

The End Times

Wars and rumors of wars, pestilence or disease, fearful events and unrest along with promises of something better. That sure sounds like today, doesn't it? Today we are talking about the end times.

We have been asked many times over the past weeks, "Are these the end times" or "What does the Bible say about the end times?" Last week we spoke about the difference between fear and love especially during times like this. We want to address what is going on in the world now and answer the question, "Are we in the end times" in today's message.

There is unrest around the world. The ongoing hostilities between Muslims and Jews in the middle east is always present, but there is also civil unrest around the globe. People are rising up for all sorts of reasons. Some are against governments and some are rising up against ideas. This past week we saw the people in Hong Kong out protesting and celebrating the uprising that happened in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China. In the United States we are in our second week of protests and rioting over the death of a man in police custody. We also cannot forget all the unrest and problems worldwide due to COVID-19.

There have been the people who are moving out into the front to supposedly bring peace and health with too good to be true promises of vaccines for COVID-19 and peace in the middle east. But, in their promises, they bring division and more distrust.

Friends, Jesus spoke of all this 2000 years ago. The people were facing similar threats. Israel was a land that was occupied by a foreign army that was ruthless. There were religious leaders that were speaking in the name of God but with their own voice. There were wars and disease everywhere. Jesus' disciples saw all of this and asked him the same questions people ask ministers and preachers whenever they are scared or do not understand what is going on in the world around them. Let's read Matthew 24:3-14.

Matthew 24:3-14

(3) 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?" (4) Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. (5) For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah,' and will deceive many. (6) 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. (7) Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. (8) All these are the beginning of birth pains. (9) "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. (10) At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, (11) and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. (12) Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, (13) but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. (14) 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.

The disciples were asking Jesus the same thing we are being asked today. We can find comfort in his response. Let's look closer at his response.

First, he says, "Watch out that no one deceives you." We need to be ever watchful that we are not led astray by false leaders and those who would do us harm. Friends, ask the Lord to give you discernment



daily. Ask Him to give you the ability to know what to believe and who to listen to and trust. Be as wise as serpents, but gentle as doves. This can only be accomplished through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Welcome the Holy Spirit into your life and listen to His counsel.

Second, Jesus gives us some things to be watchful for. He says not to be alarmed about the wars and rumors of wars. He tells us to be watchful as nation rises up against nation. He tells us there will be disasters like earthquakes and storms and famine and disease in many places around the world, but these are just the beginning. They are signals. They are not the end in and of themselves, but signals, like birthing pains.

I remember when Kelly was in labor about to give birth to our son, Aidan. I thought she was going to be in labor for an eternity. It took so long. When she woke me up in the night and said it was time to go to the hospital, that was just the beginning of a long process. The unrest in our world and famines and disease are birthing pains signaling the start of the end. However, we do not know how long the labor will last. When a mother-to-be is in labor, there is a time when the pains become great and the timing between them gets quicker. We know then the birth will be soon. In Matthew 24:29-31, Jesus gives us the sign of the end of the labor and the beginning of the birth, so to speak. Let's read that.

Matthew 24:29-31

(29) "Immediately after the distress of those days "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' (30) "Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. (31) And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

That is the sign that the end of this age is upon us. The most important part is the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven and all the people of the earth will see it. We need to be watching and we need to be ready for when it comes. Being prepared for that time is so important, Jesus gave us a parable in Matthew 25:1-13.

Matthew 25:1-13

(1) "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. (2) Five of them were foolish and five were wise. (3) The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. (4) The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. (5) The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. (6) "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' (7) "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. (8) The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' (9) "'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' (10) "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. (11) "Later the others also came. 'Lord, Lord,' they said, 'open the door for us!' (12) "But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know you.' (13) "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.



Jesus uses this parable to teach that we need to be watching for His return and we must be ready for His return. Once he appears in the sky, there will not be time to prepare. There will not be time to get our affairs in order. There will not be time to share the gospel with our neighbor or friend. There will not be time for anything but to answer the trumpet call.

Don't put your preparation off. Share the gospel with your friends and neighbors. Share the love and peace of Christ with them. This COVID-19 pandemic has shown us we must prepare for disasters by having a stock of food in our homes for emergencies like this. We must have all we need to survive for 30, 60, or 90 days set aside so we can make it through difficult times.

Friends we urge you to spend time in prayer and reading the Bible. Get yourself and your household ready for when the end times are upon us. Are they now, we do not believe so, but we do believe they are not far off, by the Bible also tells us that with God a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day. God does not function on our timeline or time scale, He is outside of it. Jesus sits at the right hand of God the Father waiting for the moment for God to send him. Don't let anyone deceive you. Jesus tells us that no one, not even he, knows when the Father will send him back, only God the Father does. It is our job to be ready and watching.

