

What Do You See?

Luke 21:25-28: “There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory.

But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Let’s pray:

Lord, we are thankful for the great blessing of being around Your table this morning, the very living Word that was shared to open, the reminder of the preciousness of the blood of the Lamb, and our so great a salvation. And Lord, we are thankful, too, that as we are in these days and seeing many things going on that we do not understand, we know there is one thing that is certain, and it is Your steadfast love, Your heart and Your desire. And Lord, as we come to Your Word this morning, we want to have the eyes of our heart fixed upon You, that we could be those that are really found worthy of You in this hour, prepared, Lord, for Your great return and to understand the days, the times we are living in. We are thankful that You give us Your Word, and we are dependent upon the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of our heart to give us understanding concerning it. In Your wonderful name, we pray. Amen.

I want to share a simple question: What do you see? As you look around the world today and you see everything that is going on, what do you see? No one needs to inform us or tell us anything about the turmoil of these days. These are really exciting days because we know these are the end days, but it is also very serious days because it is the end days. So, we are thankful for our Lord’s immanent return, but we know too that just from the gospels’ sake, there are many on our heart that we desire to have saved. We know that even within the body of Christ there are many of us who need to grow up and get ready. We are thankful that He gives us this time, this age of grace that we are living in to prepare our hearts for His return.

The Signs of the Time

These verses were the verses that our Lord shared with His disciples when they asked Him about His return. “When are You coming back? What will be the signs of Your return?” That is the setting for what He shared, and He went through various things in that Scripture, and then concluded His saying with the verses that we just read. So, we would like to look at these verses.

He begins: “Then there will be signs.” From the very beginning He says, “Watch for the signs.” He is such a gracious God. The signs of the time, the signs that our Lord speaks of are a testimony of His great love, His grace and mercy towards us. He does not leave us in the unknown; He does not leave us in a vacuum. He says, “Out of my love I am going to give you some signs.”

We know in the Old Testament before He came the first time, there were signs, but many missed them; they did not see them. We want to be those who have the eyes of our hearts

enlightened to know the signs of the times that we are living in because they all point to one thing. All the signs in this world point in many different directions. All of the signs that our Lord gives point to one thing, and it is His return. The signs are given for us to be prepared, for us to take these days very seriously and to allow Him to be speaking to our hearts and working within our lives.

Many ask today, “What is going on? What does all of this mean?” The people I fear the most are the ones who say, “This is what is going on. That means this.” Right now, we do not really know. We are in a time of waiting, of watching and praying. And this is why the Lord said, “This is a sign.” This war that is going on in Israel right now could end in a few days, or it could explode into World War III. We do not know, but we are watching and waiting, knowing something is going on.

As He continues in these verses, it is interesting that He talks about a contrast here. In verse 25 He talks about signs in the sun, moon, and stars on the earth. That is what is going on in the earth. In verse 26, He also speaks about powers in the heavens. So, we have a contrast between what is going on in the earth, and what is going on in the heavens, but there is also a relatedness. There is a contrast with relatedness because as Daniel said, “The heavens rule.” The main battle is not upon this earth; the battle is in the heavens of what is going on and those powers are being shaken. That is why we need to have the eyes of our hearts opened in a greater way, to have an understanding of what He is saying to us because as He said in verse 27, “Then they will see the Son of Man is coming in that cloud with power and great glory.” All is related to His return.

Then He gives us this wonderful instruction. This is one of His great “buts” in the Scripture. Whenever we read Scripture, we need to know of these things that are going on, and we need to be able to see, particularly when this little word “but” is getting our attention.

“But when these things begin,” notice that it says, “begin to take place,” not at the end. He warns us from the very beginning. “When all these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing nigh.”

He is giving us these signs throughout history, throughout the days we are living in to warn us that the end is coming, this perusia of our Lord. Our brother spoke of it last week that it is not a one-time event; it is a period when He begins to return. That perusia of the Lord is beginning, and we need to have those eyes of our hearts opened to be able to see what He is really doing in this hour and time.

A Change of Perspective

It is interesting that He says, “Straighten up, lift up your heads.” There are other translations, but that is the essence of what those words are. “Lift your head up.” Why does He do that? Why does He tell us to straighten up and lift our heads up? The issue of why He is doing that is because He wants us to have a change of perspective. We naturally look around at the circumstances of the world—people, events, struggles, fears—and we are fainting. Fear can come upon us as we read later in some verses. But here He says, “Straighten up, lift up your head.” Change your perspective so you do not feel overwhelmed by looking at the things of this world, but look up because He wants us to see Him. He wants us to get our eyes off the natural and on to the spiritual

of what is really going on. Actually, this has been one of the things the Lord has worked with man throughout creation. All through the Scriptures we see God has simply tried to reach down to man to get us to change our perspective of what is going on. If you look at the wisest man that lived upon the earth besides our Lord, Solomon gives us a hint about our perspective.

In Ecclesiastes verses 1:13-14 we have these verses of contrast.

“I set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom concerning all that has been done under heaven. I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, vanity of vanities.”

He shows us a great contrast here of our perspective. Is it under heaven or is it under the sun? Under the sun is our natural eye, what we see upon this earth. He also says, “Under heaven is our spiritual eye.” If we live under the sun, we will simply be discouraged, disappointed, in despair, hopeless. There is not a lot of hope in this world, even in the spirit of humanism which is supposed to be our salvation. The one thing it ends up lacking considerably is the spirit of hope because they say there is no hope in man. But if we are living under heaven, we can be encouraged, and we can be strengthened to press on. There is hopefulness. Why is that? Because when we start seeing things from His perspective, we can see that there is an end in view. Everything that God does is always with an end in view. So, we see throughout Scripture that God has been trying to get man, to get us to quit looking through things of our natural perspective, but to look up and see things from His eternal heavenly perspective.

Examples in the Old Testament

Job

We can look at a few examples in the Old Testament. Job was referred to earlier today, and at the very beginning Job knew a lot about the Lord, and he was really blessed of the Lord. And through some of the things that he shared, we can see that he only knew the Lord in part. But through the trials and the sufferings of life and under the disciplining hand of the Lord, his whole perspective of both himself and God changed because his eyes were opened to look up. He said, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see You.” His perspective had changed, and we too need that change of perspective.

Isaiah

In a similar, familiar passage in Isaiah, who was one of the great prophets of the Lord, was used greatly by the Lord. But there came a point in time in Isaiah’s life when he was greatly shaken. His friend, his cohort, the king he had prospered under, his close confidant, Uzziah died, and it shook Isaiah up. We do not know all the details, but maybe, unconsciously, Isaiah had put some trust in Uzziah because he was a prosperous king. And God said, “No, I do not want you to trust in anything on this earth; I want you to see Me.” And when Isaiah saw the Lord, there is this beautiful testimony verse in Isaiah 6:5: “Then I said, ‘Woe is me for I am ruined because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.’”

His whole perspective changed. His perspective of the Lord changed, his perspective of himself changed, and his perspective of the people changed. He saw that they were just as bad

off as he was. He saw his unclean lips, and it was not until the Lord touched him with a coal that he could go forth. And he went forth, not in the power of his life, but in a new resurrection power, knowing that the Lord had called him and set him apart unto this because he had a change in perspective.

You might wonder how I came up with this title: "What do you see?" Well, it is a phrase used by the Lord among many of the prophets. He would put something natural in front of them and just ask this simple question: "What do you see?"

He put an almond tree, a boiling pot before Jeremiah. For Amos he put the plumb line and the basket of summer fruit. For Zechariah He put that golden lampstand and the flying scroll. These were very natural things that they would be able to identify with. He puts these things in front of them and said, "What do you see?" And they responded naturally at first, saying what they saw. He said, "You answered properly. But then He opened their eyes and gave them a revelation of the spiritual meaning behind what this really meant. Why is He showing them this, and why is He showing them that? We will look at a few examples maybe to help us get a clearer understanding.

Jeremiah

In Jeremiah 1:11: "The word of the Lord came to me saying, What do you see, Jeremiah?" He said, "I see a rod of an almond tree." Jeremiah responds in a very natural way there, and we see how the Lord said, "Well done; you have seen well by watching over my word to perform it." The word he is speaking of here is the promise that God had given to Jeremiah in the first part of this chapter where He called him. He said, "I have set you apart; I have called you to be a prophet to the people of God. They are not going to listen to you; they are going to reject you. It was not a very encouraging call. You are going to face fortified cities, you are going to be up against all these forces of evil, but I am with you. And by this verse He is really showing Jeremiah the power in which Jeremiah can go forth.

Jeremiah was a priest, and once he started thinking about the almond tree he remembered Aaron's rod. And as he looked back, as he remembered what occurred in Numbers 17 when different ones had challenged Aaron, Moses was instructed to take one rod from each tribe and put it before the Lord. And we know that Aaron's rod blossomed, and the fruit came forth which speaks of resurrection life. The others were dead; there was no life there, but this speaks of resurrection life. And the Lord was saying to Jeremiah, "You are not going in the power of your own life; that is death, but you are going forth in the power of resurrection life. You are going forth in the power of My victorious, overcoming life.

That is a great word for us today also, because we do not go forth in the power of our old self; we go forth and make it through each day through the power of His resurrection life. We know our Redeemer lives, and He lives in us. He is on the throne; and He is living in us. There are mysteries we do not fully comprehend, but that is the truth, and that is the power of His life by which we can go forth today. As we look upon things in our self we will faint; fear comes upon us. Nevertheless, by God's grace He can open the eyes of our heart to see. We are not going forth in ourselves; we are going forth in the power of His resurrection. Praise God for that!

Amos

Another one of the prophets that we mentioned was Amos. He lived during Uzziah's time too, and Israel had not been taken into captivity, but Amos is speaking in many ways of God's judgment that is coming.

Amos 7:7-8a: "Thus He showed me, and behold, the Lord was standing by a vertical wall with a plumb line in His hand. The Lord said to me, 'What do you see, Amos?' And I said, 'A plumb line.'" Amos responds in the natural, "It is a plumb line."

Now what is a plumb line? They are actually getting outdated because of Lasers, and other things today. But I remember when I was in high school, I worked for the state highway department on a survey party. And to show you how old I was, I actually surveyed interstate 64 before it was built. They cleared everything out, and I was going down the road with a plumb-line. You have a string, and at the bottom of it there is a weight, and it usually has a little chisel point. We would go down, and I would hold the plumb line. You even must learn how to hold it because at first it kind of wobbles everywhere. After you get a little more accustomed to holding it, you get to that one little place, and you put a little nail right there. Plumb-lines are very specific; you cannot miss it an inch. If we had missed that plumb line by an inch or so, Interstate 64 could have gone to Gordonsville instead of Charlottesville. So, it is very specific.

As Amos sees this matter of the plumb line and people used to use them when they built concrete blocks for buildings, and they would run those lines down and it was exact. The plumb-line is a law. There is no grace in a plumb-line. Don't take that spiritually now. In the natural realm there is no grace. That's it and you must follow it.

The Lord responds to Amos and He says, "I am about to put a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel, and I will spare them no longer." The Lord is getting ready to put a standard right in the midst of the people of Israel, and He is going to measure them by His holy and righteous character. Prophetically, it is speaking obviously in the future of our Lord Jesus Christ to these people. He is our standard; He is our plumb line. But the very character and nature of the Lord was measured against Israel. It was not measured against their works, all the outward things. It was their hearts that were measured, their holy character, and they did not come in; they did not measure up. We know that they did not measure. And when He said, "I will not spare them," we know that judgment came. But it was a judgment that came about in the form of discipline to bring them back to the Lord. He loved them so much; He did not throw them out. He wanted them to come back. And we are thankful as we looked at the table, there were some that went through that discipline who came back to Jerusalem, and they could testify that even though our sins were many, His mercy was more. Praise God for that!

Even today in the relative world that we live in, there is one standard out there. It is the life of Christ. The life of Christ is an absolute standard. He is full of grace and truth, but He is the absolute standard. It is not Christ less something or Christ plus something. It is Christ and Him alone. And that is what we need to be focused on in these last days. That is one of the keys in these last days. There is one thing necessary—knowing Him, following Him.

Zechariah

Then we come to Zechariah. Maybe some of us are a little more familiar with this particular prophecy. We know that Zechariah was one of those who was involved in the recovery work with the people of God in Jerusalem, and Haggi also was there. This is all in the spirit of recovering the testimony of God in Jerusalem.

Zechariah 4:2-5: "He said to me, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps on it with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on the top of it; also two olive trees by it, one on the right side of the bowl and the other on its left side. Then I said to the angel who was speaking with me saying, "What are these, my lord?" So, the angel who was speaking with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my Lord.""

Again, that is encouraging because He showed Zechariah this vision and what it was. And Zechariah said, "What is it?" He said, "You do not know?" He was not trying to intimidate him. Sometimes we feel like God is saying, "If you do not know I cannot use you anymore." No, He will show you by His grace. He had an honest, transparent relationship with the Lord. And that is so important in the days we are living in because we will see some things that we do not understand. And God will say, "You do not understand that?" And we say, "Nope, I don't." Are we afraid to tell God we do not understand what He says or what He does? Praise God, there are many throughout the Scriptures, such as Daniel, who did not understand what God was doing, and here you have Zechariah. These are men of God who said, "I do not understand what is going on." But that shows me that this is a person who is a genuine disciple of the Lord because he is teachable, and we need to be teachable in this hour to really learn from Him what He is calling us to.

After Zechariah said he did not understand the angel said, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.'"

Zechariah was involved in a great recovery work of God, and the great comforting word that the Lord gave to Zechariah was, "It is not by your might or power, but it is by My Spirit." That is how all of this is going to get done. He was involved in the recovery of the testimony of God. Zechariah was a priest from a priestly family. He knew what the lampstand was about, that it was to hold the light, it was to testify of God.

Today, that is really the purpose of the church. That is why we are here as a lampstand because in Revelation chapter 1-3, the Lord is walking among the lampstands, and we know that they were various local churches. He wants every assembly to be a precious testimony of upholding the glory of His Son Jesus Christ. That is the call He has upon us in this hour. It is the same word of encouragement to us. It is not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord. That's it! It is Him! He is doing the great work that He began, and He will complete it. It is interesting, but if you look later on in that chapter, Zechariah is there again holding a plumbline. Christ is that standard, and it gets repeated again.

He said, "What are these sons of oil? What are these trees pouring forth oil? And what he is saying is that it is the life of the saints. It is the life of brothers and sisters exercising our priestly ministry, exercising our kingly ministry, exercising our walk with Him, releasing the Spirit of God

who comes in and brightens that lamp. It is more and more of Christ within us coming forth making the light brighter to shine forth from that lampstand. The lampstand is simply to show the light which is His life. And that is what we want to be able to see and really come into.

In these days we are living in, there is a lot going on. And we see that each one of these brothers had a change of perspective from their natural to see what God had for them. And this is really what God is doing for all of us in this day and time. He is putting forth this question to us, "What do we see?" There is a quote that our Brother Lance related to what we are seeing, and I appreciate this. He said, "Ones knowledge of prophetic events is vanity without some understanding of God's purpose." You can know all these things through Daniels, Ezekiel, and Revelation, but unless you know something of God's purpose, something of God's end, what is it all leading to? It is vanity; it is the vanity of vanities. We see that God always does something with His end in view.

Knowing God's Heart

What is His heart? What is His purpose? We know that He wants to have that living personal relationship with us on a daily basis, His life within us. Then He wants to be dwelling among us as His people. He wants to have a people together that are a living expression unto Him. He desires that corporate expression, and then He has His end in view.

What is His end? That His Son would have that eternal companion. We hear a lot about the bride being made ready. But may it never become so familiar to us. As we were praying before the meeting today, one of the things that was mentioned was that within our Christian life the things the Lord has done can become so familiar to us that we can lose the preciousness of them. With the forgiveness of sins we can become so accustomed to it: "Oh yeah, my sins are forgiven." We lose the preciousness of that great work which was done. We talk about having fellowship together, all the familiar words of being built together, but may the Lord restore the freshness of these things.

And we always must keep in mind God having a purpose and an end. Almost every message should include that. It should be the goal of every message in preparing us for the end and keeping always in view for that bride to make herself ready. And may it never become so familiar to us; it is not an abstract thing. It is a reality and a fact that He is doing a great work of preparing us as His people. We know that He uses His body, His church, however we want to describe it, the warrior, the family of God, the house of God. All these things are that living corporate expression of His people on this earth at this point in time. It is one goal, to testify of Him and to prepare His people for His return.

Once you begin to see some of this, we gain a whole different perspective of why the Lord said to the disciples, "Lift up your heads, straighten up, you need to change your perspective." As you read through that chapter, the Lord says, "Lift up your eyes." Why is this? What is the real purpose? We must see that the call upon us in this hour is for our perspective to change because we are too earthbound. We are too attached to this earth; too many things are governing us. And we have got to be set free of them to allow Him to do the great work that He is doing.

We are thankful how as we look upon this whole matter of our perspective being changed, to me it adds a whole new meaning to Paul's prayer in Ephesians chapter 1. If you think about the necessity for a change of perspective from the earthly to the spiritual, this prayer takes on a whole new meaning, the absolute necessity of this prayer.

Discernment

Ephesians 1:17-18: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,"

How we need to have the eyes of our heart, our spiritual eyes opened, knowing His heart, knowing His purpose, knowing His end. This is so vital for us at this hour. As you think about this, as our Lord spoke about the various things that are going to occur, many of those things have been occurring throughout history. When He spoke about plagues, earthquakes, wars, they have been going on throughout history. There was the plague of Justinian back in 500, and I am not going to go into all these. But there was about thirty-fifty million people who died, and you think of the size of the world at that point.

In the 14th century you had the black death. Seventy-five-two hundred million people died. That is a pretty good estimate there. And it took out almost half of Europe at that point in time.

When they came to the new world, you had smallpox, plagues, the 1918th flu, called the Spanish flu, and 50-100 million people were killed. Later on, in the eighties to the present, we have HIV and AIDS that killed a considerable number. And now there is COVID going on.

These things have been going on throughout time. It makes you say, "Okay, what is the difference? They had earthquakes, the number one earthquake back in 1556 was in China, 830,000 people died. And we are more familiar with the one in Hatai in 2010, 300,000 died. The oldest one was down in Antakya, Turkey, which was before the Richter scale existed, 250,000 died. Hundreds of thousands of people have died in earthquakes. If all of these are in China, may the Lord send a message there. There were ones in Iran and Syria and a severe warning in Japan back in 1923. Again, these earthquakes have been going on throughout history. The Lord says, "When these things are going on."

Then it talks about wars. Obviously, World War II was the most destructive one. The wars from World War I forward have been going on throughout history which are tragic. The days in which we are living we have a greater appreciation of life. The world is in horror because at this point about 15,000 to 16,000 people have been killed in Israel and Gaza, but that is not the greatest tragedy in the world. If you look at some of these other events such as Vietnam War where three million were killed, Sino Japanese War, 15-20 million. Those were huge wars. What we are seeing now are little skirmishes, but they are still wars, and they are taking human life. For our sake, they called it World War I because if you look at most of the older history books, it was not called World War I; it was called the Great War. They thought it was going to be the war to end all wars, but it wasn't. All of these have been going on.

What is the difference? Why is this such an issue? The Lord continues right after that.

In verses 29-31: “Then he told them a parable: behold, (he wants you to look at this.) the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So, you also, when you see these things happening, recognize (discern) that the kingdom of God is near.”

The Fig Tree

“Behold the fig tree.” What does the fig tree speak of? Throughout the Scriptures the fig tree speaks of Israel. Now I am not going to get into all the various interpretations, but the fig tree does speak of Israel. Some have called it “God’s Time Clock.” The only thing I know is that God says, “Behold the fig tree.” So, when something is going on in Israel, we need to be watching and praying. God said, “Behold it!” He is trying to get our attention, and we need to be cognizant of that because this is one of the signs. Israel is a sign to us in this hour, and we need to recognize it and be able to discern the signs of the times. As we think of Israel as a sign of the times and the fig tree, some of us have seen the recreation or rebirth of the nation of Israel in 1948 and then in 1967 Jerusalem was unified to Israel. It had been under the control of the Gentiles, and the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled. I am not going to talk a lot about Israel because Kenny is going to get to Romans, chapters 9, 10, and 11, so I will leave all questions of Israel to Kenny, and he will answer all of them when he gets there.

Whenever anything is going on, we need to take note, and taking note does not mean from our earthly perspective. Naturally, we think politically, we think economically, all of this. But the Lord is saying, “Take note, recognize what is going on. Then what does He instruct us to do? It is precious how He continues with our wonderful instructions.

Instructions for Guarding Our Hearts

Verses 34-35: “Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth.”

Be on guard; take heed; focus your attention. Being on guard means there is an implication that there will be a potential conflict; there is going to be some enemy activity. Remember what the Lord instructed Adam and Eve in the garden. They were to be on guard because there was a potential problem there. They did not guard it too well, and we have been suffering ever since. When the Lord says to be on guard, we need to be aware that the days we are living in are serious; they are exciting, but they are dangerous, and we can fall away. This is why we need to be on guard. What are we guarding? We are guarding our hearts. This is the seat; this is the place where God wants to work within us because our hearts are the thrones of our affections.

Our brother last week spoke on “first love.” First love lives in our hearts, and that has to have the preeminent place. If our hearts are not right with Him, it clouds our whole perspective. Remember, in Ephesians it talks about the eyes of our heart being enlightened which means to see things clearly. So we have to have the eyes of our heart clarified. Some of us when we get a little older have a cataract issue. Our hearts can have cataracts, and things become a little

distorted. We need to have those cataracts removed from our hearts daily, so that we can see Him clearly, and we will be able to stand in the days that we are living in.

He tells us what we need to guard our hearts from so that they will not be weighted down. When you have a weighted down heart, you have a heavy heart. Naturally, if your heart gets too heavy, it cannot function like it is supposed to. When our heart gets weighted down, it is not functioning in a healthy way like it was designed to. It is not to be weighted down with dissipation, the drunkenness and the worries of life. Dissipation is just over indulging in something. It can be work, it can be sports, it can be social media, it can be video games, it can be evil things such as pornography—over indulging. So do not be dissipated.

It talks about drunkenness. Now I think He is speaking far more here than just alcohol because ones drink to escape. So, we find many ways to escape. Each one of us has a little Houdini in us. We are great escape artists, and we find ourselves in a situation where we are going to escape over here, escape over there. We can escape to work, we can escape to hobbies, we can escape to activities, which are not necessarily bad, but you can go to the gym to escape everything. Now we should go to the gym, we should exercise, but there is a balance in everything of how we need to know of His leading and guiding and not be an escapist but be a realist in facing things head on.

He talks about the worries of life, eating, drinking, money. There is so much that worries us in life, and most of the worries of life never come about. The “what ifs,” what about this, what is that? It never happens, but we can get so occupied it weighs us down. And He is telling us this because He says, “That day is going to come, and you do not want to get caught as in a trap.” That means you are caught off guard when it comes upon this earth because there is a day that is coming. Again we are not going to get into interpretations today.

As He encourages us, He says, “Watch at every season, making supplication that you may prevail to escape all that will come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man.” There are three vital issues here, watching, praying, and standing before the Son of Man. Regardless of what our interpretation is about standing before the Son of Man, that is a serious thing because we will all stand before the Son of Man at the judgment seat of Christ. When that occurs, different interpretations will say different times. But II Corinthians 5 and Romans 15 tell us that we will all stand before the Son of Man at the judgment seat of Christ. And we need to be ready, we need to be watching, and we need to be praying.

And when we think about this matter of watching which means to stay awake, keep on the alert, and be ready. Remember, it is watching and guarding our hearts. I remember being in the military and going out on those night watches for about four or five hours. You would have your rifle, maybe a pistol, and some type of knife. I was in the aviation part of the Navy, and I was just a nineteen year old kid. And I was guarding these places where these multimillion-dollar airplanes were stored to keep people from getting them. However, this is no comparison to what we are watching for. We are watching and waiting for our Lord, which is priceless, and we need to be among those.

The first time you go through a night watch, you are very alert because your adrenaline is going so strong. But after you go through a few of the different night watches, you start to become familiar. Maybe that sound you heard the first night, you say, "Oh, that was just a sound; it's nothing." It begins to become familiar, and you end up letting your guard down just a little. Then the adrenaline wears off, and you are out there just waiting for the end of the watch, and your mind begins to drift. What am I going to do? What am I going to have for breakfast? Am I going to have those biscuits and gravy? Am I going to have that fatback? Your mind drifts away from what you are supposed to be doing.

There are so many temptations like that. That is why it talks about watching and being on the alert, that we would stay fresh because there is nothing that wakes you up quicker during a night watch than some strange sound or something that goes boom in the night. Suddenly you are really alert, and we do not want those booms in the night waking us up. We want to be on the alert, awake already to be able to press on through to all that He has for us. The Holy Spirit is there. As we are watching, as we are praying before Him, the Holy Spirit is there in regard to the fulfillment of prophecy.

I think it is good just to remember a second, we can have prophetic events that are near and ones that are far away, distant. What is our perspective? If you see two prophetic events, and the Holy Spirit has not given us a perspective, then we think both are happening. Well, no, this is happening now, but this one is happening later. It keeps things in perspective. Some prophecies are partial fulfillments, some are multiple fulfillments. I think the prophecy of salvation is the greatest multiple fulfilled prophecy in history because ones are saved every day. Praise God for that! The partial will eventually be whole. An example of a partial fulfillment was on the day of Pentecost. If you look at all that Peter repeated from Joel on the day of Pentecost, we can see that everything did not happen on that day, but there will be a day when it will occur. So, we tend to make things black or white, absolute, but the prophecies can have a lot of variations and timing and ways. This is where we need to have the Holy Spirit to teach us and show us with the eyes of our heart what is going on. We cannot see it with a natural perspective, but from that heavenly, eternal spiritual perspective the eyes of our hearts can be open. And the beauty we have also is being with brothers and sisters, and we can have a sensing, "Is this what is going on?" We cannot be absolute and say, "This is that." But no, we can just submit to one another and really hear what God is doing.

In addition to watching, it says to pray. In times in your Christian life have you heard about the necessity for prayer? Talking about a stuck record, we all hear about the necessity of prayer, but if we know something of His heart, something of His desire, something of His purpose, we cannot help but pray. Once we are captured by Him, we might not have a full understanding of everything going on, but once we see He is doing a great work, He is bringing us together with an end in view, we cannot help but pray. And praise God, we can join with one another in corporate prayer praying together. One of the reasons there is not much kingdom prayer within the church today is because of lack of vision, a lack of understanding of what God's heart and God's purpose is. So, this is why Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1 becomes more and more critical. These are exciting days; they are serious days. We are approaching that end, and would we be those that recognize the signs of the time. We are thankful how we have a beautiful picture in the Old Testament when

David was getting ready to bring in the kingdom, and he had those sons of Issachar who understood the times that they were living in and what Israel should do. We need that spirit of the sons of Issachar among the people of God today that we would have that understanding of what He is doing and what the church, what His people should be doing in this hour.

There are many things going on in the seen and the unseen. This is where the eyes of our hearts need to really be able to see that, and to recognize it, but not in a fearful way. This is one of the things that the Lord said about how fear and the fainting of men will come upon. You can see how quickly fear can grasp us. To me one of the tragic things that came out of the whole COVID was a fear. You have fear of Covid on one side and fear of the vaccine on the other. Everybody is just fearful of something. And it is tragic how fear can grip us and govern us in a way. There is so much we do not know, but fear can come upon us, and it brings paralysis. When you are fearful you cannot even look up. You are paralyzed; fear grips us. And how we need to allow Him to be meeting us in a very wonderful and powerful way to see.

It is a very serious thing when we stand before the Lord. The first time we will be standing before Him is before that judgment seat of Christ, and that is a serious thing. And we need to be allowing the Holy Spirit to be working within our hearts now to be dealing with us, putting aside the things that are not necessary, putting aside the things that distract us, putting aside the priorities of our life that are different than Him. Our brother shared on first love last week, and I appreciated that; maybe a secondary way of looking at first love.

First love is what governs your life. What is governing our life? Is it a first love of ourselves or is it a first love of Him? We need to come to that place where He has our first love, where using Jerry's recent phrase, "where we are all in." Many ways, and it is amazing over the years and throughout the Scriptures the many different ways God tries to get our attention through various words, through sermons, through even songs to wake us up. But these are serious times that we are living in, and we need to wake up in these days that we could really see what is going on. Sometimes when something is far away not touching us directly like this war with Israel and Hamas, the seriousness of it does not impact us as much. In the days we are living in. When you are watching it almost like with live stream, you get a little more impact. But sadly for many of us, it takes something touching us personally before we wake up, and we do not want that. We want to wake up hearing His voice and that call.

As we look around the world today at the huge flood in Dubai, they had never experienced that before. In Bolivia, Brazil the Amazon River is drying up. There is a huge drought, and many of the tributaries are completely dry with stinking fish all over the place. There are so many wars in Africa that we cannot keep track of them, wars in Sudan that we do not even hear about, thousands are being killed, genocide. This is why we need to reengage our hearts with the Lord in a way that regardless of what happens, we are not governed by the things upon this earth. Our burdens and the prayers of our heart do not come from the things of this earth but from His throne, from His perspective. When He is calling us to wake up, He has a great heart, He has a great purpose, He is doing a marvelous work. It is fabulous the ones who are getting saved throughout the world today, and we want to be those who are watching and praying so that we can pray more intelligently with a spiritual intelligence of what is going on. Many times, when a

crisis starts, we really do not know, and we have to pray, “Lord, You are on the throne; the heavens rule, and my Your will prevail in this.” That is a perfectly fine prayer. But as we go on maybe the Lord will shed more light and more specifics to it. But we would be those that really are awakened for the exciting times we are living in, the serious times we are living in, and the dangerous times we are living in. However, the hope we have is that the I AM is with us, and He will never leave us or forsake us. His abundant grace will be there to carry us through all the way. But we do not want to take the grace of God in vain and waste it. Instead, we will be receiving it, responding to it, and growing in Christ to be those who will be hastening His return, hastening the coming of the Lord. And may the eyes of our heart be open that we could see, that we could look up and have that heavenly perspective. May our hearts be guarded in a greater way to be prepared and diligently watch and pray for His purpose and His ending. We have talked a lot. We love to sing this song, Marantha, but are we really aware of the seriousness of what will occur when He comes. There is a lot of joy; there is a greatness there. I do not want to paint it in a negative way; it is an exciting time, but it can be a very eye-opening time also, and we want to be those who by His grace respond to it and allow Him to meet us now. We do not know how much time we have left.

Let’s pray:

Lord, we are thankful how in Your great love all throughout Scripture, You have a simple desire that men would look up and see You, that the eyes of men’s hearts would be enlightened to see You, Your heart and Your purpose. Lord, it is not something we can do in ourselves. Revelation comes from You, and we are thankful how you are waiting and anxious to reveal Your Son in us. It brings You such great pleasure. So, Lord, we do want to be those that are offering ourselves to You, that You would continue to be working within our hearts and lives, preparing us for the days that we are living in. Lord, revolutionize our daily lives, revolutionize even our thoughts of watching and guarding our hearts. Revolutionize our prayer lives, Lord, that You could really have the people that You are calling for at this hour and this time. We are thankful how we remembered earlier today how you had ones like an Ezra, You had a Nehemiah, You had a Haggai, You had a Zechariah, You had ones that were willing to leave the luxuries of Babylon to go back which, to the natural eye, looked like a deserted, defeated bunch of old burned out stones. But when the eyes of their hearts were opened, they saw Your heart, Your purpose, and Your jealousy for Jerusalem. Lord, give us that jealousy for Your interest within each of our hearts. In Your precious name. Amen.