

BE STILL AND KNOW HE IS GOD**Psalm 46, Matthew 24**

Intro: I'm taking a little break from my REBOOTING series in my talk today to address the end. Yep – **THE END.**

Why? Russia's invasion of Ukraine has people (and some preachers) talking about end times. I've seen memes like this popping up lately. In fact, with every passing year, it seems like the latest crisis is in "try-and-top-this" mode. Two years ago, on this very weekend we cancelled in-person services because of a mysterious and scary virus called COVID 19 or Corona Virus, and we did not reconvene in person for 13 weeks. Now, just as the COVID infection rate wanes and the virus shows itself to be burning out and restrictions have almost dropped off, we have a new and serious crisis in Ukraine. We can't ignore it – it's all over the news and social media. Anyone with a cellphone can record Russian atrocities and Ukrainian suffering. The 24-hour news cycle has been pushing the fear meter into the red zone by reporting Putin's threats and the responding recriminations from world leaders who say a lot and seem to do very little.

So, in the same manner of every crisis since Jesus ascended to heaven after promising to return, the hearts of Christ Followers wonder if **THIS** is finally the time when we will see Jesus *coming in clouds with great power and glory*. Mark 13:26.

I'm not saying it's not that time, it could be – in fact he could arrive even as I say **this**. And wouldn't that be cool?!!!! But, as I said, it's nothing new—because Jesus followers all through history have been looking forward to his return since he lifted into the clouds.

In our text today, Jesus predicted a huge crisis. Listen (**Read Matthew 24:1-14**)

Jesus had been teaching in the temple courts during what we call passion week, that is, the days leading up to his crucifixion. As he and his disciples left the grounds, the disciples pointed out the buildings of the Temple, no doubt commenting on their impressiveness. Indeed, it was impressive. Solomon's original temple had been destroyed by the Babylonians in about 586 BC. Herod the Great, trying to get on the good side of the Jews, and to make a name for himself in the bargain had rebuilt it about 60 years before. It was magnificent and it was a matter of great pride for the Jewish people. Surely nothing bad could happen to such a wonderful monument, right?

All through history we have had examples of boasts that quickly fall apart:

Earlier I alluded to the pandemic and it's a prime example because we discovered that a virus could shut down the world. In a culture that thought science and medicine could solve anything and everything – we found such arrogant thinking was and is flatly wrong.

H. G. Wells called World War I the war that will end all wars, and he did so at the very beginning of that horrific conflict. Four years later as it finally came to an end at the end of 1918, everybody hoped with all their hearts that it had REALLY been the war to end all wars. Sadly, and partly because of the victors' terrible treatment of the vanquished, when World War II broke out, less than 20 years later, the war to end all wars proved to be little more than wishful thinking.

The builders of the Titanic claimed their creation was unsinkable. The captain of the ship, who went down with it, Edward Smith, had even allegedly said, "*Even God himself couldn't sink this ship,*" But it sank – and worse – it sank in less than 3 hours taking over 1500 souls with it.

So, the disciples having such confidence in their wonderful landmark is not unusual. And no doubt they were quite dismayed that Jesus was predicting that the it would be completely destroyed – in his words, . . . *there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.* (v. 2). They were horrified at such talk and, if it had come from anyone else, they would have disregarded it. It was, in fact, dangerous talk, and it came back to be used against Jesus as his trial for blasphemy a few days later.

All of it is proof that things are not as they seem or as we think and it is for that reason we need to keep in mind, through it all, we need to be still and know he is God. This is because, in F. B. Meyer's words, referring to Psalm 46 which Lori read earlier, *our deficiencies give more room for God's all sufficiency.* In other words when the times seem especially terrifying, God is all we need. We can stand firm in God while everything else is insecure – or in the words of the old song, "*Safe and secure from all alarm.*" Meyer burst out into poetry with "*Be still, Oh troubled heart! The God of the nations is your Father!*"

Referring to our text here in Matthew 24, Meyer and other commentators point out how successive generations have eagerly scoured Jesus's words here, striving to find a forecast of the future. In the case of the first Christians, Jesus's prophesy warned them to flee and in doing so to escape the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in AD 70. Nevertheless Matthew 24 is full of instruction and direction for all generations.

Here are some of those warnings and teachings for the living of these uncertain days . . .

See that no one leads you astray (v. 4)

- We've talked about this before, so I don't need to extensively cover it again. Suffice it to say, be careful what you fall for. Timothy must have found himself embroiled in controversies or at least troubled by them because in Paul's first letter to him he warns Timothy to *charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.* 1 Timothy 1:3-4 and in his second letter to *Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels.* 2 Timothy 2:23. You see we can get wrapped up in conjecture and endless hypothesizing that reveals nothing and pulls us away from what we ARE called to do which is to *Go . . . and make disciples.* . . . Matthew 28:19. Satan loves it when we neglect our witness to wander after predicting what only the Father knows. (More on that later)
- Don't be led astray away from the mission at hand. And, in the process, no matter how frightening it seems to be. . .

Don't be alarmed (v. 6)

- In those days as in these days there will be *wars and rumors of wars.* (v 6a). He goes on to say, *For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.* (v. 7). The thing about this teaching is that he is prophesying what will happen in the next 35 – 40 years, and he points out IT IS ONLY THE BEGINNING! Yes! It was only the beginning of the carrying on of a human race that has wandered far from its Creator.
- We have seen it with our own eyes – in fact, it's happening now, to miss it means you are living under a rock - nation has risen against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, with famines and earthquakes in various places. This is our fallen world. Don't be alarmed. Be still and know he is God and know, also . . .

The one who endures to the end will be saved. (v. 13)

- Now, mind you, Jesus is talking to the faithful who will be facing the invasion of Titus's army in 70 AD and the utter destruction of Jerusalem and the trouncing and dispersion of the Jewish people. But what was true then is just as true now – the one who endures to the end will be saved. Verses 10 - 12 list spiritual attacks promoted by the evil one on the people of God. Listen to them again, *and then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.* Matthew 24:10-12. Sounds familiar. One look at social media and you see so-called Christians spiritually tearing one another limb from limb, or promoting what the Bible clearly teaches against as acceptable, and so on. And Satan sits back and looks at his handiwork.
- So be alert against false prophets who attempt to lead us astray with a false gospel, be alert for false prophets who preach a false gospel of nationalism or prosperity or ANYTHING that gets our mind off of the fact that Jesus is the only way, the only truth, and the only way to eternal life.
- Be still and know he is God and hang in there and REMEMBER . . .

No one except for the Father knows the day or the hour – NO ONE! (v. 36)

- I've already referenced this, but we must be reminded. Don't be distracted by so called prophets who predict that Putin is the antichrist and the invasion of Ukraine is the beginning of the end. Or that China is threatening the end of the world as we know it. Or that Islam is the antichrist and Armageddon is somewhere in the Middle East. These are aren't farfetched ideas, but they are a colossal waste of time and resources because **WE. DON'T. KNOW!!!!!!** It's not for us to know.
- What we do know is that HE IS GOD and he's given us a Great Commission. Time's a wasting. People are dying without knowing Jesus as their Lord. . .

For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (vv 37-42)

- Let me read that again (**Read vv. 37-42**)

- What in the world did Jesus mean? It's actually relatively easy to figure out. As in the days of Noah Jesus warns of the suddenness of disaster for the unprepared. Noah and his family were busily readying the ark for the coming flood and everyone else were lives of rebellion and totally disregarding any idea of holiness. They were caught unprepared. They were destroyed.
- Don't be unprepared!
- Here's what we need to know about the coming of Jesus. . .

BE READY!

- This is why he ends with, *Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.* (v. 44).
- We do not know when Jesus is coming back. We don't know when THE END will be – so be still and know that he is God and BE READY!!! Amen.