PERILOUS TIMES ARE HERE

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This trouble that is coming will come according to the prophecy spoken by Jesus Christ himself. As Jesus answered the three-point question asked by the Twelve Apostles in Matthew 24:1-3, He answered the first two parts and then, in verse 29, He began to answer the question, What about the end of the world? He said, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and t hey shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels (messengers) with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matt. 24:29-31).

Thus, Jesus gave us four prominent signs of His immediate coming. I think it is probable that we have been living in the tribulation of those da ys, at least since the middle of 2008. Wherefore, I exhort you, and challenge you to believe these words of Jesus, and try to understand them. These words are true, but be-cause of the general misunderstand-ing of the next five verses, we get sidetracked from the truth of what you have just read. Please read these words again, and do not allow anyone to persuade you that what Jesus said here is not true. It is faith in His words that will save us in this evil day, for faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:11-17). Jesus spoke partly in parables here in Matthew, but we can see the truth of Jesus’ parables, especially if we have all five of the “Gifts of the Ministry” working in our congregations (Eph. 3:1-5).

First, there will be a time of tribulation; not the “great tribulation” previously mentioned in Matt. 24:4-21 which was about the fall of Israel in 70 A.D. He did not say perse-cution, because He wanted to em-phasize that there will be much more than persecution, although there will be that too, in time. Then the light of the Gospel will go out. The offer of redemption will be with-drawn.

Some ministers will simply quit preaching out of fear, others by martyrdom. Then there are those who will fulfill the admonition “Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity” (Isa. 26:20-21). If we are spiritual enough to be strong, and have the faith to believe what the Lord has prophesied to happen, we will still need the wisdom and knowledge of God through His Word if we are to have the strength to stand for God in these perilous times. As it is written, “Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times and strength of salvation” (Isa. 33:6). God has every intention of punishing both errant Christianity and the inhabitants of the unbeliev-ing, secular world. But in the process, He will save some, even as He did in the days of Noah.

If you have been following the reports of true scientists who are reporting the development of the natural astrological activities, you will see that we should also anticipate devastating astronomical problems which will affect the earth’s stability adversely, the nature of which has never been seen by mankind. Did not the prophet say, “The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard” (Isa. 24:20) and that there would be earthquakes in diverse places?

We shall see a recovery from the tribulation of these days, then we shall see the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, followed by something so severe that it shall cause all of the tribes of the earth to mourn. Then “they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” Then Jesus shall send His messengers to gather together His elect from the four winds. Yes, in direct fulfillment of prophecy, Jesus was the first of the seven anointed leaders of God’s Church foretold by the prophets, and He will be here “with the last [one]” as the Grace Age comes to its end (Isa. 41:4). Can we believe the words of the Son of God? How can we afford not to?

Perhaps you have not previously heard the words of Jesus explained this way, but you must believe His word and trust His grace every day. Believe Him; it is called faith. Faith does not come by spur-ious words of men’s wisdom, but by the hearing of the word of God. These words of our Lord and Savior are neither strange nor difficult to grasp, although some of it may need some careful and studious attention. It can be understood, but only if we have a ministry with all the five gifts functioning, especially the Apostles and Prophets.

Jesus raised the point of the great trouble which God intends to pour out upon the world as the sixth millennium from Adam draws to an end. He explained the reason for all of the hard things which are coming, especially His anger with His own children, and then with the inhabi-tants of the world as a whole, just as it was in the days of Noah (Matt 24:29-47). The waywardness of

the descendants of Seth was God's major complaint, and the primary reason for the flood. His chosen lineage had walked away from God's intentions for them, intermar-rying with the descendants of Cain (Gen. 6:1-8). Time after time in the history of the seed of Abraham, up until their rejection and the disso-lution of the nation of Israel in 70 A.D., God rebuked and punished them various times. That His people should not intermarry with unbeliev-ers, the heathen idolaters, was of the utmost importance to God. For every time they mixed with the other peoples of the world, they fell into the same ungodliness, and idolatry which was practiced there.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ reached Europe in the first century A.D., and stagnated there in the dysfunctional condition which was prophesied of in Isaiah 1:12-31. The judges and counselors, the apostles and prophets, were gone, and false teachers had supplanted them. From about the third century to about the 15th to 16th centuries, the process of preaching the Gospel to every creature ceased to spread. Christ¬ianity had become a government mandate under the heavy hand of Rome, and resistance to its rule punishable by death. Then the reformation began, and until about the middle of the twentieth century, the condition of the advancement of the knowledge of God remained fairly strong. But by the end of World War II, the trend had reversed. Chris¬tianity had never completely broken all the fetters of Roman paganism, and the pendulum began to swing back to Rome. In 1962, because of te new ecumenical movement, the return to Rome began to pick up momentum here in the U.S.A., and in 1964, the U.S. government began to outlaw the use of the Bible in public places.

It has taken a few years, but today, Christianity is very close to a major clash with the anti-Christian powers of the world. That includes all of us, from the zealous advocates of active Pentecostalism to the more staid Christians, even including the Church of Rome.

God is preparing to punish errant Christianity in every category, and in the same time-frame protect a group of people who have zealously clung to the true concepts which make Christianity acceptable in His sight.

Paul put it this way, "Know this also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobe¬dient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreak¬ers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning [about God], and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do

these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Tim 3:1-13). What an unflattering de¬scription of the condition of Chris-tianity as God begins to wind down the Grace Age.

"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scrip¬tures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in right¬eous¬ness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:14-17). With these words, Paul showed us how to escape the wrath of God, by learning the Word of God.

Please do not fall into the trap of changing the word "perfect" to the word "mature." If you do, you will shut out an important amount of understanding of the Holy Scriptures. In three prominent men in the Old Testament, Noah, Abram, and Job, God showed us what He meant. He did mark the perfect men (Ps 37:37). The Lord said, "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations" (Gen. 5:9): meaning Noah became as good as a person could be in that period of time. And God commanded Abram, saying, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). Also the Lord said, of Job, "That man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God." It was he of whom God told Satan, "There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God [and hates evil]" (Job 1:1-8). Therefore Jesus told His disciples, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

That is our commandment, our challenge today. Christianity has gone the way of the world. They have even fallen into the trap of seeking after wealth, against which the apostle Paul warned us saying, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inor¬dinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience" (Col. 3:1-6).

We are approaching the final developments which will soon usher in the coming of our Lord and King. It is indeed high time to wake out of sleep, and seek the Lord, search His word, and

search our own hearts for anything which might provoke the Lord to say unto us also,

“How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil” (Prov. 1:22-33).