

The Prophetic Puzzle

Working jigsaw puzzles is an activity I have seen enjoyed by both toddlers and senior adults alike. It seems we are never too young or too old to resist the attraction of finding the right pieces and placing them perfectly into place, thus completing a beautiful picture. This week's Templates of Truth compares the elements of working a jigsaw puzzle to world conditions that are aligning themselves toward certain prophetic fulfillment.

Working a jigsaw puzzle has several characteristics in common with the culmination of Biblical prophecy. We know, for instance, what the finished puzzle looks like because we have a picture of it on the front of the box. We know what the finished work of God will look like because the Bible gives us remarkable details about the completed picture. When the puzzle is unpacked, pieces are typically arranged in categories based on the components of the finished picture (sky, water, trees, foreground, etc.). The events of Biblical prophecy are often revealed in certain categories of world conditions (economy, governments, geological conditions, etc.). The first pieces that are usually put into place are the border pieces, for these create the framework for the entire puzzle. The early sections of Scripture provide the framework for Biblical history throughout time, including future events. Finally, the farther along you get in working the puzzle, the fewer the pieces are that remain on the table, it becomes more obvious where those remaining pieces should be placed, and the faster the puzzle is completed. As we near the Rapture of the church, fewer pieces of the prophetic puzzle remain in view, it is becoming more obvious where they strategically fall into place, and the pace picks up substantially as we near the trumpet sound.

In the closing chapter of Paul's letter to the church at Philippi, he declared: *The Lord is near* (4:5). The word *near* means close at hand. Many in the world today discount the validity of prophetic truth because of such statements. If people like Paul believed the end was so near 2,000 years ago and it still hasn't occurred, their argument is that it must not be valid. That is like saying, however, that a jigsaw puzzle can never be completed just because someone says in the beginning, "we'll have this puzzle finished in no time!" Prophecy is part of God's truth and what the Bible declares will happen, will indeed occur in God's perfect timing. The argument only serves to prove that the culmination of prophetic events is a lot more near in our day than it was in Paul's day.

The most revealing comparison is seen in world conditions that are aligning themselves for the culmination of events the Bible predicts for the end times. For all the nations and people of the world to be presented with the Gospel, and for all eyes to simultaneously witness the events John describes in the book of Revelation, certain capabilities must be in place. In just the last decade, technology has advanced farther and quicker than anyone could have ever imagined. With the internet, satellite, cable and cell phone technologies ALREADY in place, the world is at the fingertips to many in even the most remote places of the planet in real time simultaneously! The Bible teaches that the antichrist will be a world dictator who will control the global economy.

For that happen, certain economic & governmental conditions must fall into place. In just the past few years, we have seen how a financial meltdown in any one nation has ripple effects to the entire world economy, how unstable & unpredictable any one country's currency actually is, what a significant role oil plays in the global financial markets, and how nations of the world are forming alliances to position themselves against Israel during the Tribulation period. All of these (and more) pieces of the puzzle are moving strategically into place to accommodate the players & events that will unfold following the Rapture. It is being witnessed in today's news headlines.

Equally noticeable is the faster pace in the turn of events & conditions, both in frequency and intensity. The earth & creation is characterized in Scripture as a woman in labor. As the contractions grow more frequent, they also grow in duration & intensity, building to the climax in birth. The earth is shaking, groaning, changing and we see its labor in greater degrees of natural catastrophes, disasters and unpredictable atmospheric, geological and astronomical patterns of frequency & intensity. Paul's words mean that the destruction of our current planet and the birth of a new heaven and a new earth are imminently close.

The staggering truth is that nothing further must occur in terms of prophetic fulfillment before Christ calls His church into heaven. The Rapture could happen literally at any moment. The prophetic puzzle is down to its last remaining pieces, and it is becoming so very apparent to the close observer where they fit into place. We are only waiting for the sovereign hand of God to move them there, and things will then begin to happen such as the world has never seen or known in its entire history. Are you ready?

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide in Christ. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in the Lord Jesus.