

The Beginning of Sorrows

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

“For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

“And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

“All these are the beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:5-8).

A time is coming when the Lord will call out His people as He takes them up to heaven and pours His judgment upon the earth. According to Matthew 24:4-14, nine signs will accompany the period just before that time. There will be false Christs, wars and rumors of war, famines, pestilence, earthquakes, martyrs, false prophets, iniquity abounding, the love of many waxing cold, and the Gospel of the kingdom of God

preached in all the world. That time is called the beginning of sorrows—the beginning of the end.

These are important days for Christians to be alive. The tragedies of September 11, 2001, and the wars that have followed remind us that time is short. God's timetable is not known to us, but the signs of these times reveal that He will come soon.

Earthquakes, wars, famine, and pestilence have increased greatly. Changes—many of them devastating—have touched every life. Our only guarantee is that the days that follow will bring more perils, and more challenges.

Tragedies have left wounds that need the healing balm of God's grace and mercy. While many have hearts that are open and ready to receive the love of God, many others are mockers, scoffers, and lovers of themselves (2 Timothy 3:1-2 and 2 Peter 3:3). This is a time for Christians to follow the way of God by revealing His love and His peace, leading many to salvation.

My prayer is that those reading this booklet would take up the challenge of this era and recognize the role of Christians in the end times. As sorrows unfold, let's lift up the name of Jesus in everything we do. Let's show the victory of the Cross, the value of Redemption.

Chapter One

IF GOD'S PEOPLE PRAY

“Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee” (Jeremiah 10:7).

“The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all” (Psalm 103:19).

“Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him” (Psalm 72:11).

These verses reveal that Jesus Christ is the King of the nations. He rules over all. One day, kings shall bow down to Him. God will judge the nations and deliver justice to the people, and all nations shall serve Him (Isaiah 2:4).

Throughout history, God has commissioned godly servants and “client nations”—nations that submit their political principles to the Word of God and depend upon God to protect and to

supply their needs. A client nation is not necessarily a Christian nation, but it does include many Spirit-filled Christians whose prayers hold back judgment on that nation. These Christians are faith-heroes who speak grace, mercy, power, and peace to people's souls. Thank God, America has many of these heroes to help her through this time of great sorrows, great adversity, and great opportunity.

The effect of the prayers of one such hero is evidenced in Genesis 18. In this chapter, the Lord visits Abraham and reveals the judgment about to be meted upon the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Knowing that his nephew Lot and Lot's family lived in Sodom, Abraham asked God if He would spare the cities if fifty righteous people were found there.

"Yes," God said. "I will spare Sodom and Gomorrah if fifty righteous are found."

Abraham then said, "Lord, would you spare them if you find forty-five righteous?"

"Yes, I will spare them for the sake of forty-five righteous people."

"How about forty? Would you spare the cities if you find forty righteous, Lord?" Abraham pleaded.

"Yes, I spare them for the sake of forty."

This exchange went on until Abraham got down to ten. “Ten, Lord—would you spare the cities for the sake of ten righteous ones?”

“Yes, I will stop judgment if ten righteous ones are found,” God promised.

Then, the strangest thing happened. Abraham stopped asking. The Lord went His way, and Abraham went back to his place. My question has always been, “Why, Abraham, why did you quit asking? Why didn’t you go all the way down to one?”

The Policy of Grace

God’s way has always been the policy of grace, the policy of mercy enduring forever, the policy of a love that never changes. In view of this, my opinion is that the prayer of Abraham, a godly man, could have held back judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah. God did spare Lot and his daughters—though the angels literally had to drag them out of the city.

As for Christians alive today, we are in a position where our prayers are so vital. Terrorist attacks on the United States have made many people realize their need for God. Church attendance across America has increased dramatically. The Word of God is real. Let’s make sure

we speak it to the souls in such need.

Remember Who Is in Charge

“Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

“Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (Ephesians 5:16-21).

“...Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Revelation 1:5).

Jesus Christ is in charge of history. Terrorists and tyrants may attempt to alter the course of human events, but Christ is the governor of the nations. We cannot even deliver our own souls (Psalm 18:48). He is the “Alpha” and the “Ome-

ga," the beginning and the end. He was born of a virgin; He lived a perfect human life; He experienced death, burial, and resurrection; He ascended and is now seated at God's right hand as a glorified man; He was dead but is now alive forevermore. The keys of hell and death belong to *Him*. Those who come to Him by grace through faith shall live and reign with Him forever.

This is why I take Christianity so seriously. We serve the One who is Lord over death (Revelation 1:18). Jesus Christ went through death, and He is now alive forever more. God desires to teach us how to have divine priorities and eternal schedules. He would love to guide us, to order every step that we take (Psalm 37:23; Psalm 119:130). He would love for us to bring every one of our thoughts into submission to Him (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). He would love to pull down the strongholds in our lives so we could be rooted and grounded in Him.

Many Christians are so caught up with the ways of the world, spending precious time worrying about food, shelter, and raiment. God has a divine schedule for us, a plan to redeem the time and to put Christ and His righteousness first. When we do this, He will add unto us all

of the things that we need (Matthew 6:33).

The Power of Divine Priorities

Because He has placed eternity in the heart of every man and woman, nothing less than God can really fulfill a man (see Ecclesiastes 3:11)—it is something inside of everyone who recognizes that there is something, someone, beyond this life on earth.

The movie “Chariots of Fire” looks at the lives of two Olympic runners. One captured many medals and yet found no fulfillment. There was no thrill in his winning. That place in his heart was still undefined.

The other runner, Eric Liddle of England, was a man of God. He was scheduled to race on Sunday but refused because of his convictions. Then, when he was given a chance to run on Monday, he triumphed. His running was inspired by God, and with every step he thought of China and of the lost souls who were there. After his Olympic career, Liddle served as a missionary to China and was martyred during the Japanese invasion of that country during the 1940s. This was a man with divine priorities.

Our times are in God’s hands (Psalm 31:15). This cannot be emphasized enough. All times

and all seasons are in God's power (Acts 1:7). He takes down kings and He establishes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the understanding (Daniel 2:21).

All power in heaven and on earth is given to Jesus Christ. For this reason, He said, "Go and preach the Gospel, teaching all nations, making disciples, and baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." As with the prayers and the outreaches of many evangelical churches and believers everywhere, we contribute to holding back God's judgment on the earth.

We are a very special part of America's destiny. Our church attendance, our hearing the Word of God, our confession of faith, our communication of the Gospel of grace—these all contribute a vital part to the holding back of judgment.

Chapter Two

MAKING DISCIPLES, CHANGING DESTINIES

Christians in a client nation are responsible for teaching their people categorical thinking and categorical doctrine in the power of the Holy Spirit. They are responsible for establishing Christian education and for propagating the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world. Furthermore, they are responsible for making disciples of those they lead to Christ.

When we honor God's plan for our lives, God honors His client nation. We take part in shaping America's destiny, and God uses our nation to reveal divine justice and freedom to oppressed people everywhere.

After much prayer, the Puritans who sailed to North America in the 1600s formed a new colony in the New World. The United States, established in 1776, has served as client nation for many years now. Now, it is very late in God's

timetable. We, as Christians in this country, are custodians of the Gospel. We must preach and teach the categories of the Word to people, line upon line and precept upon precept, so we will not lack God's knowledge. We must go forward together in our communities as powerful evangelical forces of prayer, love, service, and outreach.

The Privilege of Preaching

"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy [Spirit], and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake" (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

We don't just preach the Gospel—we preach God's Word in the power of the Spirit. We impart the life we have in Christ. We revel in the privilege to speak life, to speak eternity, to speak healing, and to speak peace by the grace and wisdom of God. It is our privilege to have power in our words because we have the silver tongue of redemption (Proverbs 10:20). As Christians on earth in these days, when we preach the Gospel, we reveal eternal life to the unsaved. When they believe, the life of Christ becomes their eternal destiny.

A man visited our church recently. He had gone through a terrible divorce and blamed his ex-wife for his son's death while driving drunk. One of our people knocked on this man's door. Because of his situation, he was angry and argumentative, saying that he didn't want to have anything to do with God. Yet, he responded to a challenge and he came to church. He was loved by so many, and when he heard the message, with tears running down his cheeks, he received Christ as his Savior. His destiny was changed forever.

This was not the work of a man. It was the work of Christ through His Body, the Church. Those with various gifts and particular portions spoke eternal forgiveness, eternal grace, and the Glorious Gospel to this man's soul.

A Time for Humility

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

"So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my

mouth" (Revelation 3:14-16).

There is a Laodicean spirit of lukewarmness that prevails in many churches today. These churches are not necessarily cold. They do preach the Gospel, yet they do not have divine priorities, and they do not reveal a fiery fervency for God.

The average person in these churches does not want to be taught the Word of God in precise categories. Though he wants to be saved from hell and go to heaven, he doesn't want to take the time to hear precise truth from the Word of God, grow in it, and be obedient to it.

According to 1 Peter 4:17-18, judgment begins at the house of God. The world events that have unfolded recently should be viewed as a tremendous warning to us as Christians.

God warned us that perilous times would come. These are the beginning of sorrows. Matthew 24 and Revelation 8 outline the Great Tribulation that shall come to the earth. In the Tribulation period, evil will reign. There will be famine, death, and destruction worse than any we have known. Waters will be poisoned. Demons shall terrorize and kill and maim the inhabitants of the earth. The wrath of God will be poured out.

Born-again, blood-bought believers will not experience these terrible things. All of us who are Christians will have been raptured to meet Jesus in the air (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). God will save us out of the wrath to come.*

Thousands went to work on the morning of September 11 and never came home. Perilous times are here. It is not a time to play games. This is a time when churches throughout America should have overflow crowds. We should pray, come together, and witness with boldness. We must dare to be honest about the reality of heaven and hell.

We do not have to provide evidence; we *are* the evidence of His great grace and love. We are Christians, and our lives ought to be a living testimony of the character of God.

When we humble ourselves before God and repent of our sin, then God will begin to heal our land (2 Chronicles 7:14). He will establish a mighty work of power, protecting Christians and manifesting His nature in these last days.

Secret sins and follies must stop. Unnecessary, worldly pleasures need to be put aside for the sake of the Cross of Calvary. We need to lay down our lives for a lost world because we understand the power of hell and the power of

heaven.

We must have priorities. If our eyes are single—sharply focused on Christ—our bodies will be filled with light (Matthew 6:22). In everything we do, let us go forward in grace and love, avoiding complacency and having divine priorities.

**Read The Pre-Tribulational Rapture, by Dr. Daniel E. Lewis, Grace Publications, 1997.*

Chapter Three

PREPARE TO MEET GOD AT ANY MOMENT

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

“The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:55-58).

God will deliver us from the wrath that is to come. We who have heard the Word and believed upon Jesus Christ have passed from death unto life. We wait for heaven. We wait for Jesus Christ to come for us. We worship and praise Him because we have been saved by the blood of the Lamb. We rejoice because we know

we won't be here for the Tribulation.

The Rapture could happen at any moment. Jesus will come in the clouds, and we will rise to meet Him, ever more to be with the Lord. What a glorious day that will be! We will not have to face the wrath to come because Jesus took our sins upon Himself at Calvary. His death opened the way for us to receive His life. That is the glorious Gospel!

We should be occupied with Christ until He comes (Luke 19:13). The sorrows of the end times have begun, and with them are opportunities for us to reach the lost. These are the times for us to be steadfast and immovable. Our priority should be to abound in the work of the Lord.

Let's put aside pettiness and reflect the spirit of love, the spirit of forgiveness, the spirit of holiness, and the spirit of conviction. Establish divine schedules with an eternal purpose and let God guide our steps and control our thoughts. God will take over our lives as we walk in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Filled with love, we can boldly and confidently share the Gospel of Christ.

He Is Coming for Us

The time is drawing near when Jesus Christ

will come for His own, according to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-58. In Revelation 3:10, Jesus declared to the faithful in the church in Philadelphia, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee *from* the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

The Greek preposition "*ek*" (translated as "from" in the King James version of the Bible) is so important to understand. It really means that believers will be "kept out of" the Tribulation to come. Some would have us believe that believers will be kept while they are still "in" the Tribulation. They fail to understand the syntax of the original language. In this instance, Jesus Christ speaks of taking Christians "out of" this world before the Tribulation period.

In heaven, the life of every born-again believer will be evaluated at Christ's Bema Seat, and we will receive eternal rewards. Then, we will enjoy the glorious marriage supper in celebration of our marriage to the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. All of this will go on in heaven, while all hell is breaking loose on the earth.

Finally, according to Revelation 19:13-15, Jesus Christ will return with His own. Riding on

white horses, we will return to earth with Him in triumph. We will have glorified bodies with no old sin natures. The flesh will have no more control over us.

Be Prepared

There are Christians who attend church only when they feel like it, and these folks are not ready to meet Jesus Christ. He is all in all (Colossians 3:11). His command is for every believer to take up his cross daily (Luke 9:23). These truths are in the Bible. They should be read, heeded, honored, loved, obeyed, and shared. We need to go forward applying the truth from God's Word.

God told us to teach our children, so we have established Christian schools. We are told to go and make disciples, so we go out in the streets of the city every week, seeking the lost, winning people to Christ, and making disciples.

We have been told to reproduce ourselves wherever we go—in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and in the uttermost parts of the world. So we have sent missionary teams to more than 180 countries. The Lord commanded us to do these things, and we continue to go forward with more intensity, fervency, desire, and prayer. By the grace of God, we obey His Word.

CONCLUSION

In pivotal times such as these, God is after people who will pray and preach and propagate the Gospel. The Gospel of the love of God must be lifted up, and it will draw men to Him. We will win people by the Good News and by caring for them.

God is for us. No matter what comes against us, our response must be to pray, get out the Gospel, and go forward with the Word of God. This is the time to teach that God paid the price for all of our sins. *Anyone—anyone—*can be saved, receive the gift of repentance, and have a brand-new life as a brand-new creation of God.

Today's sorrows require that we are faithful to express the love of God. The world needs Christians who will study the Word and rightly divide it. People today need Christians who decide to put Christ first at any cost—Christians who recognize that heaven is their destiny and that their purpose is eternal. Then, Christ will do

the adding and the blessing upon the earth.