

What Saith the Scripture?

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## Looking Unto Jesus

### Or, Why God's Faithfulness Encourages Us to Keep Expecting the Bridegroom

"Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith"  
(Hebrews 12:2).

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#### **Preface**

We, who have been "waiting for the coming of our LORD Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:7), should have a greater appreciation than most of the Body's need of "looking unto Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2). When we are greatly hopeful that a particular date is the Pre-Tribulational Rapture of the Wise Virgins (Matthew 25), then we "abound" (Philippians 4:12). When our understanding has been disappointed by a failed date, then we are "abased" (4:12). But, like the Apostle Paul, whether we are abased or abound, we have learned that we "can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth" us (4:13).

If we continue "looking unto Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2), we will be strengthened "with might by His Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16). Surely, our search of the Scriptures should have taught us of the great love that God must have for us to provide us "a way to escape" (1 Corinthians 10:13) from the temptations of the Tribulation Week (Daniel 9:27). When we have been disappointed by a failed date, we become the obvious target of the scoffers. "Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Peter 3:4). Not only do we become the target of scoffers from without, but we must deal with our failure in understanding the Word, the modern prophecies, and the signs, from within. "Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45).

To those who do not understand or sympathize with date setting, we lose additional esteem when our date fails. "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh" (Ephesians 5:29). To those who witness our day to day actions as being inconsistent with any attempt to make something of ourselves, we are as fools. "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not" (Jeremiah 45:5). To family members who do not feel as compelled to seek any particular timing to the Pre-Tribulational Rapture, we are as strangers. "Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother" (Mark 3:33-35).

Our concern that we have stumbled a weak brother in Christ with our failed date tempts us to never again seek another date. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory" (Matthew 12:20). When we evaluate ourselves through the eyes of the world around us, then even we cannot understand why we must be so compelled to look for the soon appearing of the LORD, much less any particular date. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

However, if we respond to the adversity of a missed date without still "looking unto Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2), then we will most surely draw back from the LORD. "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Hebrews 10:38). Has not our God been faithful to us so far? "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our LORD" (1 Corinthians 1:9). Why should He not continue His faithfulness to us until we hear Him call us, "Come Up Hither" (Revelation 4:1)? "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

### **Again, What About No Man Knows the Day or Hour?**

What are we to make of our LORD's words in Matthew 24:36? "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (24:36). This verse is commonly used by those who believe that the Pre-Tribulational Rapture is imminent, i.e., about to occur at any moment without the knowledge of any specific day or hour. Of necessity, even those who set or uncover dates subscribe to the doctrine of imminency, when we do not currently have a specific date. "And the LORD direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ" (2 Thessalonians 3:5).

The most common understanding of the date discoverer-- for Matthew 24:36 is that Jesus was only referring to that present time, i.e., the **present tense** applied to that particular time and not necessarily to a future time when the knowledge of dates and times would be Divinely unsealed. "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the Time Of The End" (Daniel 12:4). Additionally, we have good reason to believe that the understanding of the End Time events will be especially unsealed for those upon whom those events will occur, such as the Pre-Tribulational Rapture. "None of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (12:10).

However, Mark 13:32 is even more stringent than Matthew 24:36 in the limitation of who may not know the day or the hour. "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32). Here, the LORD Jesus stated that He knew not the day or the hour, the same as man and angels. Why did the Son of God say this of Himself? When "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14), He left His glory in Heaven. "But we see Jesus, Who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9). When the LORD Jesus ascended back to Heaven, He was restored to His glory. "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2:33). Therefore, Jesus only **temporarily** did not know the day or the hour, by Divine agreement within the Godhead. And, if Jesus only temporarily did not know; likewise, man may only temporarily not know the day or the hour. "He [the Spirit of Truth] shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:14).

Most date setters will tell you what Matthew 24:36 does NOT mean. This verse only limited that understanding to those of that **present** day, that it referred to the sealing and subsequent unsealing of

that understanding until "the time of the end" (Daniel 12:9), etc., but why did Jesus even bother to make that statement: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matthew 24:36)? Does it not make a definite restriction on the setting of calendar dates for the End Time events-- and especially the Pre-Tribulational Rapture? On the surface of the text, that is an honest interpretation. But, is there more?

In context-- "Heaven and earth shall pass away" (24:35)-- some will say that the LORD was making reference (24:36) to the New Heaven and the New Earth (Revelation 21:1) that follows the Millennium, i.e., that no one would know exactly when that would occur. Still, others will say that the exact day and hour of the Second Coming-- though it will certainly be "after the Tribulation" (Matthew 24:29)-- cannot be precisely known. Still, Matthew 24:36 seems to bulwark much of the Body against seeking any precise timing to the Pre-Tribulational Rapture. After all, many (self included) have attempted to know-- and failed.

I believe that the underlying reason behind our LORD's injunction that No Man Knows the Day or Hour (24:36) is to limit the understanding of the timing of the Pre-Tribulational Rapture to the few and not the many. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter" (Proverbs 25:2). The LORD Jesus chooses to limit that understanding to the few and not the many because He can only wisely give this understanding to such as can receive it. "But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them" (Matthew 13:16-17).

Since the "testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy" (Revelation 19:10), and "He [the Spirit of Truth] will guide you into all truth... and He [the Spirit] will shew you things to come" (John 16:13), then the LORD Jesus Christ has **covenanted with us** to reveal to us the Truth of things to come. And, since Jesus has access to the timing of the End Time events, He is at liberty to reveal them to us. "All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He [the Holy Spirit] shall take of Mine, and shall shew it unto you" (16:15). Therefore, man's lack of understanding of the "times and seasons" (Acts 1:7), may only be **temporarily** limited by God while the LORD focuses His people's attention upon other more pressing matters, i.e., launching a fledgling Church at Pentecost-- "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (1:8); or *for the refining of the present Church*, that has a "little strength"-- "For thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My Word, and hast **not** denied My Name" (Revelation 3:8).

Man may choose to ignore or neglect God's modern prophets, but God is most certainly using these faithful servants to declare to him "that hath an ear" (Revelation 3:13) God's secrets of coming prophetic events. "Surely the LORD GOD will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). It may be the disposition of those who reject the certainty that we may know the day or the hour, to choose to hear a particular prophet, or to reject all the modern prophets wholesale; but, remember the Apostle Peter's Pentecost sermon reference to the active presence of prophets in these Last Days. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17 compare to Joel 2:28). If God does not neglect these modern prophets, then we dare not neglect them, either. "Touch not mine

anointed, and do my prophets no harm" (Psalm 105:15).

The prophets of the Old Testament were date setters-- or, date discoverers-- i.e., they sought to understand the timing of the things that they had prophesied. "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what [i.e., what Person] , or what manner of time [i.e., when would be the First Advent] the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Peter 1:10-11). The godly example of these prophets ought to be imitated in our seeking to know the timing of the events associated with the Second Advent-- "whose faith follow" (Hebrews 13:7).

Perhaps the most touching reason for why we may know the day or the hour of the Pre-Tribulational Rapture is the principle of friendship with the LORD Jesus. "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:15). Just because one part of the Body professes not to know of a particular date or time for an End Time event, does not mean that another part of the Body has not been revealed that understanding. "And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you" (1 Corinthians 12:21).

And, just because we believe that it is possible to know the date or the hour of the Pre-Tribulational Rapture, does not mean that we necessarily have been persuaded of any particular date or time. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Romans 14:5). If we do not presently have the confidence that we have the understanding of any particular date or time, then we-- as well as those who are persuaded of a particular date or time-- should simply go forth in the strength of Jesus' assurance that the "time is at hand" (Revelation 22:10), and be ready. "Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (Luke 12:40).

### **But, What About the Prophecies of These Modern Prophets?**

It has been the understanding of many in the Bible believing Church, that a modern prophet is someone who "forth tells" the Word of God, i.e., preaches the Word of God-- like any servant of God should from the pulpit, and not "foretells" prophetic events, i.e., offers a new revelation from God-- like Agabus warning Paul of his coming imprisonment in Jerusalem (Acts 21:10-11). "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12). This understanding would incorrectly place all those who have been called to preach the Word of God in the role of a prophet. This misunderstanding seems to have been due to the desire to preserve the canon of Scripture, in order to protect the Body from the anathema (curse) of those who add to or take away from the Word of God, i.e., by a false prophet. "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18-19).

However, this necessary and worthy objective of preserving the canon of Scripture, i.e., the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, has inadvertently taken away from the Church the very gift that the Holy Spirit would use to keep His people awake, or to reawaken them before the "consummation" (Daniel 9:27) of Daniel's 70th Week. Consequently, the Body has been taught to reject modern prophecy and prophets as they would any false cult. But, "what saith the Scripture?" (Romans 4:3).

Whether the early Church must determine the canonicity of the primitive New Testament manuscripts, or whether you and I must determine if a prophet is truly speaking from the LORD, it requires us to be alive to the voice of the Holy Spirit, and not simply leaning upon the learned pronouncements of synods and councils. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). What is the voice of the Spirit to the Church, but the inspired Word of God? "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). And, how can a modern prophet be from God and prophesy inconsistently with the already revealed Word of Truth? "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Only those modern prophecies that are consistent with the Scriptures are from God. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

How are we to determine the authenticity of a modern prophet or prophecy? First, we must treat the prophet with the same love that we would others treat us. "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (Luke 6:31). Second, we ought to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and His Inspired Word to evaluate the prophet's prophecy. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). And, "which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Corinthians 2:13). Third, we must approach the prophecy with a will completely surrendered to God to do whatever He may reveal. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself" (John 7:17).

Fourth, we must specifically ask God to reveal to us whether or not the prophecy came from Him. "Ye have not, because ye ask not" (James 4:2). Fifth, we must evaluate the accuracy of the prophecy, i.e., Did it come to pass? "And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him" (Deuteronomy 18:21-22). Sixth, we must determine the intent of the prophet, i.e., Does he call us to loving obedience of God, or to disobedience? "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deuteronomy 13:1-3). And, finally, we need to seek out the help of the Body-- where possible-- to aid us in determining the authenticity and interpretation of a modern prophecy. "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge" (1 Corinthians 14:29).

Remember that we are called upon to live "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"

(Matthew 4:4). Though the modern prophet's words are not part of the canon of Scripture, if his words truly come from God, then we are to live by them as well. God did not intend the true modern prophets to be a scourge or curse, but a blessing to His Church. "Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men" (Ephesians 4:8). The seeming inability of the Church to deal with the ministry of the modern prophets has crippled the Body, and has thus produced a blemished Church. "That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27).

Concerning interpretation of the modern prophets, those who hold themselves forth as teachers of the Body-- as I do-- are among those who would promote their interpretation of the prophets. "My brethren, be not many masters [literally, teachers], knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation [literally, damnation]" (James 3:1). A "private interpretation" is any interpretation other than God's. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation" (2 Peter 1:20). And, if my interpretation is the result of honest ignorance, then I should honestly admit my mistake and error in interpretation, and thus be preserved from being a false teacher. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the LORD that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Peter 2:1).

Before rejecting a prophecy, or labeling someone as a false prophet, when we perceive that the prophecy did not come to pass, we need to be very careful before we touch God's anointed prophets-- if they truly are. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19). If we act with a bitter or wrong heart, then we bring upon ourselves the very judgment that we intended for the prophet. "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matthew 7:2). We ought to make careful but spiritual judgment of the prophet and his prophecy. "But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man" (1 Corinthians 2:15).

Mark and avoid that prophet, only if all charitable and honest attempts have been made to interpret the prophecy. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our LORD Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:17-18). If we have honestly sought the Spirit of God's guidance in interpreting the prophecy, then we would have no choice but to reject the prophet and the prophecy. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matthew 7:7). Because God has made it His business to defend His prophets, then we are pleading with God to keep ourselves from ignorantly condemning a faithful prophet of God. "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts" (Psalm 119:63).

Now, it may be more apparent why we ought to be praying for the fulfillment of prophecy. "Thus saith the LORD GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them" (Ezekiel 36:37). Remember, much of what we receive as prophecy today was not understood when it was first given. "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it

was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into" (1 Peter 1:11-12).

### **Then, What About the Signs and Wonders?**

We would be hypocritical to say that we did not notice the signs of our LORD's Soon Coming. "O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" (Matthew 16:3). But, if we honestly notice these definite signs, why did the LORD Jesus say, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas" (16:4)?

Consider who approached the LORD Jesus, and why. The enemies of the LORD were tempting Jesus to give a sign. "The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired Him that He would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" (Matthew 16:1-3). Since it is clear that our LORD's words are to the Wicked and not to the Righteous, i.e., the Unhypocritical (16:3), then He intended these words for the Unbelievers.

He gives only one sign to a "wicked and adulterous generation"-- the "sign of the prophet Jonas" (16:4). The death, burial, and resurrection of the LORD Jesus Christ are the Gospel call to repentance and faith in Himself. Our LORD's Jonah experience depicts His death, burial, and resurrection, and is therefore a call for the wicked to repent. "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:39-40). The only sign allowed for the wicked says, "Repent!"

On the other hand, the Righteous have been given very different signs. The Virgin Birth of the LORD Jesus was a sign from the LORD that Jesus is God With Us. "Therefore the LORD Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel [by interpretation, "God with us" (Matthew 1:23)]" (Isaiah 7:14). We may well say of God's signs, as did the finally converted Nebuchadnezzar, "How great are His signs! and how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation" (Daniel 4:3).

When the High and Lofty One That Inhabiteth Eternity (Isaiah 57:15) reveals His will to man, He does so in the form of: (1) Scripture, i.e., "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105), (2) prophecy, i.e., "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" (Acts 2:17), (3) dreams and visions, i.e., dreams when sleeping and visions when awake, both with or without Divine commentary-- "Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17), (4) Providence, i.e., God's ordering of our circumstances to provide us with His apparent choice of direction-- "I being in the way, the LORD led me" (Genesis 24:27), (5) signs and wonders, i.e., confirmations-- "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers

miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost" (Hebrews 2:4), and (6) miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, i.e., marvelous works done before men to confirm a Divine Truth (2:4). Since the canon of Scripture is the primary means of the Holy Spirit to define His will to His people, all other revelations must be consistent with It, i.e., "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35).

We would be as the stiffnecked children of Israel, who wandered 40 years in the wilderness, to limit God solely to showing us His will through the canon of Scripture. "Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel" (Psalms 78:41). However, our difficulty in interpreting the will of God from these other forms of revelation, is that we are so ignorant of "what saith the Scripture?" (Romans 4:3), that we have trouble comparing "spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Corinthians 2:13). This ignorance of Scripture-- though not sinful by itself-- makes possible subsequent deception. But, "the entrance of Thy Words giveth light; It giveth understanding unto the simple" (Psalm 119:130). If we are to be "led of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:18), then we will not be foreign to His Voice, i.e., "Thy Words were found, and I did eat Them" (Jeremiah 15:16). "My sheep hear My Voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27).

Signs and wonders were given to the Apostle Paul as proof of his message and apostleship. "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds" (2 Corinthians 12:12). Just as these miracles confirmed the validity of Paul's message, so Antichrist will employ signs and wonders to deceive those who do not love the Truth. "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the Truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (2 Thessalonians 2:9-11).

With false deliverers and false prophets abounding, how do the elect keep from being deceived? "For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the Elect" (Mark 13:22). Only the love of the Truth will set us free from being deceived. "And ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). And, the Word of God "is Truth" (John 17:17). O LORD, "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:13).

In making the determination of which signs and wonders are from God and which are from Satan, we must judge them by their fruits. "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (Matthew 7:16). That which confirms us in doing right is from God. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). And, that which confirms us in doing evil is from Satan. "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Matthew 7:17-18).

Just as we can mistake the correct interpretation of Scripture or a modern prophecy-- without special promise, so we can be mistaken about the correct interpretation of a sign or wonder allowed by God. But, "the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). That sign or wonder which we mistakenly thought to confirm

what turns out to be an honestly erroneous interpretation of prophecy, still does not diminish our standing in faith before our LORD. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand" (Romans 14:4).

Though we must honestly turn from mistaken interpretations of both prophecy and signs, we ought to thank God that He encouraged our hearts then as much as He corrects and teaches our understanding now. "And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God" (1 Samuel 30:6). Only an honest and pure heart can God teach. "And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the LORD; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the LORD, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:24-26).

## **Conclusion**

Providentially, all the events that have led up to now can only strengthen us, if we continue to love God. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). Further, we can be absolutely certain that we are only closer to the time of our departure from this Earth. "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (13:11).

Our perspective must be unshakeable in this time of testing. We must be always "looking unto Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2), for though the Pre-Tribulational Rapture is the prize, Jesus is the goal mark and purpose for our running of the race of faith. "I press toward the mark [literally, goal] for the prize of the high calling [literally, the Prize of the Upward Call] of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).

What probably astounds us so, is the understanding that our LORD must sift and refine our faith as much as He is doing. "Whose fan is in His hand, and He will throughly purge His floor, and will gather the wheat into His garner; but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable" (Luke 3:17). As God's Faithful Wheat, we must be willing to allow God to aid us in this time of self judgment, for surely this is our LORD's means of keeping us from the necessity of entering the time of judgment in the Tribulation Week (Daniel 9:27). "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Corinthians 11:31).

If we continue "looking unto Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2), then we can be sure that we labour not in vain. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the LORD, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the LORD" (1 Corinthians 15:58). With the understanding that we are in a conflict with our "adversary the devil" (1 Peter 5:8), we must beg for God's protection, especially to watch our vulnerable backs. "For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward [literally, rear guard]" (Isaiah 52:12).

Since the whole of the Christian walk is tied to "looking unto Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2), we must not allow anyone or anything to interfere with our receiving a "full reward" (2 John 8) for trusting the LORD Jesus fully for everything. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward" (Hebrews 10:35).

May we "be found in Him, not having mine [our] own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Philippians 3:9). Amen, and Amen.