

Christ in Prophecy

Conference 37: Russell "Finding Hope in the Growing Darkness"

© 2015 Lamb & Lion Ministries. All Rights Reserved.

For a video of this show, please visit <http://www.lamblion.com>.

Opening

Dr. Reagan: Our nation is caught up in spiritual darkness. We are shaking our fist at God and living in open rebellion to His Word. Many are convinced that we have crossed the line of no return in our rebellion and there is no hope left for our nation. For a message proclaiming that there is hope for those who have accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior, stay tuned.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. The theme of our 2015 annual Bible conference was "Messages for a Rebellious Nation."

We had six outstanding speakers at the conference, and one of them was Bob Russell. Bob is the former pastor of Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, one of our nation's largest congregations.

Bob served that congregation for 40 years, and when he retired in 2006 it was averaging 18,000 people attending the four worship services every weekend. Now, through Bob Russell Ministries, he continues to preach at churches and conferences throughout the United States. Bob's very relevant topic at our annual conference was: "Finding Hope in the Growing Darkness." Here now, is Bob Russell.

Bob Russell's Presentation

Bob Russell: Now I was a pastor of the same church for forty years. And I conduct mentoring retreats once a month for preachers. And I consult with preachers about situations in their churches. So I'm particularly interested in what the Bible says about the conditions of the church in the last days. And what I see in the church reminds us that we are nearing the Lord's return and motivates me to long for His appearing. Listen to what the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 4 beginning with verse 1 about the condition of the church in the last days and how we are to react when we see these events coming to pass. "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus,

who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of His appearing, and His kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day and not only to me, but also to all those who have longed for His appearing."

Now, notice the bookend phrases in this section that kind of cradle this whole paragraph: "In view of the Lord's return, longing for the Lord's return," in verse 8. And this section suggests how we should respond to end time events unfolding in the church. First Paul admonishes us preach the Word even though it will become increasingly unpopular to do so. The longer I was in ministry, the more impressed I became with the power of this book. You know when the Bible is preached amazing things happen. Hebrews 4:12 says, "The Word of God is living and active sharper than a double-edged sword, it's able to penetrate the thoughts and the intent of the heart." Some supernatural things happen when the Bible is preached.

So, early in my ministry I decided that the majority of my preaching was going to be through a book of the Bible, or tracing a Bible character in the Old Testament. I think the first series that I preached was through 1 Corinthians. And I got to 1 Corinthians 6, and the first part of the 1 Corinthians 6 says, "Don't take your brother to court." I thought, "What am I going to do with this?" Well it says don't take you brother to court, so I am going to talk about why we don't sue one another. We don't air our dirty laundry to the world. We trust the leaders to be mediators and we learn to forgive one another. It was an okay sermon. But about six months later I learned that two deacons in our church who had a business partnership had had a falling out and they were about to sue one another when I preached that sermon and they decided not to do it. Now, had I waited until they sued each other and said, "Well today I think I'm going to preach on 1 Corinthians 6 don't take your brother to court." They would have targeted and it would of agitated the situation more.

We hear a lot, preachers hear a lot about preaching to people's needs. But you know the Holy Spirit knows about needs that we are not aware of. And when the Bible is preached it meets the

needs of people. And when the Bible is preached it feeds the believer. Jesus said, "Man doesn't live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God." And the Bible is meat, and milk, and bread for the soul. In fact Hebrews 4 says, "It is a double edged sword." Because when we use it to cut other people it cuts ourselves. You see when the Bible is preached it edifies the preacher. There is a big difference between expository preaching, verse-by-verse preaching and topical preaching, and the biggest difference is what it does for the preacher. Because if the preacher is digging into a passage he is learning, instead of just grabbing a verse from memory to reinforce what he wants to say. And the preacher is preaching from the overflow, he is filled. And when the Bible is preached it reaches the lost. Preachers today are so focused on reaching the seeker that they dumbed the message down so the seeker won't miss it. But as a result we can become shallow entertainers rather than shepherds feeding the flock.

Fred Craddock wrote a book awhile back called, "Overhearing the Gospel." And it is his contention that sometimes people hear the Gospel better if they overhear it rather than thinking it is directed at them. For example here is a couple having marital problems and they come to a wedding ceremony and the preacher is talking to the bride and groom about sacrifices and unselfishness in marriage. And the couple sitting out in the audience with problems probably hears that better because their defenses are down then they would if they were sitting across the desk from the preacher in a counseling session. And if the seeker overhears the preacher talking to Christians, he's probably going to hear it better; especially if the Bible is being taught, because the Holy Spirit works overtime when the Word is exegeted and applied.

Years ago I preached, I planned a series through 2 Thessalonians. And it's about the wrath of God, and the rise of the Antichrist, and warnings against idleness. And before I got up to preach the first sermon I looked out and there was Gary Proctors' brother. And I knew Gary had been praying that his brother would come, been living a wild life. And of all times I thought, "The first time he comes to church I'm starting a series through 2 Thessalonian. What do I have to say to him?" Well I looked at him occasionally when I was preaching and he was paying attention. He came back for the second sermon. He came back for the third sermon. After four sermons he came forward and gave his life to Christ. And he was baptized, well just before he was baptized he said, "Boy, that series on the wrath of God scared the Hell out of me." I believe he was right. I believe it did.

There is tremendous power in the Word of God. But in the last days it will become increasingly unpopular to preach the Bible. Paul said, "You preach the word, correct, rebuke and instruct, for

the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.”

A popular television preacher was on the Oprah Winfrey Show not very long ago. And Oprah Winfrey asked him, “Do you believe that there is only one way to God?” And he smiled and said “Oprah, you know the Bible says there’s one way to God through Jesus. But I believe that there are many ways to Jesus.” You see we find clever ways to distort the truth and say what itching ears want to hear. Itching ears want to hear that there are many ways to God and you don’t have to disagree with any other religion. Itching ears want to hear that the Bible contains the words from God but you have to judge for yourselves what is authentic and what is not. And if it doesn’t fit the cultural norms then you can reject it as irrelevant because actually it was written 2,000 years ago.

Itching ears want to hear that God may have used evolution to create the world and you don’t have to take the Genesis account literally. You can still be accepted in the scientific community and follow Jesus. Itching ears want to hear that couples can cohabit without a marriage ceremony, after all you’re married in Gods’ eyes, that’s what matters and you can save on taxes that way.

Itching ears want to hear that the Bible’s denunciation of homosexuality is no longer valid. We’re more enlightened. Jesus didn’t say anything about it so we can be neutral too. You see people want to hear about God’s favor and God’s love. They don’t want to hear about judgment and Hell. People want to be encouraged, and they bristle up at the very idea of being rebuked because a preacher corrects or rebukes people bristle up and say, “Who are you to judge me? You’re making me feel uncomfortable. I’m offended.” So, we cleverly shout grace and we whisper repentance and we seek to please men rather than God.

Tony Campolo has been one of the most popular speakers at evangelical conventions over the last three decades. But Tony Campolo last month published an article explaining why he endorsed gay marriage “my wife led the way for me,” he said, “we have gay friends whose relationship I respect. And feelings and personalities trump the Bible.” “In the last days people will gather around them teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear and they’ll turn aside to myths.”

Several weeks ago Diane Sawyer interviewed Bruce Jenner who had just announced that he was in the process of transgendering at age 65. But he said a weird thing he said, “You know I

still find myself attracted to women." And Diane Sawyer asked what I think is the most bizarre question I've ever heard on TV. She said, "Are you a lesbian then?" Have we completely gone insane? Thinking ourselves to be wise we become fools.

So, I wrote a blog, called an open letter to Bruce Jenner in which I said, "Bruce, you are not a woman trapped in a man's body, nor are you a lesbian. You are a special creation of God trapped in a carnal body and we all have various carnal temptations. Just as you once disciplined your body to win the decathlon you now need to resist the evil desires that war against your soul."

Now let me read a portion of a letter another religious leader wrote to him, which was published in a religious publication. "Dear Bruce Jenner, Jesus loves you and cares for you." True, Jesus loves the guy in Cleveland who kidnapped young women and held them hostage. That doesn't justify their behavior. "I am deeply sorry for the way individuals have treated you in response to your recent interview with Diane Sawyer. Your life has meaning, regardless of the ignorant and ill-thought comments that have been thrown your way." You take a Biblical stance you are ignorant, you're insensitive. The letter writer says, "This is a new and complicated conversation that people are scared to have." Well, not really, it's not new why else in the book of Deuteronomy would Moses warn against cross dressing? That temptation most of existed 3,000 years ago. "Some people will say that being transgender is a sin and others will say that God created them that way. But no matter your stance, showcasing love to a community that is struggling with a 40% suicide rate should be all Christians number one priority." But let me ask you something if you saw a motorist going the wrong way up an exit ramp, what's the most loving thing you can do for that person at the moment? Blare on your horn, wave and shout. That may appear unloving to someone who is uninformed as a bystander, but it's the most loving thing you can do at the moment. For the time has come when men don't put up with sound doctrine but they have turned aside to myths.

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: For those of you who may have tuned in late, you are watching a presentation which Bob Russell gave at our annual Bible conference. The theme of the conference was, "Messages for a Rebellious Nation." Bob's topic was "Finding Hope in the Growing Darkness." Bob is the former pastor of Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, one of our nation's largest congregations. Let's return now to Bob's presentation.

Bob Russell Presentation

Bob Russell: Let me share with you three reasons why as I get older I find myself becoming increasingly eager for the Lord Jesus to return. First, I'm eager for Him to come to silence the mockers. I am so fed up with God's name being blasphemed and God's people being ridiculed by arrogant entertainers and lying cretins in the media. And I'd like to hear them, see them bow. You know Bill Maher of HBO he makes fun of Christian people; he says we are ignorant for believing the Bible. When Tim Tebow had a good testimony he called him a homeschool nerd. He had a question the other day for somebody, "What about your imaginary Jesus?" You know. My friend Wayne Smith says, "I know the Bible says we're not supposed to hate anybody, but if God ever changes that rule I've got my guy picked out." [laughing] And I'm a competitor. I like to win and the Bill Mahers, and Bill Ney the Science Guy, and Rosie O'Donnell, and Michael Moore, and Barry Lynn make me mad. And like David I cry out, "How long O, Lord?" Now I know God doesn't want anybody to perish he wants everybody to come to repentance. But I long for them to be humbled or be silenced. And I long for that day when "Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

Another reason I long for the Lord return is to escape future troubles. I'm going to turn 72 years old in 3 months, if God permits me to live that long. Now, I know that if God permits me to live another decade according to Psalm 90 this decade is full of trouble and sorrow. I see some friends of mine just ahead of me going through some things I don't necessarily want to go through: arthritis and operations and dementia, and care giving, and grief. And I don't have as much to look forward to as I used to. I've had a great life with good health, I really wouldn't mind if I just could miss those unpleasant experiences and be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. That would be the best of both worlds. Second Corinthians 5:1 says, "We know that when the earthly tent we live in is destroyed we have a building of God, eternal in the heavens. Meanwhile we groan longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling."

And it's not just the unpleasant health problems I'd wouldn't mind escaping. But it appears to me unless the Lord dramatically intervenes, this world is going to become an increasingly uncomfortable. Race riots, rampant diseases, brutal terrorist attacks, increased persecution of believers. I'm kind of eager for the Lord to come back and just escape all that, the Tribulation. And please don't misinterpret what I'm about to say; but I don't enjoy going to church services as much as I used to. Some of it is a generational thing. I grew up with a lot of emphasis on reverence. And now there is more emphasis on joy. That's ok. Some of it has to do with giftedness. I am a terrible singer and I like some of the praise songs, not all of them, but all of the praise songs are written by a high tenor. And I can't get up there. And just about the time I

get so I can sing them, they put them on the shelf and we are doing something else. I was in a church as a guest speaker a while back they sang three straight songs I didn't know. Then the worship leader said, "Now we're going to teach you a new one." Well. Just once in a while I'd like to sing, "Victory in Jesus," again, you know. Now, I still like going to church, and it moves me sometimes, but not as often anymore. And I long for the Lord's return because I've had enough of the foretaste of glory divine and want the real thing. But one of the reasons I long for His appearing and that is just to be with God. "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, the voice of the archangel and the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. And then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words." Just imagine for a minute seeing the Lord Jesus face to face. "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." Can you imagine hearing Him say to you, "Well done." "Oh, Lord I've got so many sins." "I've forgotten about those. They are buried in the deepest sea. Well done good and faithful servant." What a day that will be when my Jesus I will see. When I look upon His face the one who saved me by His grace. When He takes me by the hand and leads me through the Promised Land. What a day, that will be. And imagine the excitement of embracing your family members and loved ones who have preceded you in death and hearing them squeal with you in delight of your arrival.

I was teaching a Saturday morning men's Bible class not long ago we were talking about death and dying. I said, "How many of you in here are over 70 years of age?" A bunch of guys raised their hands. I said, "Do you fear death more or less as you get older?" "Oh," they said, "Bob, you fear death less as you get older." I said, "Why is that?" And Butch Dabney said, "You've got more friends in Heaven than you've got on earth." Fisher Jones, said, "You know Bob I'm 91 years old, I hope I die pretty soon my friends are going to think I didn't make it." Can you imagine what that is going to be that reunion? And image that first worship service when we gather around the throne and we pay tribute to the One who Was, and Is, and Is to Come. I think Gabriel will blow his trumpet, a call to worship. And all of a sudden appearing before us will be thousands of angels in this heavenly choir. And half way through their song they'll say, "You all join in, Holy, Holy, Holy." And I'll open my mouth and I'll be able to sing and sound like Jack. And I'll be able to reach two or three octaves surprising myself. And then I think Gabriel will call, "Hey, George Beverly Shea and Cliff Barrows come up here and lead us in "How Great Thou Art". And we'll sing, "How Great Thou Art." And then we'll have a series of testimonies, "Noah come up here and tell us, and King David, the Apostle Paul, Simon Peter." And then after all of that Jesus Christ will walk on the platform and I see Him opening up the Scripture and showing

us things in the Bible that were there all the while, and we missed them. And we are going to be like the two on the road to Emmaus, saying, "Didn't our hearts burn within us when he opened to us the Scriptures."

And then Jesus said, "In my Father's house there are many rooms." I wonder what those rooms are. I know I think one of them is going to be a question and answer room. We can go in and have all the questions we've ever had, "Lord that 7 year old boy we prayed had Leukemia, we prayed and fasted. Why in your plan did you let him die?" And He'll tell us. "Lord, the Grand Canyon was that really millions of years of evolution or was that the result of Noah's flood?" "Lord, in Ephesians you talk about predestination would you explain the difference between predestination and foreknowledge? I've been teaching that for 40 years and I don't know what I was talking about. Would you explain that?" "And Lord, how come the Cubs could never win the World Series? Why didn't you let that happen?"

Ephesians 2 says, "God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed to us in the kindness in Christ Jesus." That word, show means to reveal in an ongoing, progressive way. Some people think as soon as we get caught up into Heaven, we're going to know everything. I don't think so. I think we'll have a greater capacity to learn and to remember. And we'll spend all of eternity learning more and more about the incomparable riches of His grace.

When I got the news years ago that Bob Birkhead's 24 year old daughter had been killed instantly in an automobile wreck, I immediately drove to the Birkhead's home. Bob loved his daughter, she was his golfing buddy. And she had just got engaged that day five hours before she was killed. I walked into this home loaded with people trying to comfort them. Here is Bob Birkhead, ex-athlete 6 feet 7 inches tall, just a wet rag of grief. I embraced him and I said, "Bob, I'm so sorry. But we've got to be near the return of Jesus Christ. When Jesus is going to come and make all things right." And he said, "Oh, I wish it were today. I wish it were today."

In view of the Lord's appearing, you preach the Word even though it's going to be increasingly unpopular to do so. And you endure hardship because persecution will intensify sometimes even from your own number. And you long for His appearing, since this world is going to become less and less meaningful to you anyway. And the Lord, the righteous Judge will give you a crown of righteousness, on that day. Not to you only but onto all them also who love His appearing. [clapping]

Closing

Dr. Reagan: I hope that presentation was a blessing to you. It certainly was to me. It is just one of six presentations that were made at our annual Bible conference, whose theme was “Messages for a Rebellious Nation.” In just a moment, our announcer will tell you how you can get the conference DVD album that contains all six presentations.

I want to invite you to be back with us again next week, the Lord willing, when we will present excerpts from other presentations that were made at our annual Bible conference. I also want to invite you to visit our website at lamblion.com where you can sign up to receive our bi-monthly magazine by email free of charge. Until next week, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministries, saying, “Look up, be watchful, for our Redemption is drawing near!”

End of Program