

~Other Speakers G-L: Allan Halton:

About this time of year the prophets take advantage of the opportunity to once again favour us with their annual forecasts. If you think you might be detecting a flavour of cynicism here, I commend you on your discernment. Over the years I have become very skeptical about much of this, especially the offerings that the popular Charismatic prophets put forth as they compete with one another in wooing the people. I have observed that, a) most of the things they tell us will happen in the coming year do not happen; and, b) they rarely if ever prophesy the things that actually do happen.

We are not to despise prophesyings; my heart is open to hear a truly prophetic word. But all too often we neglect to read the next verse in Paul's exhortation. Yes, he said, "Despise not prophesyings." But immediately following this he adds, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thes. 5.20,21). So, we are not to swallow whole all that the prophets set before us; we are to test what they say, prove what they say—and hold fast only that which is good. How can we do this? How can we discern the true from the false? Only by drawing very close to the Lord ourselves and seeking to cultivate a hearing heart—the kind of hearing that comes only to the one who has offered his whole life to God on the altar of burnt sacrifice.

I don't have a prophetic gifting myself. But as one who seeks to steep his life in the word of God and stay awake on his watch, I believe I can say confidently that the coming year will continue to see great shakings—both in the world and in the church. This is both a warning and a promise. A warning, because those whose lives are not right with God dread the prospect of shakings. A promise, because those who love Him anticipate the shakings. They may not feel very capable in themselves to go through hard things. But even so, they trust their God to bring them through, so they anticipate what is ahead. For, the shakings mean that the faithful God is at work. He has promised to shake all that can be shaken, and remove all that can be shaken, and bring in a Kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb. 12.27-29). God is a God of judgment, and His judgments are being released, as we have seen over the last few years. To the haters of God this is deeply resented. But, "Zion heard and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of Thy judgments, O LORD" (Ps. 97.8).

God needs no one to defend Him from His accusers—those who charge that the Christians' God is a vindictive God, that His judgments are not just. But let me remind you that the God of love is a God of righteousness. He hates evil. He is deeply pained with what evil has done in His world. Yes, He is patient and longsuffering beyond our capacity to comprehend—so much so, that those whose rule of life is to do as they please assure themselves that God (if He even exists) obviously never interferes with this world of theirs. But God is not going to endure evil forever. He is going to roll up His sleeves, and when He is finished no evil will be found in this world of His. None whatsoever. He is going to deal with all evil—once and for all. In fact at the Cross He already did that. And He intends to bring the judgment of the Cross fully to bear upon the whole world. For some this is bad news.

But for others, this is good news; it means our salvation. What did the days of the flood mean to Noah and the ark? It was the time of salvation for those in the ark. And when judgments were being meted out on Egypt, it was because a great salvation was in the works. There was darkness over Egypt so thick it could be felt. But the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.

So is the Day of the Lord. Some dread the sunup of this Day. It means the end of their night of pleasure—the pleasure of self-will and sin, I mean. "Behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" (Mal. 4.1). But for others—those who fear the Name of the Lord—the same Sun of righteousness arises with healing in His wings. And they go forth leaping as calves let out of the stall.

And so, come what may, good things are before us. Let us seek to nourish this sense of anticipation in one another. Personally I look forward to the coming year. Our world is shrouded in night—in thick darkness. And I, little child that I am... I am afraid of the dark. I don't know how much longer I can endure any darkness. But I have hope. The night is far spent, the Day is at hand! There is a beautiful passage in Job, in which God describes the coming of the morning as the dayspring taking hold of the ends of the earth and shaking the wicked out of it—like someone shaking the dust out of a carpet (Job 38.12,13). That's what I anticipate—the Sun of righteousness arising and shaking the darkness and wickedness out of the earth. I am weary of wickedness, and of the darkness that has provided the wicked with a cloak.

EXPECTATIONS FOR 2012

And so when the shakings come—and they will surely come—let us remember Who it is that is housecleaning, and has hold of the end of the carpet.