

Predictions and Preparation for 2012

Some asked if I was going to share predictions for the coming year as I did last year. I'm not sure how well I did on all those predictions. You can be the judge. Here is what I said last year on January 2, 2011: 1) I predict we will see an increase in terrorist attacks. 2) I predict we will see an increase in weather extremes and natural disasters. "From earthquakes to winter tornadoes, from blizzards to droughts to tsunamis and volcanoes, to mudslides and fires and extraordinary flooding, I think we will see extremes in all of these areas." 3) I predict the culture of death we've created will continue to produce devastating results in our society. 4) I predict Israel will be betrayed by those calling for peace. "I am afraid the US will be part of those who will make deals behind closed doors that will lead to a betrayal of Israel." (I would say calling for pre-1967 borders would be considered betrayal.) 5) I predict Iran, North Korea, and Venezuela will continue to stir political unrest in the world but we will see the rise of some unexpected players stepping onto the world stage. (Consider the Arab Spring, the fall of Khaddafi in Libya and Mubarek in Egypt, North Korea's new Supreme Leader) 6) I predict the economic recovery will be slow and it will have far reaching effects upon the church around the world. 7) I predict more attempts will be made to silence Christians and to prevent the spreading of the gospel than ever before.

That's what I predicted for 2011. Looks like I got a few right and perhaps missed a few. I'm not much of a prognosticator perhaps. Instead of predictions, maybe I should just call these concerns, but let me express some concerns about what we might see this year.

The eyes of the world will again be upon the Middle East. Consider:

*Will Israel be forced to pre-emptively strike Iran? I'm not predicting this, but I believe there is covert action already taking place to derail Iran's nuclear program.

*How close is Iran to getting a nuclear weapon? Heard Ron Paul saying it was of no more concern than Pakistan and India having nuclear weapons. It is when you consider that President Ahmadinejad and the Ayatollah Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of Iran, believe they can hasten the arrival of the Mahdi, the Islamic messiah by annihilating little satan (Israel) and the great satan (USA). It's interesting isn't it? We believe we can hasten the coming of our Messiah by sharing the gospel with the whole world. They believe they can hasten the coming of the Mahdi by killing Christians and Jews. Leon Panetta, Secretary of Defense, said "Iran could have a

nuclear weapon within a year.” Not too reassuring when the people in Iran with their fingers on the switch value martyrdom more than life and hate Israel and us more than they love their own people.

*How will USA respond to Iran’s threat to close Strait of Hormuz? Will sanctions against Iran provoke them to close the Strait and if they do, what kind of disruption to the world’s economy will result? They wouldn’t even have to close the strait, all they would have to do is “make it difficult” for the ships to move through. (On a daily basis over 15 million barrels of oil pass through - a sixth of the world’s oil supply according to an article in National Review).

*Israel will continue to be pushed by the USA and others toward a land for peace treaty with Palestinians.

*America’s media will increasingly side with Palestinians and portray Israelis as occupiers and Israeli government policy as apartheid.

*Watch for continued upheaval in surrounding Arab nations - the so called Arab Spring.

Western media will portray it as steps toward democratization but I predict it will only open the door for radical islam to assume greater influence and control – behind the scenes if not openly at first. Puppet administrations with radical Islamist in control.

*Keep an eye on Jordan.

*Keep an eye on Kim Jyong Un in North Korea. He will need to prove himself, either as a friend to his people, to put their needs first, or to prove he is as cruel as his father was.

*At home in the USA, the push to redefine marriage by the Gay and Lesbian forces in America will find stronger allies in a second Obama administration. The acceptance of same sex marriage will lead to further restriction of religious liberties and freedom of speech in America.

*Our culture will continue to redefine the source of truth. We are adrift in relativism and redefinitions and the shore line is fading fast. Will the church reaffirm the word of God as the source of truth? Will we dare to take an unpopular stand and passionately yet lovingly proclaim God’s truth? Will we embrace the counter-cultural call to truly be Christ-followers in this world? What will the coming year hold? What is happening?

Look with me at Hebrews 12:26. “... **‘Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.’** The words **‘once more’** indicate the removing of what can be shaken – that is created things – so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are

receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.” Hebrews 12:26-29.

God is shaking the heavens and the earth. He is shaking created things and that includes institutions and powers and authorities. There is a shaking going on “so that what cannot be shaken may remain.” When the earth itself groans for redemption, when the foundations of our society and culture - like the definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman for a lifetime, are redefined - when the definition of life and when it begins and when and how it should end- when those things are shaken, when the markers and cornerstones of society are redefined and shifted and moved, I would say there is a shaking going on. So what do we do? We grab hold with all of our might and hold firmly to the kingdom that cannot be shaken - the kingdom of God. We embrace Him and His plans and His purpose and His timing with all of our heart and soul and strength and then whatever happens, whatever else is shaken, we know we are part of that kingdom that cannot be shaken!

Understanding that, we move forward into the new year, prepared for whatever may come. Whatever happens in 2012, we don't have to be shaken! Why? Let me give you 4 reasons why we aren't shaken. We are...

1. Confident in His purposes. I learned a word a long time ago in a Sociology class at ORU - teleology - the belief that we are moving toward a definite end with a definite purpose and meaning. When everything around us is shaking, literally or figuratively, the psalmist said we rest in God for **“God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.” Psalm 46:1-3.** Earthquakes and tsunamis and political upheaval and revolution, but we remain confident in God and his purposes. **“Come and see the works of the Lord, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire. ‘Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth.’” Psalm 46:8-10.**

What do you think? Do you think he has a plan for us and for this world? Don't be afraid. Be still and know he is God. He is in control. Remain confident in his good and ultimate purpose for you. **“For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper**

you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11.

Whatever comes, we remain confident that He has a plan. **“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son...” Romans 8:28**

I don't know what 2012 will hold for America or for Carbondale A/G or for myself. I'm old enough to know that life brings plenty of surprises and is full of mystery, but I am confident that God is at work. What does that Roman's passage say again? "...in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." His purpose. I am confident in his purpose. He is going to cause everything that happens in my life and your life in 2012 to work toward his purpose of making us more like Jesus. I am confident in his purpose. Whatever happens in 2012 we are....

2. Content in His provision. The Apostle Paul wrote to the saints at Philippi and shared this testimony. **“...I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through him who gives me strength.” Philippians 4:11-13**

We don't know what this year may hold, but I am certain of his enabling power and presence. Whatever comes, He will provide what we need to do all things, to handle every situation. Paul went on to share this word of assurance, **“And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:19**

The situation with Iran and other Middle Eastern nations could result in an economic game changer for all of us, but whatever the circumstances, we can rest content in his provision knowing that we can do all things through Christ who will both give us strength and supply all of our needs. Whatever happens in 2012 we are...

3. Continually kept in His peace. We aren't moved by all these things that we see happening in the world. He has promised us his peace. Jesus said, **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” John 14:27** He has promised us his peace which comes from the constantly abiding presence of His Holy Spirit in our life. His presence always brings peace to us.

The Scripture says **“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus...And the God of peace will be with you.”** **Philippians 4:6-9**

I don't know what 2012 will hold. Jerry Lee Lewis wasn't a prophet but he may have had it right when he sang, “a whole lot of shakin' goin' on.” But we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken. We have a faith that cannot be shaken. The apostle Paul told the elders at Ephesus in Acts 20 that everywhere he went he was told by the Holy Spirit that bonds and imprisonment and affliction awaited him but he said, **“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”** **Acts 20:24**

We aren't going to let any of the things that happen in 2012 move us or shake us from our faith. Kept by his peace and through his provision and strength we are going to finish our course and fulfill all the good purpose he has for us in this coming year. Whatever happens in 2012 you can expect to be kept by his peace. And whatever happens we are...

4. Comforted by His promises. There is nothing that can happen in this coming year that Jesus can't handle. The bible says, **“Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.”** **Psalm 34:19** We've got his promise. We've already quoted from Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” And what a promise of hope the apostle Paul gave us in Romans 8. **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** **Romans 8:35-39**

I think that just about covers anything 2012 could throw at us. And whatever comes, we are more than conquerors through Christ. It may sound boastful or prideful to say there is

nothing that can happen in 2012 that Jesus and I can't handle, but let it be said, we are heavy on the Jesus part of that declaration and light on the "I" part. I am comforted by his promise that none of these things can separate me from his love.

Paul mentioned not even death nor life could separate us from the love of God. Some of us will encounter death in our family this year. But even in the face of death we are comforted by his promise. Jesus said, **"Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I got to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also."** John 14:1-3.

I am comforted by his promise. He is preparing a place for me and someday soon he promised he would come again and take me home to be with him in his house. You can't scare me with death. I'm going home to be with Jesus and all the saints of God that have gone before me.

You can't frighten me with whatever else 2012 may throw at us because I have Jesus' promise **"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."** Matthew 28:20. He is with us on this journey, all the way, to the end of the age. Wherever 2012 takes us, Jesus is going to be with us!

Troubles will come in 2012. What do we do? We remain confident in his purpose, content in his provision, kept by his peace, comforted by his promises. What do we do when everything that can be shaken starts shaking? We don't panic or hide in fear. Jesus said **"When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."** Luke 21:28

Confident, content, kept, comforted and watchful. Keep an eye on those eastern skies. This could be the year when Jesus comes again! If so, let's greet him with open hearts, watchful eyes and busy hands, doing all he has called us to do in 2012.