

Christ's Greatest Prophetic Discourse 8/8

Take your Bibles and turn to Matthew 24:36-51. This is the eighth and final sermon in the series. We have been studying the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24. This is a detailed examination of impending judgment of the earth and all who dwell upon it. Frankly, it's a sobering harbinger of eternal hell. It's really sad that even though this is what I have entitled "Christ's Greatest Prophetic Discourse," you will probably not hear one in a thousand churches that will ever even mention it these days. It is a topic of impending judgment, and therefore it is not seeker sensitive. Obviously the Lord didn't understand the principles of seeker sensitive churches. His great love for sinners utterly eclipsed any selfish ambition to attract a crowd. Thus He preached repentance. He preached that people should place their faith in Him and flee from the wrath to come. This is a merciful warning that we are studying.

May I remind you that in His first coming, Jesus said in John 12:47, "I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world." But friends, this will not be the case in His second coming. In His second coming He does come to judge the world. The prophetic warnings of impending judgment have always been God's way of arousing men from their slumber of sin. As a pastor, I cannot stand before you and merely tickle your ears with flattery and humor, careful not to disturb people from a fool's paradise—a paradise where you live for today with no concern for tomorrow. I cannot do that and then watch people slowly slip into the flames of hell without warning.

The truth is, dear friends, Jesus is coming. He's coming again someday. The same Jesus that is meek and lowly is also the eternal judge that is enraged and holy. He is coming again. Hebrews 9:27 tells us that, "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment." Obviously therefore it's important for us to preach about days of judgment. In Acts 10:42 we read that the, "(Lord Jesus) has been ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead." And Jesus said Himself in John 5:22, "The Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son." Later on in verse 27 He says, "and has given Him authority to execute judgment." On that day of judgment no one will deny the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. That debate will be over once and for all. In fact, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord.

He will return someday. He says in Matthew 25:32 that He will judge all the nations, as He has done through history. The apostle Paul describes a day in Romans 2:16 "when...God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus." Can you imagine that? Even the secrets of men will be judged, especially those of the unredeemed. We must remember that no sin will ever go unpunished, even those sins pandered in the secret caverns of one's imagination. What may be considered secret to us is not secret to Him. In fact, every sin that is ever committed, whether private or public, was perpetrated in the presence of an omnipresent and omniscient God. Every monstrous crime that was ever committed in the shadows will someday be exposed in the full light of His glory at the great white throne judgment for those who have not placed their faith in Him.

Everyone who has rejected Christ will someday be raised from the dead, the Bible teaches. They will be given a body that is suited for hell. In Revelation 20:13 we read that, "The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works." These are the prophecies of impending judgment for those who have rejected Christ. Like lasers, the penetrating eyes of omniscient holiness will someday peer into the very soul of every heart and will unmask every hypocrite, and He will disclose every secret evil. As Hebrews 4:13 says, "there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

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Someday all the lies, all the vulgarity, all the arrogance, all of the insolence, all the immorality, all of it will be brandished in the full blaze of divine disclosure. In fact, Jesus has said in Matthew 12:36 that "...every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment." The greatest tragedy that burdens my heart is that many who think they belong to Him will also stand before Him, realizing that they had deceived themselves. Jesus said in Matthew 7:22-23, "Many will say to Me in that day," referring to the day of judgment, "'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness!'" Then, after the righteous sentence has been issued, according to Matthew 13:42 He "will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Dear friends, these things are not pleasant, but they are real, they are true. Only a fool would say differently.

On a positive note, we serve a merciful and loving Savior, who has offered grace and mercy to all who will place their faith in Him. He has paid the penalty for our sins and He has given us the gospel of grace whereby men can be saved. We have a Savior who still patiently carries with a merciful invitation to come unto Him for forgiveness.

Charles Spurgeon once said, many years ago, "The Lord keeps the scaffold standing till he hath built up the fabric of his church. Not yet are the elect all called out from among the guilty sons of men; not yet are all the redeemed with blood redeemed with power and brought forth out of the corruption of the age into the holiness in which they walk with God. Therefore the Lord waiteth for a while. But do not deceive yourselves. The great day of his wrath cometh on apace, and your days of reprieve are numbered."

So we return to Christ's greatest prophetic discourse. My prayer is that this will awaken sinners from the slumber of disbelief, and will also awaken saints from the slumber of apathy. As a footnote, I must say that I grieve to see so many who disregard the power and purpose of the prophetic scriptures, saying that they are merely metaphor, and that all of the prophecies were fulfilled back in A.D. 70. Dear friends, it's quite the contrary. He has given us His prophetic Word to confirm His promises as we look at all the prophecies that have been fulfilled literally, but also to arouse sinners by those prophecies that *will* be fulfilled. That is our prayer.

We return to Matthew 24, where Jesus has given evidence again of His mercy by answering the questions of the disciples regarding the nature and duration of Israel's desolation. He has told them about the sign of His coming. He has provided detailed descriptions of the final pre-kingdom judgments at the end of the age, that time when the mediatorial kingdom of the Old Testament prophecy is finally realized; when the laws of the kingdom will be written on the hearts of its citizens, and the Messiah King will be the One to reinforce them. This will be a time when the royal blessings once promised to the nation Israel will finally be poured out upon her. When the fullness of the Gentiles will finally be over. When Israel's sufferings will have ceased. When her sentence of divine judgment will finally be served and her spiritual eyes opened to the one whom they have pierced. As promised in Romans 11:26-27, it will be the time when, "all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, 'The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. And this My Covenant with them, when I take away their sins.'"

While Jesus has provided unmistakable warnings indicating that He is coming, He states in Matthew 24:36, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the

Father alone.” May I remind you again, that during His incarnation He voluntarily and temporarily restricted certain aspects of His divinity, including the specific moment of His future arrival. He did know the signs that would lead up to that time. Can you imagine what it would be like in our world today if we knew specifically the date when Jesus would return? If He had said, “On March 13, 2007 at 7:00 A.M. I will return to this earth.” Can you imagine what would go on? Certainly evangelism would lose its sense of urgency, because procrastination would rule the day. Christians would no longer live in the light of His imminent return. We would be like my grandchildren at times. If they know that Mommy or the grandparents are gone somewhere for a little while, then they don't worry about having to look for them as they get into things that they shouldn't. But if they know that at any second Papa might come around that door, then they're always looking and it tends to curtail some of the activities of a more devious nature. The same is true with the Church. Living in light of Christ's return is a powerful motivation for holy living. In fact in 1 John 3:3 we read that, “Everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as he is pure.”

If we knew exactly what the date would be, certainly unbelievers would postpone their conversion, those that would want to someday place their faith in Christ. Many would say that they want to enjoy as many pleasures as they possibly can before submitting to Christ. And of course such an attitude of shallow conviction and hardness of heart would be indicative of someone who would never be saved in the first place. Certainly that would be the mindset.

I might also add that I believe Jesus knows precisely when He will be returning, now that He's back sitting at the right hand of God the Father. In Matthew 28:18 we read that “all authority has been given to (Him) in heaven and on earth.” So it is reasonable to assume He knows when He's coming now. But here, Jesus emphasizes that no one knows the time of His return. This reinforces the concept that we as a people need to be watchful and prepared and faithful. These are the very attitudes that He now underscores for the generation of people that will live during the time of the tribulation. I believe it also has application for those of us awaiting the rapture of the Church as well. What we see is that He illustrates three attitudes and three analogies in verses 37-51. This breaks down nicely into an outline, three simple concepts that we'll look at, especially for those of that day, but even for us. We are to be:

1. *Alert*
2. *Ready*
3. *Faithful and Sensible*

First He emphasizes the concept of being *alert*. You could even look at it as the idea of being sober, reasonable, serious and solemn about the reality that He's coming again. Notice what He says beginning in verse 37. “For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away.” So shall the coming of the Son of Man be. We could characterize the days of Noah as we look back and read about them in the book of Genesis, as days of granite indifference to the faithful preaching of impending judgment. The people of that day, and of today, and certainly the days right before the Lord comes—and that could be very, very soon—the people are blinded by their lusts. In that day they scoffed at Noah. It's interesting as you read the text you find that he preached for 120 years while he built the ark. For 120 years he was the laughingstock of the world. Those of us who preach the second return of Christ know exactly what that feels like, to be the laughingstock of the world.

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The people were blinded by their lusts. "They were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage." In other words, they were living life as usual, utterly apathetic towards the holiness of God and the merciful warning God was giving them through His servant. They didn't understand, in verse 39, until the flood came and took them away. Even today nothing has changed very much. If the world refuses to acknowledge God as Creator, they will also refuse to believe in Him as Judge. Is it any wonder that the world considers those who believe in the second coming of Christ as the lunatic fringe of religion?

Think of the parallels even now in our culture with the days of Noah. How much worse it will be as things get worse and worse just before the Lord comes. First of all, when I think of our culture, we probably live in the most shallow and superficial culture that has ever existed. People simply do not take God and His Word seriously. There is no sense of alertness here, despite the faithful witness on the radio and in some books. Adults today have for the most part been raised on television, video games, sporting events, vulgar music, sound bites and Cliffs Notes. Naturally this bleeds over into the Church where preaching must be short and entertaining. People are incapable, for the most part—at least they think they are—of deep thought. You have to give them bumper stickers in between a few jokes. Generations of people have been raised on what I call "cotton candy Christianity" with a steady diet of superficial, junk food "sermonettes for Christianettes." Therefore people no longer have a hunger for the deep things of God. As a result, people do not understand Bible doctrine. If you don't understand Bible doctrine, you'll have no discernment. If you have no discernment, you will not grow in Christ. If you do not grow in Christ you will have no power in your life. And this for the most part describes much of what is called the Church today.

Truth really doesn't matter anymore, because the thought is that everybody's got their own truth and we need to be tolerant of everybody's truth. Even if it differs from mine, it's your truth. And since nobody can really know the truth, why listen to any in-depth Bible study? As a result, people are incapable today of debating even the most simplistic philosophies of man. Seminaries today in many places are doing away with courses in theology and replacing them with courses in marketing. After all, it's important to learn how to attract a crowd. But dear friends, there's a huge difference between a *church* and a *crowd*.

Christian publishing comes along and caters to this kind of superficiality by publishing trite self-help books, pop psychology, and all these books filled with the theological Ebonics of our day, talking about the new "smiley-faced Jesus" of our culture. You see this in books like many of the best sellers. I've talked about the *Prayer of Jabez* and *The Purpose Driven Life*, etc. Then of course contemporary Christian music comes along and trivializes the holiness of God even more and puts it all to music. I don't want to paint with too broad of a brush because there are songs and books and churches that certainly do preach the truth and we rejoice in that. But that is becoming increasingly more rare.

As a result, we have churches that are ostensibly Christian, but they have no fear of God. There's no passionate pursuit of personal holiness. There's no grasp of the deep, rich things of Bible theology. There's no discernment. I fear that in many cases, when Jesus does return, that many of those folks will be like those in the days of Noah that did not understand until the flood came and took them all away. Certainly this will be the prevailing mindset during the tribulation. During the tribulation, there will be a combination of superficial religionists of every imaginable stripe. We're seeing that even today, combined with the Howard Stern "vulgarians" who hate God and mock His Word.

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We've studied the Scriptures, especially in light of what will happen during the time of the tribulation. With the Church gone, and the restraint of the Holy Spirit now removed, the Antichrist will be allowed to wreak havoc upon the world as He reigns for forty-two months. As a result mankind, with all of his sinful passions, will be released and the world will continue in a moral freefall that we're already seeing today. It will be like the days of Noah. In fact, if we go back to Genesis 6:5 we read about the people of that day. There God says, "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." In the Hebrew the idea of "the intent of the thoughts of his heart" could be translated the *imaginations*. In other words, in those days, even their imaginations, all of their thought life, was dominated by constant wickedness.

We know that during the tribulation, during those seven years that will be dominated by false religions, we will see much of the same thing because these religions will give license to every imaginable form of immorality and vice. Again we see the precursors of that today. Even today we see the rise of the great harlot church that we read about, especially in the book of Revelation 17, the great harlot church of the ecumenical movement. We read about the Laodecean apostasy of neo-evangelicalism that we see today.

I have to say that I rejoice in this precious church, and you people, and many churches around the world like this church. For you, apostasy is very foreign. You will not stand for it. My friend, Dr. H.T. Spence, who has spoken here recently wrote something I felt worthy of quoting to you. Here's what he has to say.

"While there is a growing, wholesale falling away in the earthly church and its movements, there is a remnant of Christians who know the anointing of the Spirit of God for personal living and preaching, for maturing in sound doctrine, for fruit of the Spirit in character, for prayer, for discernment into the conditions of our times, and for patience in waiting for the catching away of Christ's Bride. At this time in history, four burdens must be consistently evident in every true remnant preacher: (1) the existence of the apostasy, (2) the urgency of the second coming of Christ, (3) the need of daily communion with God, and (4) the call to the remnant for revival unto the glorious Christ. If amidst his declaration of the Gospel these four areas are not a regular cry from his preaching heart, then he has capitulated to the Neo-Christianity of his times."

While we give God all the glory for His severe mercy and grace in the lives of the redeemed remnant who faithfully await Him, we also know that such is an anomaly in the world today. The Bible is clear that just before the Lord returns, the whoredom of Satanic deception and false religion will dominate the world. Despite the supernatural gospel presentation during the time of the tribulation, of the 144,000, the stunning conversion of Israel, the two witnesses, the angel in heaven and so on, combined with all of the horrific plagues wreaking havoc on mankind during the tribulation period, man will still remain committed to his unbelief, to his selfish agenda. We read in Revelation 9, after describing the sixth trumpet judgment that kills a third of mankind, the Holy Spirit speaks through the inspired apostle in verses 20-21 and he graphically describes the hardness of hearts in that day. Here's what he says it will be like.

"And the rest of mankind," in other words the rest left alive, "who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts." Can you

imagine that? What a testimony to the depravity of man. As we think about it, mankind has always preferred self over God. Men have always preferred sin over righteousness. Frankly, many prefer hell over holiness. In that day, the wickedness will be so great as to cause blasphemers to shake their puny little fists in God's face even as they fall into the flames that they have been thrown into.

But Jesus then goes on to illustrate what will happen when the waters of judgment will envelop those who disregard His warnings. In verses 40-41 He says, "Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left." We have a similar description in Matthew 25, a description of divine separation between the sheep and the goats. The sheep represent the redeemed, and the goats the unredeemed. This helps us understand what Jesus is saying here in these verses. What He's describing here is not the rapture of the Church, he's describing judgment. One will be taken into judgment and another will be left to enter the millennial kingdom. In verse 42 He says, "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming."

But not only are they to *be alert*, the second analogy illustrates another very important attitude for that generation, as well as for ours. We are to secondly, *be ready*. Notice verses 43-44 He says, "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will."

When I was thinking about this text I was thinking about that time on 9/11 when the United States was attacked by the Islamists. If we had known that they were coming, we would have been ready. But obviously we didn't know. They still want to attack us, but we don't know when. If we did, we would be ready. So what must we do? We must be ready all the time. That's exactly the idea here. Like a thief that will break into a house, that would come unexpectedly at a time you would never know. Certainly a thief would never announce "Hey, I'm going to break into your house tonight." Since we don't know the exact time that the Son of Man will come, we need to be ready. That's the point. People might say well, how do you be ready? How do you prepare yourself for this? The idea is to be spiritually prepared. You need to be saved. You need to be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, ready to meet Jesus as your Savior, not as your Judge.

Jesus gave a similar warning in Luke 12:35-37. He says, "Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps alight, and be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them." Everyone here in this room today and everyone within the sound of my voice, could potentially meet Jesus today. If death were to come you would, as a believer, go into His presence—absent from the body and present with the Lord—and it would be a time of great joy. But if you're not a believer, if you really do not love the Lord Jesus Christ, then this would be a horrible day, the day of your death, because your spirit would immediately go to hell to await the final judgment.

But also, for all of us who know Christ, I believe that we could be raptured at any time. We could meet Him at that time and then others might be left and perchance may come to a saving knowledge during the time of the tribulation. Certainly many will. They will see Him ultimately at the second coming,

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unless they died before or were martyred. The point is, we must all be ready. We must be sober, realizing that He could come at any time.

The Lord also adds something here. He says that we are to be, thirdly, *faithful and sensible*. Notice beginning in verses 45-51 He says, "Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But if that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time,' and shall begin to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, and shall cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; weeping shall be there and the gnashing of teeth."

The imagery here is quite obvious. A master has two kinds of slaves. The Master would be analogous to God. One slave would be the faithful and sensible slave that would represent believers. The evil slave represents unbelievers. Think about this with me. All true believers, all of you who know and love Christ, are to be faithful and sensible servants of the Master until He comes. I don't think we would argue that. We have all been given a sacred trust to manage the household of God, illustrative of all that the Master possesses, not just the Church but also our families and everything else that we come into contact with. As I was thinking about it, here's just a few of the things that we're responsible to do as faithful, sensible slaves. These are the types of things that the Lord wants to see us doing when He comes.

We are to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength. And to love our neighbors as much as we love ourselves. The Master has told us that we are to deny ourselves and follow Christ, willing to even go to our death by taking up our cross daily. In Luke 10 we're told by Jesus that the number one priority in the Christian life is to avail ourselves to every opportunity to be taught the Word of God and to humble ourselves before it. We are to long for the sincere milk of the Word like newborn babes long for the mother's milk. We are told that we are to present our bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is our spiritual service of worship.

We're told that as servants we are to discipline ourselves for the sake of godliness. We're told that we're to pray without ceasing. We are to be filled with the Spirit. We're to come out and be separate from the world. We are to fulfill the great commission, to "make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that He has commanded." We're told that we're not to forsake the assembling together of the saints. We are to discover and develop our spiritual gifts in the context of the Church, so that we can put the Holy Spirit on display and minister to the body.

These are not *options*, dear friends; these are *commands*. This is what the Master has told us to do. We are to worship the Lord in the joyful giving of our offerings in the church. We have responsibilities. Husbands, we are to love and lead and to protect our wives. Wives are to love and submit to their husbands. We are, as parents, to raise our children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. The point is, every Christian has stewardship responsibilities that the Master expects us to be carrying out. This would be indicative of people that are faithful and sensible. That's why in verse 46 He says, "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes."

Likewise, the evil slave, people that do not know Christ, whether they want to acknowledge it or not they have a responsibility before God as well. They have a stewardship responsibility. Of course the

first responsibility they have is to repent and be reconciled to God through faith in Christ, so that they too will love God with all their heart, mind, soul and strength, and their neighbor as much as they love themselves. Most people refuse to do this, saying in their heart, "My Master is not coming for a long time." And of course many say that, "There is no Master," and, "I'm my own master." Many will say "I have plenty of time to indulge my flesh. I've got time to do my own thing. I don't really care about serving and honoring my Master, so I'll just worry about that later." Of course many suppress the truth about God and who He is in their unrighteousness, as it says in Romans 1. Jesus illustrates the depth of this kind of wickedness in verse 49. He says these slaves will be the one who "shall begin to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards." In other words, there's no self-control. You just go after anything you want in your own life. Certainly this is the picture of the unbelieving world today, and it's going to get worse before Jesus comes, not better.

Turn over to 2 Timothy 3:1-5. We get an idea of the worsening condition of the world before Jesus comes. By the way, this is yet another refutation of post-millennial theology, of dominion theology that believes that somehow we can get our kids educated enough, and the Church is going to get good enough, and we can elect enough Republicans to finally turn the world around so that we can hand the kingdom over to God, that things are ultimately going to get better and better. That's not what I read in my Bible. In verse 1 it says, "But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come." The term *difficult* in the original language could be translated perilous or savage. In fact, in Matthew 8 we read of the demon-possessed man, and this same term was used, that he was a savage man.

"Realize this, that in the last days difficult (savage, perilous) times will come." Also, the word *times* is the idea of the accumulation of epochs, of deceptive epochs. In other words, there's going to be layer upon layer upon layer upon layer upon layer over generations and generations of deception. Not just in religious circles, but in philosophical circles and scientific circles and so on. We see that. Think of the whole lie of evolutionary theory. So, these times are going to come, and there's a description here that the Holy Spirit gives us. "For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." Sadly, my friends, this sounds a whole lot like Congress and the Senate. In verse 5, "holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these."

The tragic truth is simply this, back to Matthew 24:50. "The master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, and shall cut him in pieces." That's a euphemism for death. Then He says, "...and assign him a place with the hypocrites." This last phrase is interesting. It denotes two kinds of unbelievers that will exist before Jesus returns. We've seen them down through redemptive history, two types of unbelievers. One will be the defiant Christ-haters. These are the ones that are defiant in their public rejection in the person and work of Christ, the atheists, the agnostics, the proud intellectuals that dominate our colleges and universities and seminaries, that mock His Word and ridicule all who love Him. This would also include all the false religions of the world that deny the deity of Christ and worship some phony god that they have contrived that does not exist.

There is another type of unbeliever that is the most dangerous kind. This is the hypocrite: those who think they worship God and worship Christ but do not. As we read in 2 Timothy 3:5, they are "holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power." These will be the apostates who claim to be worshipers of Christ, claim to be His servants, but many have created their own standards of

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righteousness, not His. They're worshipping a Jesus of their own making. They are pursuing their own agenda, not His. We see elements of that in the liberal churches today, the quasi-Christian churches, the mystical, the prosperity theology, faith-healers, all of this crazy stuff out there today. Certainly this is indicative of the mongrel church, as I call it, that has invaded fundamental evangelicalism. We see that in certain aspects of the seeker-sensitive movement and the emergent church. These are the ones I fear that Jesus described in Matthew 7:21 where He says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven." Well, who will enter the kingdom of heaven? He goes on and says, "but he who does the will of My Father."

Jesus warns that the defiant Christ-haters are going to be assigned a place someday with the hypocrites. It's interesting. It demonstrates that the hypocrite that teaches Sunday school and sings in the choir and even fills the pulpit, is just as offensive to God as the atheist, as the Howard Stern "vulgarian" type that we see today.

When I think of this fast approaching consummation of man's wicked reign on earth, I'm reminded of that text in Luke 18:8. I often think about this. There you have Jesus asking a pensive question, and obviously He knows the answer. In that text He says, "...when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" Will He find faith on the earth? The answer is that yes, there will be some, and we read that in other passages, but very little true saving faith. There's only going to be a remnant, that's the point. When He returns, the world will be dominated by calloused unbelief and sophisticated religious hypocrisy.

To make this personal and practical, as we come to the end of this great study, I have to ask you a question. Are you alert? Are you ready? Are you a faithful and sensible slave of the Master? I fear that some are not. For some that I know, I question if you even know Christ. It's a burden of mine and of every pastor who loves his flock. You know who you are. You are those who feel as though you're a stranger to God. As you think about God and all that He is supposed to be to you, you realize that somehow there has been a mysterious separation that has occurred. For whatever reason, the early days of enjoying Him and being excited about your faith, those days don't exist anymore.

For some as you think about it, it's that longing to be in His presence, that longing to be with His people, that longing that you once had to know the Scriptures and those times of refreshment, when the Spirit of God rushed over your soul and you were broken over the words you just read. It changed your life. Those times are gone, they're past. You, in your mind still claim that you believe in Christ, maybe you truly do belong to the redeemed, but there's no real excitement there. You go through the motions of "churchianity." Some show up at church regularly, some occasionally. There's always five or six other things that seem to be a bit more important. If you're really honest, you're not living in light of His glorious return. It never goes through your mind. You're not alert, you're not ready. You're not faithful or sensible.

As you look at your live there's no spiritual fruit on the vine. Your Christian life is barren, boring. For some, it's bereft of spiritual blessing. My friend, if that is you, first of all you want to examine your heart to make sure that you truly know Christ. For many, you truly are born again, but for whatever reason, the locusts of sin have devoured your joy and your assurance and your blessing. Beloved, you're in need of genuine revival. I'm not talking about the revivals that we see in our Southern culture. I'm not talking about evangelistic revivals that are many times so superficial and so distorted. I'm talking about those of you who need a revival in your soul. This is a revival for believers.

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Something needs to happen so that the excitement and joy of your salvation returns. I might add that this will never happen until you get serious with God. It will never happen until you get serious with where you stand before God right now. You can hear all this about eschatology, you can know your doctrine and theology, you can be part of the church and you can still be dry as a bone when it comes to really living a life of Christ and being nourished by His Word.

Friends, if that is you, this revival will only come when you get serious about confessing your sins, whatever they might be. Specifically. Not this general, vague stuff. "Oh God, forgive me for being a carnal Christian." That's very different than saying, "God, forgive me for the way that I interrupt my husband every time he speaks. God, forgive me for my laxity in being disciplined with the Word. God, forgive me that I haven't studied Your Word on my own and had a prayer time on my own for years. God, forgive me for the times where I let everything else in my life interrupt those times when I should be in church, humbling myself before the teaching of the Word. God, forgive me for being a husband who does not lead his wife. God, forgive me for being a wife that simply will not allow my husband to lead."

Folks, this is the stuff of genuine revival. There needs to be a mourning over sin. There needs to be a hungering and a thirsting for righteousness. If this is you, then in brokenness of heart you need to come before almighty God and in great humility, pour out your life to Him and let that laser-like penetration of His omniscience expose all of the garbage that is there. Get serious about your faith. Plead for a spiritual awakening. Beg Him for restoration of fellowship and power. Then, my friends, you will be alert and ready. You will be more faithful and sensible, as a servant of the Master.

I share the apostle Paul's burden in Philippians 2:15-16. He prayed for the people of Philippi, "that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ," in other words, when you stand before Him, "I" referring to Pastor Paul or Pastor Harrell, so that "I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain." My friends, I must confess, for some of you I fear I toil in vain.

Oh, child of God, mark it down. The Master is coming. The rapture of the church can occur, and you won't know when it will happen, despite where you might place it in the prophetic timetable. We won't know the moment, the second coming we'll not know, so we need to be alert, we need to be ready, we need to be faithful and sensible. I hope that all of you will long to hear the Master say, as we read in Matthew 25:23, "Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." What a day that will be. When He rewards those who have been faithful to Him with the many things of the kingdom of God.

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