

Light for Dark Times

You Must be Born Again!

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Wars and Rumors of War

February 27, 2022

Sermon Text: Matthew 24:1-14

Scripture Reading: Jude 1

It is crucial that we understand the times in which we live. The Lord emphasized this to Daniel-

Dan 12:1-4 “At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. (2) And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

(3) **And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. (4) But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”**

Once again we find ourselves in terrible times. War. There really is never peace in this world. Wars rage in one part or another continuously. Just in the 20th century alone there were two world wars in which millions and millions perished. The world map is in flux with borders being redrawn as one power hungry tyrant after another comes on the scene. History is largely the record of wars with times of peace being very few. On a spiritual plane the ultimate war – that between God’s kingdom and Satan’s – rages, though at the cross the victory was

won.

In the 24th chapter of Matthew (chs 24-25 are known as the Olivet Discourse), Christ instructs His disciples – and us – about the era in which we live – the church age, the last era before Christ comes again. And as we see, war is a chief characteristic of this world.

Mat 24:1-14 Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. (2) But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

(3) As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

(4) And Jesus answered them, “**See that no one leads you astray.** (5) For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and

they will lead many astray.

(6) And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. **See that you are not alarmed**, for this must take place, but the end is not yet.

(7) For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.

(8) All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

(9) “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.

(10) And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.

(11) And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.

(12) And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. (13) But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

(14) And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed

throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Christ gives His people *peace*. And one way He does this is to tell us about the world in which we live. He does not want us to fear. He does not want us to be deceived. In fact, as He told Daniel, He wants us to shine brightly in a dark world – we are the light of the world –

And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

When we turn on the news, almost always there is war somewhere and right now there is a very serious war – a tyrant has invaded. At any moment (it is just these kinds of local conflicts) – the thing could break out into WWII. Allies choose up sides and the fight is on – this time around with both sides having nuclear weapons. These are just the kinds of times which are fertile ground for, as Jesus is going to warn us here, some false prophet to come along and pronounce the

end of the world. Or maybe even proclaim himself the messiah – a savior of sorts (which in large part is what Hitler did).

If you are a Christian, if you know Christ – *the Lord not only does not want you to be fearful and anxious in the face of these things, He wants you to shine. He wants His people to be beacons of light and truth.* But this means that we must understand the times. We must know the things Jesus tells us here, so let's take a look.

Mat 24:1-14 Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. (2) But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

(3) As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

In the previous chapter, Jesus had confronted and exposed the Jewish nation, and he made this pronouncement:

Mat 23:37-39 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! (38) See, your house is left to you desolate. (39) For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

It is a final verdict. God had left the temple – it was desolate. And so it is fitting that it be destroyed, which is exactly what Jesus foretold – the destruction of the temple in 70 AD by the Romans.

The disciples had asked Him when these things were going to happen. When would He come again? When would the present age end? They most probably had some ideas about His kingdom that needed correction.

Follow along as I read these verses again, commenting as we proceed. Look carefully at what we must know *if we are not to be fearful and if we are not to be deceived.*

(4) And Jesus answered them, “**See that no one leads you astray.** (5) For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray.

It is interesting that Jesus places much emphasis on this warning – *don’t be deceived.* MANY will come on the scene claiming that they are the Messiah. And of course, history is filled with just such examples. Think for instance of:

- The Pope – the alleged “vicar” of Christ on earth
- And of course you have all of the cult leaders through the centuries, many of whom we probably have never heard of.
- Hitler deceived the entire German nation, claiming to be their savior
- Muhammed the alleged

“prophet” of Islam

The book *Knowing the Times*, is a collection of messages by Martyn Lloyd-Jones and in the lecture *Remembering the Reformation*, MLJ said:

“...as I see the contemporary situation, the greatest battle of all, perhaps, at the moment is the battle for justification by faith only. ‘Works’ have come back! I was reading a religious newspaper a fortnight ago which carried the words ‘Saint Gilbert’ as a heading to a paragraph. The writer was of the opinion that this man whose Christian name was Gilbert was undoubtedly a saint and we must accord him the name and dignity of a saint. Then he went on to say, ‘Of course I know that in actual practice Gilbert called himself a rationalistic agnostic.’ And the article justified this assertion on the basis of Gilbert’s life: he was a good man, he was a noble man, he had high and exalted ideals, he gave much of his life to the propagation of the League of Nations union and to uplift the

human race, he tried to put an end to war...and therefore though he denied being of god, though he did not regard the Bible as the Word of God, though he did not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, nevertheless, he was a saint. What makes a man a saint? Oh, his works, his life!

...You see, it does not matter what you believe. According to this teaching, it is the life that makes a man a Christian. If you live a good life, if you live a life of sacrifice, if you try to uplift the race, if you try to imitate Christ, you are a Christian, even though you deny the deity of Christ, though you deny His atonement, though you deny the miraculous and the supernatural, the resurrection and many other things, nevertheless you are a great Christian and a great saint!

The battle for justification by faith only is on again!”

Knowing the times, you see. Understanding these times of this present world. And Jesus here in the Olivet Discourse is teaching us

wisdom about this world and its times – the times in which we live.

The pattern seems to be that whenever there are particularly troubled times, the soil is fertile for these kinds of deceivers to show up. They are all, you might say, little manifestations of the chief man of lawlessness – the Antichrist.

2Th 2:1-4 Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, (2) not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. (3) Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, (4) who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

1Jn 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

1Jn 2:18 Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.

2Jn 1:7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.

Listen to G.K. Beale on this as he connects these New Testament passages with Daniel's words on the same subject (chs 11-12) -

“...according to the prophecy of Dan. 11: 30– 45, a final enemy of God will attack the covenant community. **In addition to persecution, the attack will be in the form of deception:** the end-time opponent will execute a subtle attack of deception by influencing with “smooth words” some within

the community “who forsake the holy covenant” (v. 30) and “who act wickedly toward the covenant” (v. 32), all of which stands behind Paul’s reference to “the apostasy” in verse 3.

The fiendish adversary will influence these people to turn to “godlessness” themselves (v. 32), to compromise, and to foster deception and further compromise among others. Daniel says that “many will join with them [the faithful] in hypocrisy” (v. 34), claiming to be faithful, while in fact they are not.

This end-time antagonist will appear openly before the community, “exalt and magnify himself above every god” (v. 36), and then meet his end under God’s judicial hand (v. 45). Hence, Paul is developing the Dan. 11– 12 prophecy in verses 3– 4 and following.

Paul has said in verses 3– 4 that the readers should not be led astray in thinking that Christ’s coming has already happened because the two signs of the final apostasy in the

church and the final appearance of the antichrist have not yet occurred. He states emphatically in verse 5 that a third reason why they should not be deceived about this is that what Paul has just told them is not new information. Already Paul had repeatedly told them about the coming apostasy and antichrist: “Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?” (v. 5). Verses 3– 4 were a reminder of what they already knew. The implication of the reminder is that Paul has perceived that the readers were becoming vulnerable to false teaching because they were in the process of forgetting the truth that he had already taught them.

Although Paul has underscored that the final manifestation of the antichrist is in the future, in verses 6– 7 **he warns them that they cannot relax and let down their guard against his deceptive powers in the present.** In fact, Paul makes the radical statement that they are no safer from deception now than when the antichrist will actually come.

Consequently, saints must not suppose that just because the antichrist has not yet come in physical form, he cannot mislead them now.

Beale, G. K.. A New Testament Biblical Theology (Kindle Locations 4380-4391). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Now, listen carefully again as Jesus connects these warnings with times of cataclysm and war as we are seeing in our day right now:

(6) And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. **See that you are not alarmed**, for this must take place, but the end is not yet.

(7) For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.
(8) All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

One of the ripest times for deceivers to come on the stage is in times of war. “The end is near” – “listen to me” – and so on. But

Jesus prepares us. This present world is always going to be characterized by wars. By nations rising against nations. Famines. Earthquakes. But none of these things is to be taken as a sign that, as Jesus puts it, “the end has come.” “*See that you are not alarmed.*” This war in Europe right now is not going to end with the nuclear destruction of this world and all humanity. This world is going to end when Christ comes, and not before. So don’t be alarmed and don’t be deceived.

In our mid-week study of Revelation we saw these same things characteristic of the last era of this world in which we live:

Rev 6:4-8 And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword. (5) When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand. (6) And I heard what

seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!" (7) When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" (8) And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

And Jesus continues:

(9) "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.

(10) And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.

(11) And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.

Do you see the emphasis once

more? Persecution of Christ's people, many who have claimed to be Christians will renounce Christ and fall away, and false Christians will be deceived by false prophets. These are the things we can expect to see all around us in the present era ever since the resurrection of Christ.

Most "Christians"...aren't. The majority of people who claim to be Christians are not regenerate. They do not hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. They follow one of these false antichrist prophets, and if you think this is an exaggeration, just consider Rome as a prime example. How many millions and millions of people have been deceived by the false gospel of Rome and are just sure that they are Christ's people? And how often, including at this present moment, has Rome persecuted and denounced Christ's true people?

Think also of all the millions of people who have embraced what is called "Orthodox" Christianity. The Russian Orthodox church. The Greek Orthodox church. These are just more manifestations of the

deceptions Jesus warns us about. And this is why we must be careful when we use terms like “Christians” or “the Church.” We need to define just who we are speaking of. For example, we recently watched a church history video by Robert Godfrey in which he was teaching about the Crusades. And in that lecture he spoke of the church and the Christians marching on Jerusalem to drive out the Muslims. He said that the Christians slaughtered the Muslims and Jews in Jerusalem and that this has been a black mark on the church ever since.

Now, he may have defined his terms in an earlier lecture (this one we watched is part of a 72 part series), but I think you see the point. Who is a Christian? What is the Church? Actually, the Crusades were launched largely by the Pope and no doubt political leaders as well. But were these things done by Christ’s true people? Was that mass of Crusaders made up of people who were truly in Christ? Or could it have been that the real church, consisting of real Christians, was just a remnant,

often persecuted, hated and even killed by this thing called “the Church” which was actually of the spirit of antichrist. History will prove Christ’s words, - the real people of God are a remnant, not the mass of what visibly appears to be the Church. Are we talking about Rome, for instance, or are we talking about the true people of God? If we are not going to be deceived, if we are going to avoid the deceptions and false prophets Jesus warns us about, then we must take care in our definitions.

The Reformation of the 1300’s – 1600’s for instance was a recovery of the gospel, a recovery of the Bible by people who truly knew Christ and a rejection of what had appeared to be “the church” for hundreds of years. What was the reaction of Rome? Exactly what Jesus warned us of – persecution, murders, hatred.

See that you are not deceived! You must be born again. Are you? I am not asking if you have been baptized or if you are a member of a local church, or if you grew up in a family that went to church every

Sunday. I am asking you this – *Are YOU born again?* Because if you are not, then you are not a Christian. Christ does not know you and you do not know Him.

However, for those who do know Christ, here are encouraging and certain words from Him to His people:

(12) And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. (13) **But the one who endures to the end will be saved.**

(14) And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, **and then the end will come.**

Two promises here for Christ's own:

1. ALL who are in Christ, ALL who are born again, *will endure in faith to the end and will be saved out of this evil world.* EACH ONE of Christ's people are sealed with His mark (See

Revelation 7) and He knows us by name.

2. The end of this present world will come at the precise time that God has decreed. Nothing can thwart His purpose. Not war. Not nuclear bombs. Not evil tyrants who start world wars. Nothing. Not the devil himself.

Therefore, take comfort in Christ's certain Word. Don't be dismayed. Do not be fearful. Press on in serving the Lord and pray that He come soon.

Jud 1:24-25 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, (25) to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.