

*Approaching Armageddon* (Matthew 24: 6-8)

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*And you shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that you are 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 pestilence, and earthquakes, I n diverse places. All these things are the beginning of sorrows.*

We are living in an amazing, startling and in some respects, frightening world. Unprecedented developments have and are taking place in the scientific realm. The moral economic and political climates are changing their temperatures everywhere in a most drastic manner. Prophecies concerning different parts of the world, especially Israel and Palestine, the apostasy that is permeating the churches of Christendom, the terrific influence being exerted by modernistic, Christ-denying, blood-ridiculing philosophy are all looming up before us as indications of the world turning over and unprecedented tragedies. To read the Bible in relation to present day trends and events is to unquestionably believe the doctrine of the Antichrist, the great tribulation, the Battle of Armageddon, and in fact, everything related to the great event of Christ's second coming.

Anyone who rejects or denies the veracity of the prophecies is an ostrich with their head in the sand, in view of impending and irrevocable doom. Peter declares, *The prophecy came not in old times by the will of Man, but through holy men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.* (II Peter 1:21). The prophecies given throughout the Bible are not just the hallucinations or fantasies of some old men. They are messages of God, presented for our understanding, enabling us to be not only properly informed, but to be ready for the return of Christ and as an encouragement to live faithfully until He comes. Prophets and apostles who were inspired by God to write their messages, spoke to the people concerning their responsibility to God and their neighbours. They were encouraged to be faithful, not only that they themselves might be saved, but also for the benefit of the generations who were yet unborn. In many of the writings we see the Holy Spirit carrying these people into the future, telling them what would happen, even to the very end of time. The prophecies of the Bible reveal God's foreknowledge to us, informing us that God not only has knowledge, but that He has control over the affairs of the world.

In reading the Bible we discover that God, not we humans, is the sovereign of the universe. I know there are many people who wonder if God has forgotten what He created, especially the way so many events have and are transpiring. He created humanity as a free moral agent. He has placed before us the way of salvation, peace, happiness, and eternal bliss.

He has also revealed to us that the wages of sin are death; that the way of the transgressor is hard and that there is an appointed judgement; that there is a place of eternal Hell for those who reject Him. God is now permitting humanity to make their choice and when humanity comes to the place where their cup of iniquity is full, God is going to take things in hand and both judge and reward according to their decisions and His words.

At this time and into the future, we discover that prophecy culminates in the second coming of Christ and the events leading up to it. The Bible is unmistakably clear when we read both the Old and New Testaments, one is compelled to admit that prophecy concerning end times dominates. The events connected with the end of time are clear in Scripture. This present dispensation is going to close with the rapture of the Church. The great tribulation which follows leads up to and including Armageddon. After this will be a revelation or the returning of Christ to the earth with His saints.

The Devil's superman, the victorious character we call Satan will be active on the earth between the rapture and the revelation. From the time mankind was created up until now, a terrible battle of forces has raged. It started with Genesis 3:15 and proceeds unabatedly without cessation until one comes to Revelation 20:10:

*And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophets are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

Between these two verses we have the record of conflict that runs through the 66 Books of the Bible. God and Satan, good and evil, righteousness and unrighteousness are in moral combat. Here and there throughout the history of mankind wars have broken out. In between these wars there has existed unrest, jealousy, suspicion, and tensions – all of which we are experiencing in an unprecedented manner. There would be more understanding of the present situation if we believed God's Word as in Ephesians 6:12:

*We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

The Moffatt translation reads, *against the spirit forces of evil in the heavenly sphere*. In one sense we are living in a world of material things, but our life sources are in an unseen spirit realm. I think we are beginning to realize some things the previous generations found hard to believe. IE: if you ask a scientist for a definition of matter, you probably will be told that it is a mass of correlated atoms. Then if you ask what are atoms made of, you will probably be told, electrons. Now what is an electron? You will probably be told an electron is energy. For a definition of energy, you will probably be told that the scientist does not really know and that no scientist really knows. When one follows this development from the atom, to the electron to energy, one is then approaching the area of the Spirit realm. Paul said, *through faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God...* (Hebrews 11:3). He says, *by the word of God*, then goes on, *so that some things which are seen were not made of things which do appear*. Paul wrote over 2,000 years ago, but scientists are just beginning to realize how true it is. The late Dr. Milliken discovered the cosmic ray. When he was asked shortly before he died, *what is the cosmic ray?* He answered, *it is God*. Another responded, *maybe a better answer might be that it is the hem of God's garment*. They tell us that it is an invisible form of energy which will plow through 3 feet of steel and register through 6 feet of lead. Unquestionably there is an invisible, indescribable spirit realm. I know a lot of people deny the existence of Satan. Advertisements, books, movies, music etc. ridicule the personality of Satan. Many people are trying to eliminate a personal devil from their thinking.

A few years ago, I read an article that said, *anyone who is foolish enough to believe that there is a personal devil is a fit subject for the psychopathic ward*. A response was given by another who said that if it were not for a personal devil, we would not need psychotherapy.

We must not forget that there is a personal devil who is the head of a class of invisible evil spirits, working furiously for the defeat of God's programmes and the complete ruin of humanity. For over 6,000 years the devil has been enraged, but for the past 2,000+ years he is intensively enraged because God's Son, Jesus defeated him in temptation and then on the cross of Calvary. Christ defeated him in resurrection, but the devil is never going to give up until he is cast into the

bottomless pit. Right now, he is preparing this world for the Superman, the Antichrist that we are told about in the Epistle of John.

The Antichrist will be a person and a system. The devil is efficiently and aggressively preparing the world, even the religious world for the his coming. As Christ is the head of the Church, the Antichrist is the head of the world-wide evil. There is only hope for you and me and anyone in the world when we put our unwavering trust in Jesus Christ, and permit the Holy spirit to live in our hearts as we live faithfully in anticipation of His coming. The world at large is not living with this anticipation.

When we read the Bible, and look at our present-day world events, things could hardly be in better shape for the Antichrist to present himself on the scene. I believe this gives us much to think and pray about. There are many signs to observe to the coming of Christ. We need to watch and observe the events taking place. Most of you like myself will have listened to the debates at the UN for many years. I have been made to realize that we are at the door of the closing day. When those who talk of the time on the doomsday clock and say it is about 2 minutes to the hour of 12, surely Christians need to be paying attention. This is just a prelude to the Battle of Armageddon. Ezekiel wrote that the invading hordes in the battles prior to Armageddon as then noted in Revelation 16:16, is Satan's final attempt to defeat the Son of God by destroying the city where Christ's throne is to be established.

Zachariah has an interesting statement in C. 14, the first 3 verses. The Battle of Armageddon will come at the close of the tribulation. It is described in Revelations 14: 14-20, as a terrible, fierce, bloodied ordeal. The fury of Hell will be poured out. Satan and his forces, headed by the Antichrist will be consumed by the power of Christ's coming as He then sets up to rule the earth and reign in righteousness for a thousand years.

Today, bombs which humans have made can produce great devastation and destroy beyond comprehension, but the manifestation of power that is to come will not be by Man but by Jesus Christ. He who holds the secret of all the elements will do this without a bomb. The things that are taking place in our time I believe are preparations for that which is to come. The devil is working feverishly. People throughout the world, the leaders of the nations and the great masses of humanity are responding to the inspiration, hate, revenge and the organization of Satan. All these things are frightening shadows, but for the Christian they are signs of the

dawn. We must thank God, the Son of Righteousness is going to rise up with healing in His wings. In this moment, or the next moment or the next, the trumpet of God *could* sound; the dead of Christ *could* come forth; and the Christians who are now alive *could* join the dead in Christ and go together to be with the Lord.

Following this there will be a period of great tribulation and then will come the Battle of Armageddon – and then the return of Christ in glory – not in the rapture but the revelation. Many in our world reject Jesus and they have or are taking the Bible, Christian prayer, saying grace before meals, out of most of the schools, public institutions and public places. Atheistic nations and individuals are doing their best to rid this world of every vestige of Jesus Christ. But thank the Lord, He is on the throne. When the last battle of history is over, even when the 1,000 years have passed, when Satan is cast into the bottomless pit forever, and all those who have kept their faith and confidence in Christ can live eternally with Him in the new heaven and earth without sin and in the glory of His eternal righteousness.

If you are serving Him, may God grant you will be faithful. If you are not, I urge you to place your faith, confidence, and trust in the personal presence of Jesus Christ, God's Son. Amen.