

## *The Last and Greatest Politician*

In every marriage there are differences. Some are differences of opinion and others are differences of style. Charleen and I are no exception. One of the things she does that seems to me both strange and inappropriate is that she always reads the last chapter of a novel first. Whether it is James Michener, John Grisham or Jeanette Oke, she opens the book at the end.

I have tried to explain to her that she shouldn't do this. It defeats the purpose. It ruins the tension. It's just not the way novels are supposed to be read. But, she explains to me that her way is far better. When she reads a book she doesn't have to worry about trying to figure it out. She understands all the way through the novel why everything is happening the way it is. She says she enjoys the flow of the novel a whole lot more when she can understand how everything will end up.

Well, this time we're going to do it her way. We're going to check out the back of the Bible and find out how everything ends. Now, for those who like to be surprised, you may not appreciate this. If you prefer to worry through every election, every international war, every social crisis and every nuclear threat—you may not want to know how history's story will end.

On the other hand, if you might enjoy life a lot better and understand things a whole lot better by seeing where everything is going—then follow along carefully.

Two thousand years ago there was a politician who made an amazing promise. While there is nothing new about politicians making promises, this promise was a shocker even by the most extreme political standards.

This politician was Jesus. His life was riddled with politics from the very beginning. When he was born Magi came from half a continent away looking for a king. This threatened King Herod who tried to kill Jesus before he could claim the

throne. Political zealots followed him with the hope that he would overthrow the Roman Empire. On Palm Sunday the crowds went wild hoping that Jesus would be crowned the king and throw off the cruel Roman yoke. At his Easter Week trials he was mocked with a royal robe and crowned with a ring of thorns. On the cross there was a notice posted over his head that said **THE KING OF THE JEWS**.

Through all of this Jesus kept an astonishing secret: he really was a king! He had position and power that would have blown them away. But he was saving that for later. First, he had a job to do. He came to die on the cross to atone for human sin. He would save his powerful politics for later.

It was when he left earth to return to heaven that Jesus made the greatest political promise ever made in all of history. Actually, it was his press agents who made the announcement. It's recorded in Acts 1:11. Jesus had just disappeared from earth to heaven. His followers were standing around looking up in amazement. Two angels asked, "Why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

Since then Christians have been waiting for that promise to be kept. When dictators have ruled, when despots have persecuted, when governments have become corrupt, Christians have repeatedly said, "You just wait. Jesus is coming back again!"

We often pray the words of the Lord's Prayer, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." That prayer has a double application. First, it asks for God's help so that we will be able to live the life of heaven now while we are here on earth. We see ourselves as citizens of heaven living on earth and representing heaven until Jesus actually returns. It also

*It is altogether possible that the return of Jesus Christ to earth could happen in our lifetime.*

anticipates the day when God's rule on earth will be the same as God's rule in heaven. In heaven there is no injustice. There is no corruption. God's perfect will is accomplished in every way every day. Our prayer is that someday it will be that good on earth.

The Bible never tells us to vote nor does it tell us how to vote. The Bible does, however, tell us to pray and it tells us how to pray. Please don't misunderstand; all who are eligible to do so should take seriously their responsibility to vote. But even more important than casting our votes for those who will be in positions of authority in our country is the responsibility that we as Christians have to repeatedly pray that God's will be done on earth.

We are now in a period of serious political problems. Jesus predicted all of this long ago. In a sense, he turned the pages of history ahead in a conversation that he had one day with his followers. You can read his words in Matthew 24:3-14:

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All of these are the beginning of birth pains.

"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted, even put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this

gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."

Some people think when there are wars and earthquakes and famine and disease that disaster is imminent. That's not what Jesus said. He said that when all that happens that's not the end; that's the beginning. He went on to explain that there would be an interim period between when he first came and when he would next come that would be a period of chronic problems. We in America have been amazingly fortunate that we have not suffered a lot of the calamities that other peoples have suffered. But the truth is that there have been and there will be false teachers and spiritual coldness and wars and worse. That's not good, but it's not a surprise. It's precisely what Jesus said would occur.

But there is one very interesting point to what Jesus said here that too often is neglected. His last comment was that this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come.

That has been the hope and prayer of Christians for 20 centuries. But at many points in history people have thought this was a far-fetched prediction; it couldn't happen; there was no way. Even though they prayed and even though they went as missionaries, there were minimally good results to report.

But that's not true today. Today more people are becoming Christians in more places than ever before. Jesus' predictions have begun to come true in ways only imagined by people in earlier centuries. For the first time in history the gospel is reaching every continent, every nation and every people group. And Jesus said this would happen before he came back. That means that it is altogether possible that the return of Jesus Christ to earth could happen in our lifetime.

But what are we supposed to do in the meantime? The answer is in I Corinthians 11:23-26. This time it's St. Paul who says:

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke

it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is a new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Holy communion is temporary. It will not be part of heaven. It will not be necessary after Jesus returns.

During the year before Charleen and I were married I was a student in Chicago and she lived on the East Coast. I had lots of pictures of her. Several pictures of her I carried in my wallet. I had a picture of her that sat on my desk in the office where I worked. There were a couple of pictures of her on the dresser in my bedroom. I had pictures of her all over the place, looking forward to the day when we would get married.

Now I don’t carry her picture in my wallet. I don’t have a picture of her on the dresser in my bedroom. I’ve got her! Why would I need a picture?

And the same goes for communion. You see, while Jesus is gone from our physical view, we need a picture, a reminder. That’s why we celebrate communion, so that we will experience Jesus while he’s in heaven and we’re on earth. We do communion in order to remember him until we are together with him; then it will no longer be needed.

But communion is only for those who are Christians. You wouldn’t carry around in your wallet a picture of someone you didn’t know. That wouldn’t make any sense. Communion is for those who know Jesus Christ personally and are committed to him.

I had an interesting experience. After one of our Sunday morning services I was shaking hands with people and a couple came by. As they shook hands with me they said, “We signed up last week!” What they meant, I learned as we talked, was that they had recently accepted Jesus

Christ as their Savior.

At first I thought, “That’s a strange way to put it.” But as I thought about it afterwards I liked what they said. They weren’t just saying that they intellectually believed the facts about Jesus, that the Bible is true. They were saying that they actually “signed up” with Jesus; they enlisted with him forever.

Communion is for those who have “signed up”, who believe that Jesus is who he says he is and that he did what the Bible says he did. It is for those who anticipate that Jesus is coming back again.

*We celebrate communion so that we will experience Jesus while he’s in heaven and we’re on earth.*

Communion is also a way of signing up for many people. In many of the most important decisions of our lives we have a physical, tangible way of expressing it. In Minnesota when

you get married, you get a marriage license that you must sign; when you buy a car or get a home mortgage you get a physical, tangible piece of paper that says the transaction has been completed.

When we put our faith in Jesus Christ—that’s kind of intangible. But communion provides that “tangible something”. When we eat the bread and drink from the cup, it’s a tangible way of saying, “I do sign up. I really believe. I believe what Jesus did and I remember it. And I believe that Jesus is coming back again!”

*Faith Matters*® is the Broadcast Ministry of  
Leith Anderson and Wooddale Church  
6630 Shady Oak Road  
Eden Prairie MN 55344  
952-944-6300  
[www.wooddale.org](http://www.wooddale.org)  
©Leith Anderson