpinning* component of God’s calendar, is the overriding factor to which all theories concerning the feasts should be subordinate. In other words, it is the “year of redemption” more than our preconceived notions about feast fulfillments that should inform our speculation as regards rapture timing. With this (biblical) year’s feasts behind us, it is time to at least consider the possibility that the Rapture could indeed be a “signless” or “imminent” event as some propose: Is it possible that the Lord has revealed to the Church the *season* of its gathering but not the “day or hour?” Is it possible that the fall feasts are more about Israel and the *end* of the Tribulation (to be fulfilled in rapid succession in a single season, as were the spring feasts) and the Rapture is more about a day of which “no man knows?”

These are questions worth asking.

To conclude, the lesson I take from the past nine months is that ALL things, even uneventful watch dates and temporary letdowns, work for the good of those who love the Lord (Rom. 8:28). Moreover, a wholly new and positive light is shed on this period when we realize that everything that has happened (or *not*

happened) has been a part of God's carefully crafted plan to prepare the bride—and the world—for what is about to unfold.

I'll close with what I consider the most encouraging news for the weary watchman in 2016—Jesus' promise that those who persevere and are found watching when He returns will be honored by Him personally:

"It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them" (Luke 12:37).

This day is coming very soon.

Keeping looking up!