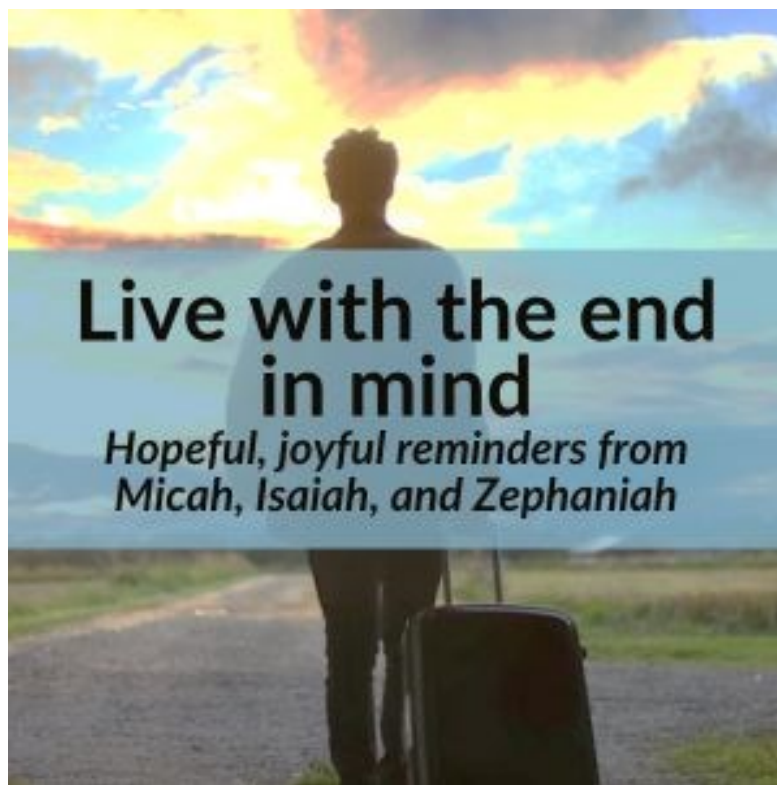


Handouts

Notes & Questions



Why is living without thinking about the future harmful to us?

- *It's about far more than not planning for a great financial retirement.*
- *We are created as eternal beings and we need to live with that in mind.*
- *How the Old Testament prophets give us a picture of how that works out is the subject of our lesson today entitled....*

Live with the End in Mind

Hopeful, joyful reminders from Micah, Isaiah, and Zephaniah

Teacher, Yvon Prehn

Intro

- The bestselling book the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* totally revolutionized the lives of millions of people and one of the habits he talked about is a great summary of our podcast today.
- The habit I'm talking about is Habit #2—***Begin With the End in Mind***
- The prophets who preached after the fall of Israel and before Judah was conquered by Babylon preached to challenge people to do this.
- We will briefly talk about 3 prophets and how they encouraged people to live with the end in mind.

The Three Prophets are Micah, Isaiah, Zephaniah

- Review the Timeline chart of the prophets for the historical setting.

Of all the areas we could talk about with these prophets, why this one?

- The idea of living our life today in light of a future ordained by God, either of future blessings or judgment, is one of the unique characteristics of Christianity and is prominent in all three prophets, often under the topic of the term, **Day of the Lord**.
- ***It's important to understand this idea of living with the end in mind only makes sense when we understand that Christianity is a linear religion with a clear beginning and a clear end as regards planet Earth.***
- We need to understand this as Christians because this makes Christianity....

Very different from religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and also modern New Age thinking

- These all see existence as circular.
- They do not have a "final judgment" either good or bad.
- Reincarnation is a series of endless "do-overs."
- If you don't get it right this time, you have an infinite opportunities to do it again.
- And when you do finally get it right and achieve Nirvana, you are simply absorbed into nothingness.
- Free from suffering, but no joy or consciousness, no anything.

Christianity in contrast, sees earthly history as linear with an end point both....

- For individuals, it says very clearly in Hebrews 9:27 *...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*
- And for the Earth itself, 2 Peter 3:10 *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.*
- ***There is an end point*** to both earthly human existence and to the world as a whole.

- No do overs.
- But the end times and judgment have two sides—judgment for punishment, judgment for rewards.

The prophets in our current reading through the Bible talk about both

- The prophets include Isaiah, Micah, and Zephaniah
- But though they have similar messages that can be summed up by saying “Repent, change your way of life because judgment is coming” they also spend significant time talking about the phrase “Day of the Lord”
- And the “Day of the Lord” is a time of **both** judgment and rewards.
- The word “judgment” in and of itself merely means evaluation—of both what is bad and what is good.
- And I want to put a hopeful balance into this lesson because.

It is easy to emphasize the negative side of judgment

- And the negative side is real.
- It was for Israel, when they did not live as God wanted them to, they were taken captive and removed from their land.
- It will be for people today, both those that do not know Jesus as Savior who will spend eternity apart from God
- And for those who don’t live as Christians in the way God wants them to, there will be a loss of rewards at the judgment seat of Christ.
- **But that is only ONE side of judgment.**

Judgment also involves giving rewards!

- Judgment is necessary for rewards.
- Think of how unfulfilling a class is that doesn’t give grades or a race that would not have winners or a cooking content where it didn’t matter how the pies turned out.
- Think of the joy of blue ribbons, trophies and Super Bowl Rings, or high marks in school.
- We intrinsically love rewards.
- And our God loves to give them to us!
- We’ve looked at the challenging parts of the prophets, in a few minutes we will look at what they had to say about the positive future of God’s people; first a bit on timing.

A review of the prophetic view of time for the timing of rewards

- *****Remember prophets speak for God and from His view outside of time present, near future, far future often combined sometimes in the same passage**
- That means what they talk about often has something to do with what is happening in their NOW—**but also what may in both the**
 - **NEAR FUTURE –current deliverance from enemies**
 - **FAR FUTURE –God’s ultimate deliverance and coming Messiah and future eternal blessings**
- Their prophecies help us see God outside of and in control of history—
- Near fulfillment gives us confidence in future fulfillment.

History & proper dating

- **Importance of dating correctly**—questions on this come from liberal scholarship in the 1800s that wanted to date much of when the Bible was written later than had been traditionally believed.
- These views are currently discredited and shown to be far more a product of anti-supernatural basis than any true scholarship
- *****But they are still repeated—but with NO true verification of them.**
- In contrast there is a wealth of material from archeology—Wealth of

documentary evidence, historical writings and discoveries such as Dead Sea Scrolls showing they are false and traditional dating is true.

- **IMPORTANT EXAMPLE: Theory of “Deutero-Isaiah” (or second Isaiah)**
- Came about near the end of the eighteenth century. Supposedly, Isaiah himself wrote only the first 39 chapters before the Babylonian captivity, leaving one of his students to write the second part (chapters 40—66) that talks about restoration.
- ***It has been expanded to talk about a third Isaiah, anonymous editors, and other totally unverified, unsubstantiated editors.***

Refuted by reputable scholarship, Jewish, secular, and Christian, some examples:

- The Dead Sea Scrolls contain a complete scroll of Isaiah dated from the second century BC. ***The scroll has one unit with the end of chapter 39 and the beginning of chapter 40 in one continuous column of text.*** This demonstrates that the scribes who copied this scroll never doubted the singular unity of the book. Neither did the New Testament authors, nor the early church, as quotations from both sections are attributed only to Isaiah.
- **Jesus** quoted Isaiah in the early part of the book, Isa.29:13 and then the later part, Isa. 42:1-4 and made no distinction, ***attributing both to Isaiah.***
- Excellent work by Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, contains an extremely detailed scholarly presentation of the traditional dating of all Old Testament books.
- ***The point is that from the historical verification of prophecy in the near term, based on the fact it was written long before the events took place, we have confidence in the prophecies relating to end times.***

eBook, Is God Fair?

- This is another resource that I created for you to show you how God makes a promise or prophesies an outcome based on how His people will act and then fulfills it.
- It focuses on how we must be clear in our dating of when the Pentateuch was written, the first five books of the Bible,
- Because in them, God both sets out His expectation for His people and they agree to them.
- This is the foundation for EVERYTHING else that happens in the Old Testament—the messages of the prophets and God’s response when people did not obey.
- www.Bible805.com has a link to it.

Isaiah’s prophecy questioned and proven by proper dating

- Written approximately 150 years before Cyrus lived—no captivity yet, and the Medes and Persians not a power at that time.
- *Isa.44:24 I am the Lord, the Maker of all things,
who stretches out the heavens,
who spreads out the earth by myself,
²⁵ who foils the signs of false prophets
and makes fools of diviners,
who overthrows the learning of the wise
and turns it into nonsense,
²⁶ who carries out the words of his servants
and fulfills the predictions of his messengers,
who says of Jerusalem, ‘It shall be inhabited,’
of the towns of Judah, ‘They shall be rebuilt,’*

and of their ruins, 'I will restore them,'
²⁷ *who says to the watery deep, 'Be dry,*
and I will dry up your streams,'
²⁸ ***who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd***
and will accomplish all that I please;
he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt,"
and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid.""

- Archeological evidence of fulfillment in Cyrus Cylinder, now in the British Museum

A theological and emotional adjustment

- When we talk about the end times, in part it does mean God's judgment on humanity,
- And though we want to take our lives very seriously, and how we live, we don't want to live in fear, but in anticipation.
- It is important that we realize our lives will be evaluated by Jesus but for those serving Jesus ***to look forward to it as a time of rewards, commendation, and joy.***

Wanted a corrective to a book about it—Erwin W. Lutzer's, *Your Eternal Reward, Triumph and Tears at the Judgment Seat of Christ*

- Good reminder of facing Jesus some day; good advice on how to live to please our Lord.
- Good comments on how the trials of this life prepare us to be the eternal servants and co-heirs of Christ we were created to be.
- Reminders of the degrees of reward and punishment.
- But the book has an overwhelming emphasis of negativity of meeting Jesus and eternal regret that I don't think is Biblical.
- To show why, I'll start with a little personal story, then the Biblical views of our eternal rewards, some encouraging New Testament verses and final comments.

Let me tell you a little story

- When I was in 6th grade, I had my very own Sunday School class. It was in California near a military base. I had started helping in Sunday school when I was old enough for them to let me do it, but this was my first, very own class.
- I don't remember what the exact lesson was on that day, but I remember it seemed like some of the kids were being naughty and I wanted to put the fear of God into them.
- So I said—"You know Jesus is going to come back and how will you feel if you are acting badly?" Because I knew most of them were from military families I thought I'd come up with the greatest illustration ever to make them realize the seriousness of the situation when I said,
- "It's just like when your Daddy is on TDY (a temporary assignment away), and he comes home when you aren't expecting it. Won't you feel terrible if you are doing something naughty?"
- A little girl immediately answered me and told me then everything I would ever need to know about the return of Jesus if we are a believer—
- "OH, no!" she said, "I'll just be so happy to see him!"
- And so will we all be on our meeting with Jesus, when we've loved and lived for Him.

Back to the Prophets, we know the people were reminded again and again

- That they had broken the Covenant, the agreement they made with God.

- But in the same books following the pronouncements of judgment are promised of future restoration, a coming Messiah, and of the eternal Kingdom of peace.
- Let's look at some of them.

In Micah—and emphasis on the coming Messiah

- Micah 5: 2,4,5: But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come
for me
one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from of old,
from ancient times.”
He will stand and shepherd his flock
in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live
securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.

More about the coming Messiah

- Micah 4:2-5
He will teach us his ways,
so that we may walk in his paths.”
3 He will judge between many peoples
and will settle disputes for strong nations.
They will beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not take up sword against nation,
nor will they train for war anymore.
4 Everyone will sit under their own vine
and under their own fig tree,
and no one will make them afraid,
for the LORD Almighty has spoken.
5 All the nations may walk
in the name of their gods,
but we will walk in the name of the LORD
our God for ever and ever.

Micah 7:18-19

- ¹⁸Who is a God like you,
who pardons sin and forgives the transgression
of the remnant of his inheritance?
You do not stay angry forever
but delight to show mercy.
¹⁹You will again have compassion on us;
you will tread our sins underfoot
and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

In Isaiah—again the Messiah, source of all future blessings

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,

establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.

Eternal future because of Him

- Isaiah 51:11 Those the Lord has rescued will return.
They will enter Zion with singing;
everlasting joy will crown their heads.
Gladness and joy will overtake them,
and sorrow and sighing will flee away
- ^{Isa. 65:17} “See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. . . .
Before they call I will answer;
while they are still speaking I will hear.
²⁵ The wolf and the lamb will feed together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox,
and dust will be the serpent’s food.
They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,” says the Lord.

When we get to Zephaniah, a bit of history first

- Zephaniah and Huldah prophesied early on in the reign of Josiah, the last good king; Jeremiah comes later and preaches through the rest of his life and into the lives of his sons.
- Josiah dedicated his life to revival in Judah.
- Had the Law publicly read; renewed the Covenant.
- Got rid of pagan altars and priests, mediums and spiritists.
- Reinstated Passover.
- End of life foolishly went to fight Pharaoh of Egypt and was killed.
- Sons deteriorated back into sin, not trusting God and finally after several deportations, Judah is completely conquered by Babylon and the people go into captivity.

What Zephaniah had to say

- Zeph. 1: 14 The great day of the Lord is near—
near and coming quickly.
The cry on the day of the Lord is bitter;
the Mighty Warrior shouts his battle cry.
¹⁵ That day will be a day of wrath—

***Neither their silver nor their gold
will be able to save them
on the day of the Lord’s wrath.”***

-but for those who trust in God
- Zephaniah 3:17 ***The Lord your God is with you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.
He will take great delight in you;
in his love he will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing.”***

Zephaniah 3:19-20

- At that time I will deal
with all who oppressed you.
I will rescue the lame;
I will gather the exiles.
I will give them praise and honor
in every land where they have suffered shame.
²⁰ At that time I will gather you;
at that time I will bring you home.

I will give you honor and praise
among all the peoples of the earth
when I restore your fortunes^[a]
before your very eyes,”
says the Lord.

And finally, in addition to the OT promises of future restoration in the NT, we have John’s vision in Revelation 21, with its emphasis on eternal joy

- When God once again, as He did in the Garden of Eden, in the relationship humanity was created for He walks with His people
- *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. . . . And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”*

Summary of the Day of the Lord in all the prophets/all the Bible

- A time when God supernaturally acts in judgment, not necessarily a “day” but a period of time.
- Two purposes:
- To punish wickedness
- To purify and restore and reward his people
- In the past it was the time when, after many warnings judgment finally came on God’s people, and they were carried into captivity—but it was a captivity with a promised return.
- Today the coming Day of the Lord is when Jesus will return.
- Just like the prophets told people how they were supposed to act, God has told us also how we are supposed to act.
- Because case the Day of the Lord **WILL COME**.

As the New Testament reminds us in the same way that the Old Testament did

- 2 Peter 3:10-14 New International Version (NIV)
- ¹⁰ *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.*
- ¹¹ *Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, **where righteousness dwells.***
- ¹⁴ **So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.**

A few final comments & applications

A challenging C.S. Lewis quote I used in past to end church com seminars—to illustrate the incredible importance of their work & you of what you do

- *When the author walks on to the stage the play is over. God is going to invade, all right: but what is the good of saying you are on His side then, when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something else - something it never entered your head to conceive - comes crashing in; something so beautiful to some of us and so terrible to others that none of us will have any choice left?*
- *For this time, it will God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every*

creature. It will be too late then to choose your side. There is no use saying you choose to lie down when it has become impossible to stand up. That will not be the time for choosing; it will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen, whether we realized it before or not. Now, today, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side.

Why I shared that—to not only remind ourselves, but to remind others

- So much flippancy, irreverence, mocking God today. We may be the only person to remind another person that this life is not all there is.
- One other story, I don't always do this, but once when traveling I was checking out and I left one of my books on Church Communications at the front desk of a hotel in South Bend for someone to pick up. The young desk clerk looked at it, noticed it was a God related topic and said, "Do you really believe that stuff?"
- I certainly do I said—he made some smart remark about Christianity, and I responded, "You ought to consider it. It's far better to meet Jesus now as Savior, before one day you face him as judge."
- The airport shuttle was waiting, and I had to dash off, but the smart aleck attitude was gone, and he said to me, "I never thought of that before."
- I've prayed for him over the years, and I hope to see him in the Kingdom. We never know how we might plant one seed the Lord can use.
- ***We may be the only one in our circle who has an eternal view of life—don't be afraid to share it.***

Finally, some day it will be for us like it was for the children at the end of Narnia

- *There was a real railway accident, said Aslan softly....the term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended; this is the morning.....*
- *All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: **now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.***
- The future "better than all that has come before" is how we want to focus on the coming of our Lord and meeting Him—not fears, not worries, but thankful, anticipating,
- Looking forward to a time when our Savior, our Lord, our Friend, perhaps the Father we never had, comes home and we will be SO happy to see Him!

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- **Links to:**
- Podcasts, blogs, and eBooks
- Printables & merch of Bible verses & encouraging sayings
- Chronological Bible-reading schedules

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Live with the End in Mind, Hopeful, joyful reminders from Micah, Isaiah, and Zephaniah

1. What does it mean to “live with the end in mind” and why is that important?
2. What makes Christianity different in its view of end times from other religions? How does that make it different in how we ought to live?
3. What are the two sides of judgment and which one have you tended to emphasize more?
4. What was the false dating of Isaiah ultimately about and how was it disproved?
5. Why is it important to focus on the joyful aspects of our future meeting with Jesus?
6. APPLICATION—What does living with the end in mind mean to you, how can you apply it in your life?

a historical timeline of

The Pentateuch and the Prophets

It is incredibly important that we fix in our minds when God gave His laws to His people, and when they agreed to follow them. This happened when they came out of Egypt. The people subsequently disobeyed God's laws and God sent prophets to them reminding them of what they promised and of the judgments God promised would follow for disobedience. The timeline following shows how God patiently delayed judgment and sent prophets to remind people again and again and to warn them of the consequences of their actions. PLEASE NOTE: the dates listed are approximate, as various resources date them with slight differences. However the order events took place is agreed upon by conservative scholars.



This is incredibly important to understand that the Law, the covenant that Israel promised to obey, was not a later afterthought, a cultural icon, or a series of suggestions. It was the FOUNDATION for what the people agreed to following their acceptance of God's salvation and their obedience or disobedience of it is what drives the history of the nation following it and serves as a challenge to us.

IN THE BEGINNING

God created humanity to walk with Him forever. Sin brought death, but a Savior was promised who would conquer death, Genesis. 1-3.

No exact date - FLOOD, Tower of Babel

2166-1876 BC - Call of Abraham

God calls Abraham, blessed to be a blessing; then the lives of Isaac and Jacob. Jacob and his 12 sons move to Egypt. 400 years of slavery follow.

1446 BC - Exodus from Egypt

God miraculously calls Moses, rescues Israel from slavery, and promises them a land. Early in their journey, they camp at Mt. Sinai where God makes a covenant (agreement) with them for them to be His people and obey Him, with blessings for obedience and discipline if they do not obey. The terms of the covenant are clearly spelled out in the first 5 books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, which Moses writes during their 40 years of wandering. They KNOW how they are supposed to worship and live and agreed to it.

1406-930 BC - Israel United

First under the Judges, then Saul, David, and Solomon, Israel is united as one people. They are in the Promised Land but they did not drive out the heathen nations God commanded them to and they have constant problems and temptations to serve other gods because of them.

930 BC - Israel divides into two nations

Because of Solomon's idolatry, God splits the nation with the Southern part Judah, remaining under David's line of kings, and the Northern part, Israel having a variety of leaders.

930-722 BC - Duration of the Northern Kingdom of Israel

The Northern Kingdom, Israel has evil kings throughout its history. God sends prophets to remind them of their agreement with God to worship and follow Him alone. Early on God sends Elijah and Elisha; later Amos and Hosea. Israel does not repent.

722 BC - Assyria conquers Israel

The people are removed from the land and scattered throughout the Assyrian Empire. Israel is resettled with people from other conquered nations who bring their pagan gods with them and attempt to integrate their worship with that of Jehovah.

930 - 586 BC - Duration of the Southern Kingdom of Judah

During this time Judah had a combination of good and bad kings. The people continuously needed to be reminded to serve God and to do that prophets were sent to them that included Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk.

586 BC - Babylon conquers Judah

The Temple and Jerusalem are destroyed and the people taken captive to Babylon.

606 - 538 AD - Time in Babylon

God did not leave His people during their captivity. Daniel and Ezekiel prophesy during this time, with Ezekiel primarily the prophet to the people. Daniel was a witness to kings and a prophet for all ages.

538 BC - Return to the land

As prophesied by Isaiah, Cyrus issues a decree for the people to return to their land. The prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi encourage people once again to put God and His worship first in their lives.



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