

The Nations in Crisis

by John F. Walvoord

The world is facing a multifaceted crisis that threatens its very existence, and the church is failing to provide a clear and consistent response.

Scripture: Psalm 2:6

Topics: "End Time Prophecies", "Global Crisis"

Description

John F. Walvoord delivers a powerful sermon on the current international crisis, emphasizing the world's turmoil in various aspects such as science, economics, morals, and theology. He highlights the urgent need for hope and guidance, pointing out that only the Scriptures provide a sure course and intelligent explanation for the confusion and impending disaster. The sermon delves into the spiritual, theological, moral, ecclesiastical, scientific, racial, economic, political, and prophetic crises facing the world today, painting a vivid picture of the challenges and the potential fulfillment of end-time prophecies.

Transcript

The world today faces an international crisis unparalleled in all the history of man. A tremendous revolution is under way in the international scene, in science, in economics, in morals, in theology, and in the religious structure of the church. The world is aflame with the raw passions of men ambitious for power and desperate to be freed from poverty and frustration. An ominous cloud hangs over the hearts of men and nations. The nations are indeed at the crossroads, and impending events cast their shadow on every aspect of human life. The world is moving faster and faster like a colossal machine out of control whose very power and momentum inevitably will plunge it into ultimate disaster.

Apart from the Bible, the world does not have a ray of hope. Our most brilliant leaders have not found an answer. World leaders, whether in Moscow or Washington, are troubled by the great issues which face the world today. President John F. Kennedy before his untimely assassination expressed the viewpoint of western civilization when he said, "I speak today in an hour of national peril, and of national opportunity. Before my term has ended, we shall have to test anew whether a nation organized and governed such as ours can endure. The outcome is by no means certain. The tide of events has been running out, and time has not been our friend."

The present world crisis is not a result of any one factor, but a concurrence of causes and effects which combine to set the world stage for a conflict which may quickly bring an end to hundreds of years of progress in western civilization and establish new centers of international power. Whatever the future

holds, it is going to be dramatically different than the past. In this dark picture only the Scriptures chart a sure course and give us an intelligent explanation of world-wide confusion as it exists today. The present world crisis in the light of the Scriptures reveals the existence of remarkable components in almost every area which may lead to a dramatic climax of world history. The present crises in every area of human life all point to the same conclusion, that disaster awaits the nations of the world.

Spiritual Crisis

The twentieth century has witnessed a gathering spiritual crisis. The history of the church to some extent has paralleled the intellectual progress of the world since apostolic days. For many centuries Christianity was largely obscured in the darkness of the Middle Ages. The vigorous evangelical movement of the church largely sprang from the Protestant Reformation and political freedom which permitted the proclamation of the Gospel. During the last century an unprecedented missionary effort has been witnessed. Thousands of missionaries carried the Gospel to distant lands and the Bible was published in hundreds of tongues. Through the printed page and through radio the Gospel has reached most of the civilized world to some extent, and more individuals are within potential reach of the Gospel than ever before.

Although there are many encouraging aspects to contemporary missionary efforts, it should be obvious even to the most sanguine observer that the proclamation of the Gospel is not even keeping up with the population explosion, much less overcoming opposition engendered by the nationalism of small nations and the vigorous growth of communism in many lands. As far as numbers of converts are concerned, communism as well as some of the non-Christian religions of the world are far exceeding Christianity in its present outreach. Even in so-called Christian United States of America, Biblical truth has had realistic application to only a small segment of the population and has not materially influenced our national policies whether in politics, business, or educational areas of national activity.

The spiritual crisis is pinpointed by the rejection of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord by the masses of world population in every nation. In Europe, the cradle of Protestantism, only a small fraction of the total population has an intelligent belief in Jesus Christ and nowhere in the world is the Christian faith a dominant influence. It is obvious that a projection of the contemporary efforts to further the Christian faith and to introduce people to Jesus Christ will fall far short of any realistic goal. The world has plunged into an age where the great majority do not know the facts about Jesus Christ, and if they did, would probably not receive them sympathetically.

Theological Crisis

If the historic Christian faith embodied in the great creeds of the church and expressed by the Protestant reformers are taken as the standards, it is evident that the church today is in a major theological crisis. Central in this controversy is the rejection of the Bible as the inerrant Word of God. In spite of the fact that more facilities are available than ever before to print, translate, and proclaim Scriptural truth, the educated people of the world have not turned to the Scriptures in faith. Within the walls of the professing church unbelief in the Scriptures has come in like a flood until many so-called Biblical scholars assume that the historic faith in the Bible as God's holy Word is now outmoded and not even worthy of debate. Substituted for Biblical faith is confidence in spiritual experience--either natural or supernatural, and in the promotion of ritualism, moralism, and rationalism.

Man has once again assumed the impossible task of defining and proclaiming infinite truth apart from God's divine revelation, an effort which history has demonstrated is doomed to failure. Churches and institutions of learning which are standing with the Protestant Reformers in fundamental doctrines are all too few and are an evident minority in the great mass of contemporary Christendom.

While in our day some of the extremes of liberalism have been rejected, there is no observable trend toward the absolute standard of accepting the Bible as the inerrant Word of God. There does not seem to be any hope of reclaiming this doctrine for the majority of the church. Organized Christendom today is like a ship without a rudder, and an anchor, at the mercy of the winds of chance and bound for no certain port. The ultimate end can only be disaster for the ship and all those who put their trust in it.

Moral Crisis

It is only natural that spiritual crisis and theological crisis should have its ultimate end in the moral crisis of our day. Never before in the history of the world has there been more organized and deliberate immorality in defiance of Biblical ethics. The new liberal theology has bred a new morality. That such immorality should be true of the heathen world is to be expected. That it should come from cultured, educated, and liberated people is certainly an omen that only divine judgment can deal with this situation. Even in lands where Christianity has been widely taught, the basic morality of honesty and decency, the sanctity of marriage and the home, and related ethical standards are dragged into the mire of a civilization devoted to every sinful pleasure and to ridiculing any return to decency.

Such a situation is plainly treated in II Peter 2 as a natural result stemming from departure from the doctrine of the person and work of Christ. The immorality of our day is the inevitable fruit of departure from Christ and the Word of God. For it there can only be divine judgment such as the Scriptures clearly predict.

Ecclesiastical Crisis

The trend away from Biblical theology and Biblical morals has precipitated in the modern church a desire to organize all Christendom in one centrally governed body. In this way the church can achieve a powerful role in the world not dependent upon its theology or spiritual power. Although motivated in many cases by a sincere desire to advance the cause of Christ, the ecumenical movement has emerged in the modern scene as a colossus embracing all Christendom in a gigantic organization responsible to its leaders but not to its laity. This centralization of power is no substitute for the spiritual unity accomplished by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

Because the majority of the organized church are committed to theological and spiritual doctrines which differ from historic Christianity, progress in the ecumenical movement can only result in the throttling of evangelical activity true to the Gospel. Both on the mission field and in the homeland its influence has tended to make the way difficult for those who still proclaim the old orthodoxy. Most important in understanding our times is the suggestion that the creation of an ecumenical church is a foreshadowing and preparation for a new world religion which in the prophetic future will be completely devoid of spiritual truth related to Christianity. The present demand for conformity to the organized church could end in the throttling of freedom of speech and conscience which would threaten any future spiritual progress for the church at large.

Scientific Crisis

One of the major elements in our modern world is the rapid rise of science whether in the field of electronics or the atomic structure of matter. Incredible advances are being achieved in one year which more than equal the advance in whole centuries of the past. The modern world has been brought together by rapid communication and transportation. The atomic bomb has greatly increased the ability of evil men to destroy or control. The race to command space is driven by the fear of some breakthrough which would give one nation a dominant position of power over the entire world. To the horrors of war already conceived are added the possibilities of bacteriological or chemical warfare which could well wipe out whole civilizations and drastically change the face of the earth.

The scientific colossus is such that increased knowledge brings only increased fear, and those in the best position to know have the greatest dread of that which the future may hold. The scientific advance has contributed tremendously to the accumulated evidence that the world is facing a showdown, that history in the future will not be as it was in the past, and that some gigantic crisis looms on the horizon.

Racial Crisis

Among the tensions contributing to the international scene are growing racial tensions evident not only in the United States but throughout the world. It is evident that people wrongly oppressed in some cases are not content with equality and redress, but want supremacy. The down-trodden masses of the world regardless of race often find in the racial issue a springboard from which to launch their claims.

From a Biblical standpoint, antisemitism in the Middle East is a matter of major significance. The people of Israel now restored to their ancient land, although small in number, are regarded as a thorn in the side of the non-Jewish world and constitute one of the major tensions in a pivotal area of the world.

From the standpoint of prophecy this issue looms large in the present day and in the prophetic future, and Israel's restoration is by divine appointment. Israel as the chosen people is destined to a prominent place in future world affairs, but not before enduring much hardship and persecution. The racial issue, however, is not limited to the Middle East, and almost every nation under the sun has serious racial tensions on a plane never before realized in the entire history of the world.

Economic Crisis

Those living within the United States of America have an unusual platform from which to view the economic situation of the entire world. Prosperity has swept America to a degree never before realized, and its average citizen has more money, more pleasure, more luxuries than ever before. But the United States is an island in a world of desperate economic need. Millions of the masses of the world who are oppressed and deprived of any fair share of economic wealth are clamoring to be heard. In many nations there is no middle class, but only the extremely rich and the extremely poor. The tensions raised by such a situation cannot forever lie dormant. The word revolution will undoubtedly be prominent in the days ahead, as oppressed people are exploited by communists as well as ambitious politicians and encouraged to rebel with empty promises of improvement in their situation.

While certain areas of the world are experiencing unprecedented prosperity, other portions are still laboring in desperate need of the basic material things of life with millions who are in constant danger of starvation and for whom the simplest shelter and provision of clothing is often lacking. The mushrooming population of the world has only aggravated the situation until major sections of the earth can no longer support themselves. The resulting pressures inevitably will affect future world history and continue to erupt

until the whole earth is caught in a world crisis combining all of these several elements.

Political Crisis

One of the most evident areas of crisis is in the international scene with nations motivated by communistic principles attempting to wrest control from the noncommunist world. Never before in history have such dramatic changes taken place as have occurred in the last twenty-five years. During these years major countries have been freed from control of other nations and many small nations have emerged as independent states. The immaturity of the new countries and their lack of economic resources and wise leadership already have produced an erratic course which does not portend a glorious future. The world-wide struggle between communism and the noncommunist nations is moving relentlessly in favor of communism, and the question which many thoughtful leaders raise is how long will this struggle continue. For those interested in freedom of conscience, freedom of enterprise, and freedom of speech, these are indeed dark hours, and no one humanly speaking dares to predict what another generation will face.

Crisis In Prophetic Fulfillment

The many factors which contribute to world crisis in our day have tremendous significance as compared to the Scriptures. The amazing fact is that these factors fit into a prophetic pattern which describes the end of the age. The Bible anticipates that a world crisis would precede the coming of Christ to establish His millennial kingdom (Matthew 24:15-24). Before the final world crisis comes to its head Christ will come to take those who believe in Him out of the world in the rapture of the church (I Thessalonians 4:13-5:11).

In describing end-time events, the Bible makes plain that the world crisis will eventually result in a world government headed by an evil world dictator (Revelation 13:1-10). The United Nations of our present world built on the assumption that world government is the only way to world peace may well be a part of the preparation for world-wide acceptance of a world dictator as the only way out. In preparation for the formation of this world empire, the Bible seems to anticipate a revival of the ancient Roman Empire, a formation of a United States of countries in the Mediterranean area. From this will come a temporary solution of the Israel-Arab controversy by means of a covenant with the people of Israel (Daniel 9:27).

This preliminary stage, however, is only the forerunner of a final world government in which the world dictator assumes supreme control and demands that all worship him in recognition of a new world religion of which he is the head (Revelation 13:8). Israel as well as those who name the name of Christ in that day will become the objects of fearful persecution. Divine judgments in an unprecedented way will fall upon the earth (cf. Revelation 6-19). These and many other developments will tend to make this period a time of great tribulation. This tremendous movement will climax in a great world war and the second coming of Jesus Christ to establish His earthly kingdom.

The significance of the present world crisis is that it contains practically all the elements which are a natural preparation for the end of the age. The raging of the nations (Psalm 2:1) is the forerunner to the Son of God establishing His government in Zion (Psalm 2:6; Isaiah 2:2-4). The present generation may witness the dramatic close of the "times of the Gentiles" and the establishment of the kingdom of heaven upon the earth, thus bringing to fulfillment one of the great themes of prophecy--the divine program for the nations of the world.

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