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Future Forecast

One great king of Israel, Hezekiah, received these sobering words from the prophet Isaiah, "Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live." (Isa. 38::1). Such a sobering message would certainly put things into perspective wouldn't they? And that's exactly what is meant to be the effect of biblical prophecy. Many people are caught up in studying prophecy and reason themselves in circles only to find that their lives are a distorted mess and they are utterly distracted from the purposes of which God has revealed these things. Many writers of Scripture share a future glimpse of God's workings. The Biblical prophecy drum beats the themes of God's holiness, God's mercy, God's judgment, God's restoring grace. For some, the sound of the drum is awakening, and for others it is a death march. For all it is meant to be a "reality check." Christ has clearly warned that peace with Him is the only way to truly be ready for His coming. Looking to the present while seeing the future on the horizon He says,

"I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished! Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division; for from now on five *members* in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law." And He was also saying to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming,' and so it turns out. And when *you see* a south wind blowing, you say, 'It will be a hot day,' and it turns out *that way*. You hypocrites! You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time? And why do you not even on your own initiative judge what is right? For while you are going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate, on *your way*

there make an effort to settle with him, so that he may not drag you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I say to you, you will not get out of there until you have paid the very last cent." *Luke 12:49-59 NASB*

Knowing full well the deserved judgment upon the world and despicable rebellion of mankind against God, Christ was un-flinched in His focus to march towards the cross to become the impeding obstacle of God's judgment upon man. As God, He too shares in His disdain for man's sinful position and continual rebellion. Somehow in the judicious character of God His patience stays His judgment. And wonderfully in the heart of God His mercy interrupts His indictment. Yet as He stands before this great crowd full of those who have come to scorn Him, Christ warns that rejection of Him will be eternally destructive. His hands of mercy reach out as He warns them that if their heart is not set in order like a house would be upon the master's return they will not have peace with Him when He comes a second time. His appeal to them is to take care of the matters of their soul right away. Unlike when a debtor defaults on his contractual obligations the soul that receives judgment from God will have no bond to fall back on. And no price will be enough to bargain for the bond of their soul. For if when the soul meets the eyes of Jesus at that great judgment bar has not made peace with Him before that meeting then no amount of plea-bargaining will remove his guilty sentence. Pardon is offered today. And Christ has offered to be the bond, the pardon for the guilty, if in due time they will look unto Him. The signs of His coming are meant to motivate a ready life and readied living for His return.

The Jews of that day thought they were okay, and that when God would come to them He would bring a cornucopia of blessings to them simply because of their covenantal heritage. What they lacked was the belief that their sins would need to be atoned for by a perfect sacrifice once and for all, and that this appearance of God before them was the first and necessary coming of God for their redemption. He must deal with sin before He comes again to establish a perfect kingdom. When that

perfect kingdom arrives finally in Christ's second coming, sin is dealt with severely and the effects of its curse are utterly reversed. Only the patience of God withholds that day from coming.

LIFE APPLICATION:

1. What is the imagery of the severity of God's judgment upon sin mentioned in the first part of this passage?
 - a. What are we to remember in light of God's delay in returning?
 - b. What will be left after He judges?
 - c. What are these events supposed to motivate Christians to do?
 - d. Is there a difference between the outlook of someone who is ready for His return and someone who is not ready? Explain?
2. What is the immersion that Christ was yet to experience and how is that picture so fitting for it?
3. What is so divisive about the Gospel message even within a family?
4. Why will some be more fascinated with signs of the times than with exercising their faith in living out the Gospel in their lives?
5. Read 2 Peter 3:7-14 and answer the following questions:

But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; *NKJV*