

You've Got God-mail

Is God Trying To Tell Us Something? Reading His G-mail

“You've Got 7 God-mails:” G-mail #7: “Ready or Not, Here I Come”

“**W**ho's next?” No, we're not talking about the empty chair at SuperCuts. But the topic *is* one that's all too summarily brushed off.

Executive coach Bobb Biehl says leadership is “knowing what to do next, why it's important, and how to get it done.” There's more leadership in this room than Costco has RV-sized shopping carts. Maybe if we pooled our brainpower, we could invent “Son of eBay,” or become as giddy as folks in those casino commercials. But, no, we can't even guess which I-5 lane's gonna move the fastest.

Why does caring that Jesus is returning take a back seat to unhittable sales goals, getting the corner office, acquiring more toys, or swilling some anti-stress juice to dull the pain of success? If we *knew* what's next on God's cosmic clock, would we be better off? Or is true bliss just iPodding along, not facing the music?

Old Testament prophet Jeremiah suggests, **“Let's take a good look at the way we're living and reorder our lives under God.”** (Lamentations 3:40) In a 1st century letter to Christ's followers in old Turkey Paul writes, **“Don't act thoughtlessly, but try to understand what the Lord wants you to do.”** (Ephesians 5:17)

Opening God's Mail

Hitch-hiking through the Bible, we've noted three things: (1) The Old Testament is the story of God calling out a nation, the Jews, who looked forward to the arrival of their God-Man Messiah. (2) The New Testament covers history's Main Event – Jesus' earthly birth, His life here, His death, resurrection and return to heaven where He's preparing celestial condos for those who love Him. And (3) God did all this because He loves us intensely, sacrificially -- and desires to save you and me from everlasting destruction so He can live with -- and enjoy us -- forever.

Today we conclude the *Top 7 Things God Is Trying To Tell Us*. Recapping the first six-pack ...

(G-mail #1) “I'm here. Accept no substitutes.” There's only *one* God, the Bible says, and all roads do *not* lead to Him.

(G-mail #2) **“I made everything, you included.”** John the disciple declared, “No Jesus? No creation!”

(G-mail #3) **“Like it or not, I’m in control.”** Solomon cautions, “We make our plans, but God directs our steps.” Paul adds, “All things are from Him, through Him and to Him.”

(G-mail #4) **“You’re born as a sinner, sentenced to suffer God’s wrath. So, Jack, you need a Savior.”** Jesus explains: **“These (who don’t put their trust in Me) will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”** (Matthew 25:46)

(G-mail #5) **“My Son Jesus completely paid the penalty for your sins -- all of them!”** Says Paul, **“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”** (Romans 6:23)

(G-mail #6) **“Nothing but My best for you.”** Many scoff at Christ’s people as being moral Twinkies, but not so fast! **“Don Pardo, tell these folks about all the heavenly loot they get for saying ‘yes’ to Christ!” Let’s read Colossians 1:15-23 and 2:6-15 (p. 875).**

Here’s the reading of God’s will - Romans 8:14-17 (p. 841).

Up God’s Sleeve

Ask any AARP member -- we’re earthbound for a very *short* Time to prepare for Forever ... which is a very *long* time (John 3:35-36). The Bible is "the world according to God." In it He reveals what He wants us to know now about what He's done, doing and will do.

The next major event in God’s timetable is the Rapture. The Greek word used by the writer Paul means “plucked,” “caught up.” Christ returns in the sky, with no warning. It’s biz-as-usual one minute; then ZAP, God’s adopted kids vanish! Gone to meet Jesus in the air! Think of the mass hysteria, looting, driverless cars, pilotless planes. Amazingly, even some “Nurdy’s guys” will be mysteriously AWOL! Our pics will be on milk cartons and cable TV as Geraldo drones on.

Let’s read Paul’s encouragement to believers who were anxious about their deceased loved ones who loved Christ -- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (p. 879).

DISCUSSION: What can we learn about death from this passage? What questions does this raise?

But wait – Jesus is coming back yet *again*, per God's blueprint for the "last days." But terrifying events precede it, graphically and symbolically laid out in Revelation, the book

of *endings* that completes what God began in Genesis. Revelation is about consequences – the principle of Sowing and Reaping.

If you think this "end-times" talk is "George Lucas on steroids," ask the countries on the Indian Ocean if their world didn't change in a tsunami-second. What seems so permanent, out of the blue is no more! Even kicking the entire globe in its axis!

Shortly after the Rapture a charismatic leader is thrust into prominence since only he seems capable of engineering "peace and security" for all nations. The Bible refers to him, among other names, as Anti-Christ (A.C.). Satan-enabled, A.C. will become "the tyrant from hell." (Revelation 13:1-8) But first this masterful, peacemaker-pretender will, for 3.5 years, spin his slick diplomacy and win over those who've been "left behind."

The Wheels Come Off

Then, halfway into this 7-year "day of the Lord," as it's called by God's prophets, A.C. will commandeer the refurbished Jewish temple of King Solomon in Jerusalem, demanding that the world worship him.

During the next 42-month-long hell-on-earth everyone who does not bow to A.C. faces brutal persecution and death, forced to wear "the mark of the beast" ("666") if they want to buy or sell anything. This code may be embedded in a chip in the forehead or hand, like technology now used in animals. A.C.'s evil will dwarf Stalin, Hitler, Mao, Pol Pot, Idi Amin, Saddam and their ilk.

During this period the Bible says 144,000 Jews will become Jesus followers, then take Christ's Gospel to the ends of the earth. Millions will hear and be saved, but hordes of believers, having missed the Rapture, will be martyred by A.C.'s marauders.

As A.C. leads his coups against God and His people, God triggers a series of spectacular judgments to destroy A.C.'s one-world, religio-economic-political empire. Fire mixed with hail falls, burning up a third of the earth. Mountains slide into the seas, turning water into blood, deleting a third of all marine life and a third of all ships. A monstrous, fiery star falls, polluting a third of all fresh water. And a third of the light from the sun, moon and stars goes dark. It's Krakatoa, St. Helens, Vesuvius and super-sized tsunamis gone wild! Oh and did I mention famines and plagues. (Revelation 8:7-12)

These horrors crackle in rapid-fire order. No warm-ups need happen first -- except the Rapture -- in order to detonate this Revelation rumble. Christ could come pick up His folks any minute. Or years from now. Jesus said nobody knows when He'll return. So, like the '62 Curtis Mayfield hit goes, "People, Get Ready."

The Tribulation ends on a 50x100 mile tract -- the Plain of Megiddo (Armageddon) -- in northern Israel near Haifa. History's last battle for world supremacy, waged ten miles from Nazareth, Jesus' boyhood home. (Matthew 3:7, Jeremiah 30:7, Daniel 9)

Millions of A.C.'s troops from all over the globe converge there, squaring off against Christ who returns as conquering King of kings and Lord of lords, leading the armies of

heaven. This last, greatest war would've wiped out the human race, the Bible tells us, were it not for Christ's "second coming" at exactly this time.

"Ya Wanna Be A Millenniumaire?"

To end this murderous madness, Satan, A.C. and company are tossed into "the lake of fire," keeping them from deceiving folks during Christ's 1,000-year reign on earth. (Revelation 19:19-20:3)

Those who survive Armageddon and enter the millennium experience "heaven on earth" with Christ ruling the world. The planet, sin-free for the first time since early-Garden. Ah, "Visualize World *Peas*." (Revelation 20:1-6, Matthew 6:10, 25:34; Daniel 2:44)

As the 1,000 years end, Satan and all people who've not made their faith-decision to follow Christ, are heaved into an endless, unquenchable fire, with weeping, stark terror, pitch-blackness and separation from God. The Bible terms it *hell*, from *gehinno*, the Hebrew word referring to the valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem where children were torched and sacrificed to pagan god Molech. (Jeremiah 7:30-34, Matthew 10:28, Mark 9:43-48)

This cosmic catharsis, foretold by God's prophets and by Christ, is done to purge sin from Earth to satisfy *God's justice*. But *His mercy* has made a way for us to avoid this. Christ's followers, living and dead, go "home" with the Lord, skipping the Tribulation. That's why Paul calls the Rapture our "blessed hope!"

DISCUSSION: Is this too "extremist wacko" to give any credence to? If you do, what makes you believe it's true?

Get Ready To Rumble

Hebrews 9:27 reads, **"Each person dies only once, and after that comes judgment."** Paul adds, **"From one man (God) made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each of us."** (Acts 17:26-27)

God doesn't want a single soul to be destroyed. So He sent His Son to earth to be the sinless Sacrifice that permanently erases your sins and mine, entitling us to live with God eternally in His freshly-minted "new heavens and new earth."

In light of the Bible's "What's next?" and God's gracious offer of total pardon for our sin, it's up to each of us to accept Jesus' saving invitation. Right now you could say,

“God, this is too much for me to comprehend, but by faith I’ll take Your Word for it. Thank You for wiping out my sin debt. Enter my heart now, and I’ll give you center stage in my life forever. In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen.”

Trail Mix While Exploring God-mail #7

800 years before Christ Isaiah told the Jews of God’s anger and coming judgment for their immoral, idolatrous breaking of their covenant with God (Deuteronomy 28-p. 149). Isaiah foretells **God’s destruction of the entire earth due to man’s willful disobedience. Let’s read Isaiah 24:1-13 (p. 526).**

The Jews’ first temple, built by King Solomon, was leveled by Babylonians in 586 B.C. Its rebuilding, started 70 years later, wasn’t completed until 64 A.D. Just six years later, Rome under Titus completely crushed it. As the disciples huddled with Jesus, **they asked Him a heavy. Let’s read Matthew 24:1-36 (p. 737).**

Peter spent his last years teaching the Jews who chose to follow Christ. By 70 A.D. he’d spotted **lies seeping into the believers’ meetings, and he wrote to set the record straight**, bolstered by the .1000 batting average of the Old Testament prophets and by the words of the Lord Himself. Biblical prophecy was not written as an early Xbox (because we all know Microsoft doesn’t do “early”), but rather to motivate us to make a wise choice about to whom we’ll entrust our lives. **Let’s read 2 Peter 3:1-13 (p. 904).**

Untold casualties in earth’s final war will, says the Bible, wipe out a fourth of the world’s population. Perhaps 1.5 billion. **Let’s read about the mop-up as foreseen 2,600 years ago by the prophet Ezekiel in his ch. 39:1-16 (p. 649).**

Speculation about what heaven will be like will go on until (a) Christianne Amanpour returns with video or (b) until we get to do a *white glove* ourselves. **Meanwhile, we read God’s description in Revelation 21:1-8, 22:6-7, and 22:18-21 (p. 922).**

His Deal

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