

End-Times

“But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he was not willing to let them go. Pharaoh said to Moses, ‘Get out of my sight! Make sure you do not appear before me again! The day you see my face you will die.’ ‘Just as you say,’ Moses replied. ‘I will never appear before you again.’ . . . Then Moses, hot with anger, left Pharaoh.”

These heated words (in Exodus 10:27-29 and 11:9) between Pharaoh and Moses immediately preceded the terrible 10th plague on Egypt. America is in exactly the same position today that Egypt was back then, when this exchange of angry words took place, with God’s fierce judgment the next event. Our country is now on an irreversible and unstoppable course that will necessarily lead to the most horrifying series of judgments God has ever sent.

As Israel was spared from experiencing that judgment, so will followers of Christ. In evangelical churches, we call that “the Rapture.” But our friends, relatives, and neighbors who have ignored Christ and the salvation that’s freely available in Him will have to suffer the full weight of God’s wrath. It will be hideous.

The Bible refers to this coming time of judgment “the Day of the Lord” and it’s described in detail in the Book of Revelation. Yes, multitudes will be saved during that world-wide holocaust (Rev 7:9). But that’s not for us to hope for because **“the whole world was astonished and followed the beast. Men worshiped the dragon . . . all inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast . . . he deceived the inhabitants of the earth”** (13:3,4,8,14). It’s likely our friends, relatives and neighbors will be among those deceived, and will be among those who **“cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him”** (16:9). And so we read some of the saddest words in the Bible: **“The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons. . . .”** (9:20).

The plagues on Egypt were because of their contempt for God’s “son,” His people, Israel. Those plagues were proleptic of the violent judgments God will send to all earth for rejecting His Son, the embodiment of Israel, our Lord Jesus.

From the evidence available, the Day of the Lord is imminent. The countries of the Mid-East are beginning to align exactly as prophesied in Daniel 11, a northern tier of allied Gentile nations, enemies of Israel, and a southern tier. The countries of Europe are in the early stages of reforming the old Roman Empire, as prophesied in Daniel 2. With the United States removed as a world power (the ideology-driven people seizing power in Washington and in America’s institutions will see to that), Israel will find itself helpless before its powerful allied enemies, as also was prophesied in Daniel and in Zechariah. An anti-Christ is almost certainly in place somewhere awaiting the call to emerge from shadows to carry out his deceitful role. And all the Western world has been psychologically and socially primed to believe his deceptions. God is right now in the process of making final the setting of the world stage for end-time events to begin.

We are witnessing before our eyes the preparations for the Day of the Lord and the church age coming to an end. We are today like Ezekiel was in the early chapters of his book, just before Babylon’s armies came and wiped out Judah. Ezekiel knew the end was coming, and he faithfully warned his nation. But they thought they were invincible, that God would never do such a thing, and so that doomed nation ignored him. Then the end came. And it was ugly.

We also are today like Noah was as the ark he was building neared completion. He saw what it was he was building, a massive boat, which meant that a very great and terrible flood was coming. And, as the ark was nearly complete, he knew that that judgment was imminent. He also knew that, although God was just in sending this judgment, He also is merciful in making rescue available to any who desire it. So in faithfulness, Noah preached to everyone all around that salvation is freely available. I suspect Noah actually pleaded with his friends, relatives, and neighbors to join him. We know this because the Scripture says that Noah was righteous. And righteousness means doing what is right to or for others. So, Noah’s message, delivered to all, was “Come!” And everyone could see what it was that he was building, so if they used their heads, they would have joined Noah.

The prophet Zephaniah also faithfully warned of coming judgment. **“I will sweep away everything from the face of the earth,’ declares the LORD”** (1:2), and **“The great day of the LORD is near – near and coming quickly. . . . That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the corner towers. I will bring distress on the people and they will walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD. Their blood will be poured out like dust...”** (1:14-17). Zephaniah prophesied against not only Judah but against her

surrounding nations, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Cush, and Assyria as well. His plea was for repentance to escape the judgment (2:1-3). Why? Why did the prophet need to warn those surrounding Gentile nations? Because God loves all His human creatures, and He wants all to repent and be saved. In the face of horrible wrath, God uses His faithful servants to warn of coming judgment. Love requires it. Today, God's servant is the church, and her mission is the same.

The church in the United States right now, however, is in a precarious situation. It's one that God Himself created by releasing the coronavirus into the world. Church attendance and church programs have been severely disrupted. And the disruption has to be understood as God's doing. Both church leaders and those in the pews are hoping that things can return to the way they were before the virus. It's almost the same with the church right now as when the people of Israel wanted to return to Egypt (Numbers 14). They refused to go forward into the unknown future by simply trusting in God. They wanted only to go back to what was familiar to them, to the world that they knew. We fail to understand that what God asks of us is child-like faith in Him regarding the future, and to actually move our feet and take steps forward, letting Him by the Spirit guide and direct us into carrying out His will. That's faith in action.

I'm arguing here that at this critical moment in history, the church needs to wake up to the desperate need of our friends, relatives and neighbors to get saved now, before it's too late. Instead of trying to relive the past, its Sunday morning sermons and songs, the church needs to completely revisit its mission and began in earnest both personal and church-organized evangelism. And prayer, both individual and organized prayer, sincere heart-felt prayer—maybe even with tears and fasting – for the salvation of souls. And for the revival of the Church from its stupor.

And what a message we have: The coronavirus that's taking away the lives of people all around us, as reported on TV news stations every evening, is a judgment that only anticipates something far, far worse that's about to come. Yet there's rescue from that coming horrible judgment in the Person of Jesus, the crucified and resurrected One. The Gospel is a precious message, one that all must hear while time is still available. That's the urgent need today. God will see to it that His elect respond. So . . . Let's get with it!

Warning to the Church: (I take no pleasure in writing this, but someone needs to.) Don't be smug about your salvation! Too often, I've heard this, "I believe in Jesus, so I'm saved and on my way to heaven. Let someone else in the church do what's necessary. That's why I put money in the plate." Church, beware! Israel also was smug, and for that, God punished her. **"Long ago you broke off your yoke and tore off your bonds; you said, 'I will not serve You! . . . You say, 'I am innocent; He is not angry with me.' But I will pass judgment on you"** (Jeremiah 2:20,35). If we don't serve Christ, we necessarily wind up serving other gods, just as Israel did. That people knew that they were elect. So they couldn't believe that God would possibly be angry with them. But they were called to serve God, and they refused to do it. So God threw them off the Land into exile. And to this day, they are alienated from their God.

The Church is called to serve God too. In Scripture, every follower of Christ is a servant of Christ. We're *all* called to serve Him in some way, according to His revealed will. The clergy/laity distinction that we have in the church is phony, artificial. The only reason we have paid "ministers" (servants) and "priests" is because Emperor Constantine organized it that way so that he could control the church. But it's not biblical. Every believer is to be a minister and a priest.

"Hey wait a minute!" some will argue. "Don't you know John 3:16? Christ died on the cross because of God's love for me. The reason I'm saved is to be an object of God's love." And I reply, "Is John 3:16 the only Scripture that Christians in America know?" God accomplished far more by the death and resurrection of Christ than merely to save sinners. Check out Hebrews 2:14 and 1 John 3:8, for example. Likewise, we're not saved merely to be passive recipients of love. We're saved for far more than that, such as to serve God. Look carefully at Hebrews 9:14 (and notice the "*so that*"), Revelation 1:6, and Romans 7:4 (and notice the "*in order that*").

In Revelation, the last book in the Bible, are letters addressed to specific churches (Ephesus, Smyrna, etc). In these, Christ challenges *individual believers* to be "overcomers." Notice, the text doesn't say, "to the church that overcomes." Christ says, in every letter: "*to him* who overcomes..." The blessings of salvation (ie, being an "overcomer") are for obedient believers. Evidently, that's not everyone in the church. Scripture for the Church closes with that warning. We absolutely *must* be faithful. Especially in these unique end-times, when God's outstretched hand is so clearly evident, and the outpouring of God's wrath is so imminent.