

Watchmen Watch of the Night

by Stephen Kaung

We are living in the last days, a time of apostasy, difficult times, and the falling away in the church, but we have hope in the Lamb, Jesus Christ, who has overcome to restore the earth to God's original purpose.

Duration: 1:15:13

Scripture: Matthew 24:32, Matthew 24:34-36, Hebrews 1:1-2

Topics: "End Times", "Salvation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses a scene in heaven where there is a sealed book in the hand of God. A strong angel proclaims that no one is worthy to open the book or break its seals. This leads to John weeping because no one is found worthy. The preacher then emphasizes the importance of understanding the gospel of the kingdom and surrendering our lives to Christ in order to endure to the end. The sermon also mentions the opening of the seals in Revelation and draws parallels to the signs of the end times mentioned in Matthew 24.

Transcript

Hebrews chapter 1 verses 1 and 2. God having spoken in many parts and in many ways formerly to the fathers in the prophets at the end of these days, or in some versions said at these last days, has spoken to us in the person of the son, whom he has established heir of all things, by whom also he made the world. Matthew chapter 24. We'll begin with verse 32.

Matthew chapter 24 verse 32. But learn the parable from the fig tree. When already its branch becomes tender and produces leaves, ye know that the summer is near.

Thus also ye, when ye see all these things, know that it is near at the doors. Verily I say to you, this generation will not have passed away until all these things shall have taken place. The heaven and the earth shall pass away, but my words shall in no wise pass away.

But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of the heaven, but my father alone. But as the days of Noah, so also shall be the coming of the son of man. For as they were in the days which were before the flood, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day on which Noah entered into the ark.

And they knew not till the flood came and took all away. Thus also shall be the coming of the son of man. Then two shall be in the field, one is taken and one is left.

Two women grinding at a mill, one is taken and one is left. Watch therefore, for ye know not in what hour your Lord comes. May we look to the Lord in prayer.

Dear Heavenly Father, as we draw near to Thee through Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, we know that we are accepted in the Beloved. We know that we have access to Thy throne of grace. We know that we can behold the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, and thus be transformed from glory to glory according to His image by the Lord the Spirit.

So our Father, we come this morning with confidence in Thee. We ask Thee Lord to bless us, to bless Thy word to our hearts. We pray that we may not only just hear the words, but we may really receive the Spirit that Thou hast in Thy word.

We ask Thee, O Lord, that Thou will in our heart, plant something that will respond to Thy own heart. We ask in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

King Solomon, in the book of Ecclesiastes, he said that to everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose. It is a wise man's heart who knows the time and the manner, or as Amplified Version puts it, a wise man's mind knows when and what to do. We thank God that as we go over the Old Testament, we find that there were people living in those days who knew the time they lived in.

And because they knew the time they lived in, they were able to understand the purpose of God for their time. And by the grace of God, they responded, fulfilling God's purpose. And God bore witness to them, that they had pleased Him.

Then the second morning, we mentioned our Lord Jesus. In the fullness of time, He came into this world, born of woman, born under the law, in order to deliver us out of the curse of the law, that we might receive Sonship. And when our Lord Jesus was on earth, His whole life was governed by this phrase, mine hour, my hour.

In other words, you'll find He knew the hour He was in. And He knew the purpose of that hour. The purpose of that hour was that He should come to find His bride.

And for that reason, He gave Himself on the cross. He poured forth blood and water, His life, in order to sanctify and purify that body of every spot and wrinkle, that He might present to Himself a glorious Church, holy and without blemish. We do not have the time to go into the days of the Apostles.

We have to omit that. And this morning, we would like to come to this matter of Watchmen, what of the night. We find that in the Word of God, there is a phrase.

And the phrase is, in these last days. Or in some versions said, at the end of the days. Now this phrase we find recur many times in the Bible.

Not only we find that in the New Testament, in Hebrews chapter one that we read, at the end of the days, God spoke in the person of His Son. But we find that in the Old Testament too. Now if we like to put down all these references, I'll just read them.

We do not have the time to go into them. You will find them in Genesis chapter forty-nine verse one. Numbers chapter twenty-four verse fourteen.

Deuteronomy chapter four verse thirty. Thirty-one verse twenty-nine. Jeremiah twenty-three verse twenty.

Thirty verse twenty-four. Forty-eight twenty-four. Forty-eight verse forty-seven.

Forty-nine verse thirty-five. Ezekiel thirty-eight verse sixteen. Daniel two verse twenty-eight.

Ten verse fourteen. Hosea three five. And Micah four one.

If you do not catch them, that's okay. But anyway you will find that in the Word of God you have this phrase, recurring again and again. In these last days.

At the end of the days. Now what does it mean? It is a Hebrew expression. It implies the ending of the period of law.

When Messiah was to be introduced. In other words, it means the introduction of the days of the Messiah. When the Messiah comes, then we enter into the end of the days.

You find in Hebrews chapter one, it is said, God having spoken in many parts and in many ways formerly, or in the days of old, to the fathers in the prophets. In the old days, God spoke to our fathers through the prophets. Now thank God our God is a God who speaks.

Now if our God is silent, we will never know Him. If He does not reveal Himself, we will be totally ignorant of Him. But thank God our God is a God who speaks.

And He is always speaking. He spoke in the days of old, through the prophets to our fathers. Now of course in those days, He could only speak in bits and fragments.

In many parts and in many ways. Why? Because the human vessels were so limited. But thank God at the end of the days, in these last days, God is able to speak in His own Son.

And when He speaks in His Son, He speaks fully, completely, and perfectly. That is the final speaking. The full revelation of God.

So in these last days, or at the end of the days, it really refers to the days of the Messiah. That is, at the coming of the Lord. Now of course we know, to the Old Testament prophets, they saw the coming of the Messiah.

They saw the days of the Messiah. But they did not see that the Messiah would come twice. They saw the coming of the Messiah.

But all they saw was the coming. They didn't realize that there were two comings. So actually, in these last days, at the end of the days, which refer to the days of the Messiah, it begins with His first coming, and it ends with His second coming.

And in between these two comings of the Lord, we call them the end of the days. These last days. Now the apostles, they wrote about such days.

For instance, Paul, in 1st Timothy, chapter 4, verse 1. He said, But the Spirit speaks expressly, that in later times some shall apostatize from the faith, giving their mind to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, cauterized as to their own conscience. In these last days, you will find there will be apostasy. And then again you'll find in 2nd Timothy, chapter 3, verse 1. The apostle said, But this know, that in the last days difficult times shall be there.

For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, evil speakers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, profane, without natural affection, inflexible, slanderous, of unsubdued passions, savage, having no love for what is good, traitors, headlong, of vain pretensions, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God, having a form of piety, but denying the power of it. In these last days, difficult times will be there. Now why it is so difficult? Because men become lovers of self, lovers of money, and lovers of pleasure.

We live in such a difficult time. Professor Wurst, Kenneth S. Wurst, when he wrote a book on these letter writings of the New Testament, he entitled his book, In These Last Days. He got that suggestion, of course, from 2nd Timothy, chapter 3, verse 1. In these last days.

And he dealt with five books in the New Testament. He mentioned that in 2nd Timothy, Paul predicts the end time apostasy. There will be a falling away in the church.

And then in 2nd Peter, the Apostle trades the apostasy to false teachers. These false teachers bring in the falling away in the church. And then the Apostle John, in 1st John, tells us what that apostasy is.

It is the denial of the person of our Lord Jesus. And then in 2nd John, he tells us the correct attitude towards those who deny the person of the Lord Jesus. And in 3rd John, he cites a case.

Thou trickest a petty tyrant in a local church. And then in Jude, the various characteristics of the apostasy are brought out. Now in these five books, you get a picture of the church in the days in which we are living.

So it can serve as a guide to us. Telling us what is the nature of these false teachers and their heretical doctrine. And also warn us against both of what is going on.

So dear brothers and sisters, we are living at the end of the days. We are living in these last days. Now if these last days commence with the coming of our Lord Jesus 2,000 years ago, then I think we understand.

We are living at the very end of the end of the days. We are living in the very last of the last days. We are truly living at almost at midnight.

When the Lord Jesus was upon this earth. He was the light of the world. And you remember our Lord Jesus said in the gospel according to John chapter 9, there was a man who was blind from his birth.

And when the disciples saw that man, strangely these disciples who had never been to the school of rabbis, they had never learned, but they were natural theologians. Because when they saw that man born blind, they began to ask the Lord a question, a theological question. Now this man was born blind.

Who sinned? His parents or himself? Brothers and sisters, you know, it is very strange. Even though not all of us have gone to theological seminaries, but we are born theologians. When we face a situation, immediately we begin to theorize, we begin to develop a kind of theology about it.

But our Lord Jesus said, it is neither the sin of the parents nor his own sin, but it is for the glory of God. That clears up all theology. And then the Lord Jesus said, I must work the works of him that has sent me while it is day.

The night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. In other words, when our Lord Jesus was on earth, it was day.

Because he was the light of the world. And then again in chapter 11, in the case of Lazarus, you find that our Lord Jesus, in verse 9, chapter 11, verse 9, Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in a day? If anyone walk in a day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walk in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.

After the Lord died, raised from the dead, ascended up to heaven. Dear brothers and sisters, the sun is gone. So we enter in a sense, night.

We are now in the night. And in the night you find the sun is not seen. What is left there is the moon and the stars, to give what light there is.

And in typology, we know that our Lord Jesus is the son of righteousness. And the moon is a type of the church. He leaves the church behind on earth.

And of course the stars speaks of individual believers. Because one star is different from another star. Every one of us is different, but all are supposed to give out light.

And dear brothers and sisters, the world has entered into night. But thank God he still leaves his church and his believers behind. And they are to give whatever light there is in this world.

But anyway you'll find, after our Lord Jesus has left, the world has entered into night. And it has been about 2,000 years now. So no doubt we are almost at midnight.

The darkest of the night. Now what are the phenomena of the night? If you turn to Matthew chapter 24, you'll find that our Lord Jesus, as he went out from the city of Jerusalem, his disciples pointed out to him the temple, built by the remnant and beautified by King Herod. It was a magnificent edifice.

And they took great pride in that temple and said, look, it was adorned with precious stones, with gifts from all over the world. But as our Lord Jesus was walking out of the city of Jerusalem, on his way to Mount Olive, he said to his disciples, I tell you, the day is coming when there will be no stone upon another stone. In other words, the temple will be completely destroyed.

And of course when the Lord said that, it was such a shock to the disciples. And they dare not say anything to him on the way, lest they be heard, because it will be considered as blasphemy by the Jews. But after our Lord Jesus and his disciples came to Mount Olive, and then the Bible said, some of his disciples came to the Lord secretly, and whispered to his ear and said, Master, Lord, when shall these things be? And what is the sign of thy coming and the completion or the end of this age? And then our Lord Jesus told them, when shall these things be? And also he told them of the sign of his coming, of his perusia, of his presence, and the completion of the age.

Now of course we know that this is recorded in Matthew chapter 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Just to help us to understand, Luke 21 is mainly the Lord's answer to the first part of the question. When shall these

things be? That is, when shall the temple in Jerusalem be completely destroyed? That is recorded mainly in Luke 21.

But of course, in Luke 21 you'll find it continues on to the sign of his coming and the completion of the age. But the emphasis in Luke is to answer the first question. But when you read Matthew chapter 24, you'll find the emphasis of the answer is on the second part of the question.

The sign of his coming and the completion of the age. But it also includes the first part. When shall these things be? So brothers and sisters, if you remember that, that will be a help.

Now the reason why it is, because if you read Luke chapter 21, you will find a key there. And the key is in 21 verse 24. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and be led captive into all the nations.

And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the nations, until the times of the nations be fulfilled. So this is a key, telling you that what has been described, what has been said before that, actually refers to the first part of the question. When shall these things be? But we will focus our attention on Matthew 24.

And there you'll find our Lord Jesus began to tell his disciples, verse 4. And Jesus answering said to them, see that no one mislead you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Christ. And they shall mislead many.

But you will hear of wars, and rumors of wars. See that ye be not disturbed. For all these things must take place.

But it is not yet the end. For nations shall rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there shall be famings, and pestilences, and earthquakes in diverse places.

But all these are the beginning of throes. That is the beginning of the famings. After the Lord left, the world entered into night.

What will be the phenomena of the night? The Lord said, there will be people coming, proclaiming themselves as Christ. False Christ. And they will mislead many people.

And there will be wars, and rumors of wars. There will be famings, pestilences, earthquakes everywhere. But the Lord said, these things do not indicate that the end has come.

Actually, these are just the beginning of birth pangs. Now if you will, parallel this portion of the scripture, with Revelation chapter 6, then you will find there is a similarity between them. Now we know that Revelation chapter 4 is the scene of the glory of the Creator.

And Revelation chapter 5, is the scene of the glory of the Redeemer. In other words, in chapter 4, you will find the glory of creation. And in chapter 5, you will have the glory of redemption.

Now whatever your interpretation may be, I think that is not important. But, to me I feel, Revelation chapter 5, is the scene of the ascension of our Lord Jesus. You remember then, in Acts chapter 1, the Lord ascended from the Mount of Olives.

And His disciples were there seeing Him going up. Until He was taken by cloud. But He was still going up.

They couldn't see Him because He was in the cloud. And yet they are still looking up. And you remember two men in white appear and said, men of Galilee, why are you looking up? The same one who is going up, he will return in like manner, in the same way, to this earth.

The Lord ascended up to heaven. But nobody saw the scene, what happened when He arrived in heaven. But thank God, by Revelation, the Apostle John was giving a vision of the glory of the ascended Christ.

When He ascended up into heaven. You know, in verse 6 of chapter 5 of Revelation, and I saw in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the Lamb, standing as slain. Now in some version it says, newly slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God, which are sent into all the world.

And it came and took it out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne. Here you'll find a scene. There was one sitting on the throne.

And in his hand there was a book. But that book was sealed. And then you'll find there was a proclamation, a strong angel proclaimed with a loud voice, that everybody may hear it.

In heaven, on earth, and underneath earth. All creatures will hear this. And he said, who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals? But after the proclamation was made, nobody was able in the heaven, upon the earth, under the earth, to open the book, or to regard it.

Why? Because there was nobody worthy. And when John saw that, he wept. Now dear brothers and sisters, why did he weep? It must be something of tremendous importance.

If there will be no one coming to take the book and break the seal, then you know what would happen? This earth will continue on indefinitely under the usurpation of the evil one. This book in the hand of the one on the throne is the title deed to this world. Brothers and sisters, God has never given up his ownership.

Even though the enemy usurped the authority upon this earth, he is now called the ruler, the prince of this world. But it is a usurpation. He did not possess the earth.

He is a squatter, not a possessor. God still holds in his hand the title deed to this world. But who is worthy to take the book and open the seal? In other words, who is worthy to execute the plan of God, to restore the earth, to restore creation back to God's original purpose? And this needs someone who is worthy to do that.

But no one was worthy, not only on earth, not only underneath the earth, but even in heaven. There was no one worthy. And when John realized that, he wept, because he thought there will be no hope, no hope for the world.

And then he was comforted by one of the elders. He said, Do not weep. Behold, the lion which is of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has overcome.

So as to open the book and its seven seals. And when that word was said, immediately he saw that in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures, in the midst of the elders, a lamb. This lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, is a lamb.

A lamb newly slain. In other words, it shows us that our Lord Jesus, after he was crucified on Calvary's cross, after he has finished the work of redemption, he was raised by God from the dead, and then he ascended up on high. And when he ascended up into heaven, he stepped forward, and he took out of the hand of God the Father, that book, because he was worthy.

And when of course this happened, you'll find immediately the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the lamb, and they sing a new song, saying, you are worthy to take the book and open its seals, because you have been slain and has redeemed to God by your blood, out of every tribe and town and people, nation, and may them to our God, kings and priests, and they shall reign over the earth. So brothers and sisters, this book, the title deed of the world, of this earth, of creation, is now in the hand of our Lord Jesus. Now can you imagine that after he took that book in his hand, that he will wait and not open the seals for two thousand years? Can you imagine that? That's the reason I believe, that as soon as he took the book in his own hand, he began to open the seals.

In other words, he began to execute the plan of God in recovering this earth and creation back to God. So there you'll find he began to open the seal. So I personally believe, now if you don't agree, it's perfectly alright, because it is interpretation.

I personally believe that as soon as he took the book in his own hand, he began to open the seal, one after another. And what you see in these seals? When the first seal was opened, you'll find a white horse, and one sitting on the horse, with a bow, but without arrow. Now if you connect this with Matthew chapter 24, then you will find the one who sits on the white horse with a bow, but without arrow.

In other words, it is a counterfeit. White, with bow, but no arrow. So these represent the false Christ and the false prophets.

After the Lord has left, in the night, you'll find there will be false prophets and false Christ, coming upon this earth, to deceive many people. And then in the opening of the second seal, you'll find a red horse, and the one who sits upon it has a great sword. In other words, he will take away peace from this earth.

The Lord Jesus said there will be wars, and rumors of wars. And then in the opening of the third seal, you will find a black horse, and the one who sits upon him has a balance in his hand. In other words, it is famine.

There will be famine coming upon this earth. And then the fourth seal was broken, and a pale horse came forth, and the one who sits upon it has the name of death. And he is able to use pestilence, hungers, wars, and all these things to kill one-fourth of the population of the earth.

So brothers and sisters, you'll find there is a correspondence between the four seals, and the first part of Matthew chapter twenty-four. There will be false Christ, there will be wars and rumors of wars, there will be famine and pestilence, and there will be earthquakes. All these disasters come upon this earth.

But the Lord Jesus said, this is not the end. Do not think that the end has come. These are just the beginnings of the end.

Now why is it that when the Lord opened the seals, there will be such disasters coming upon this earth? Why? It is because when God is trying to restore the earth to himself, there will arise such opposition from the power of darkness of disasters to come upon this earth. So actually, these are the signs or symbols of the opposition that comes against the kingdom of God. But dear brothers and sisters, people always ask

the question, if there is a God, and if God is love, why should there be wars? Why God allow wars? If he does not institute wars, at least why he does not allow it? If God is a God of love, why should he allow pestilences, famines, hungers, death, all these terrible things that we witness, that we experience upon this earth? Dear brothers and sisters, remember, these are the result of man's sins.

These are the expressions of the opposition to the rule of God. Miserable, suffering, pain, these things may bring upon this earth. But dear brothers and sisters, the Lord said, these are the beginnings of birth pains.

Isn't that wonderful? We think that wars, pestilences, famines, earthquakes, this only brings disasters, brings only death upon this earth. What good can come out of these things? Now when you look at these things themselves, it's true. Nothing good could come out of these things.

But God overruled these things. And God used these things that were stirred up by the enemy, that were the result of the sins of man. God took hold of these things and turned it into good.

And God said, these are the beginnings of birth pains. Now a woman who was bearing a child conceived. And when she began to have birth pains, now it was terrible of course, very painful.

But when he began to move, and when he began to prevail, when he began to have these birth pains, in themselves they are terrible, they are painful. But out of the birth pains came forth a birth. And when a child is born, the woman forgot all her sorrows.

She is happy because she has a child. Now dear brothers and sisters, it is true. God allowed all these things to happen upon this earth.

And God took hold of these things, and used these things as birth pains. The creation, the world, mankind, is under travail. You can hear the groaning of creation.

You can hear the groaning of man. But all these groanings and moanings, you will find God is working out his purpose. There will be a birth.

Now what is to be born? Out of the travail of creation. Out of the travail of this world. God is gathering out of every tribe, every town, every people, every nation, a redeemed people to himself.

God is bringing out of all these painful experiences, men and women who are redeemed by the precious blood. And God has made them kings and priests unto God. In other words, God is, through the travail of creation, God is bringing forth his own church.

The body of Christ, the bride of the Lamb. So brothers and sisters, you will find the wisdom of God. How God overruled everything.

Now isn't it true that when we were in all these kinds of troubles, men began to realize the vanity of vanities of this earth, and how many began to turn to the Lord. These are the beginnings of birth pains. Just the beginnings.

And you know these things continue on for two thousand years. Just like a birth pain. It is not just as soon as a woman is in pain, the child is born.

Now, that would be good. But unfortunately, usually it doesn't happen that way. And you'll find the birth pain will continue on and subside a little bit, and then it will come again and subside again, until finally you'll find a child is born.

Through these two thousand years, this is what is happening in the night. And as the time of birth comes nearer, you'll find that the pains begin to become more intense and shortened. You'll find that it repeats faster and faster and faster.

And that's what's happening. In these two thousand years, yes we have wars and rumors of wars, all these twenty centuries. We have famine and pestilence and earthquakes through all the twenty centuries, that's true.

But dear brothers and sisters, do you realize, when it comes to the end of the last days, when it comes to the time when the child is going to be born, you'll find that everything is intensified. It may take a hundred years to have a major war. But then you'll find it shortens maybe to thirty years.

And it will be shortened and shortened again. And in old days a war may be just a tribal war. It may affect only a small part of the world.

But now you'll find it will be a global war. Brothers and sisters, everything is intensified. Everything has increased.

You'll hear earthquakes everywhere. You'll see famine everywhere. Pestilence, wars and rumors of wars everywhere.

Intensified. Increased. As we come to the end of these last days.

And then the Lord Jesus said in Matthew chapter twenty-four, Then shall they deliver you up to tribulation, and shall kill you, and you'll be hated of all the nations for my name's sake. And then will many be offended, and will deliver one another up, and hate one another. And many false prophets shall arise and shall mislead many.

And because lawlessness shall prevail, the love of the most shall grow cold. But he that has endured to the end, he shall be saved. And these glad tidings of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole habitable earth for a witness to all the nations.

And then shall come the end. When all these things are happening, you'll find that there will be tribulation upon those who believe in the Lord. O brothers and sisters, in the twenty centuries, you will find that how God's people are being persecuted, are killed, the blood of the martyrs flow all over the twenty centuries.

The world will kill the Christians, will hate them because of the name of Christ. Whenever something happens, they blame the Christians. You'll find that in history.

For instance, Nero. We know that Nero, actually he was the one who burned the city of Rome. And when the city of Rome was burning, he was in his palace, playing his harp, and singing his song, enjoying the fire.

He was mad. Maybe he was clever. He wanted to rebuild Rome.

We don't know. But because when the fire burned and the people suffered so much, there was such murmuring, such rebelling in the hearts of people, he began to rebel. And when Nero saw that, he knew that there was danger there.

So he tried to find a scapegoat. And he began to spread the news, and the Christians, the Christians did that. And dear brothers and sisters, you'll find that this is not only true in the time of Nero, this is true over the two thousand years.

Whenever anything happened, people blamed the Christians. And all these two thousand years, the blood of the martyrs continued. But thank God, it is with the blood of the saints that the church is built.

And when these things happen, you'll find many will fall. Lawlessness shall prevail. Love of the most shall fail, grow cold.

But he that endures to the end, he shall be saved. You know, when persecution comes, even believers will deliver fellow believers up to be killed, to be sent to labor camp. Lawlessness shall prevail.

Love of the most shall grow cold. Dear brothers and sisters, we are in these days. He that endures to the end shall be saved.

But thank God, you'll find at the same time there is a glorious picture. And the glorious picture is, when all these things are going on, at the same time you'll find the gospel, the glad tidings of the kingdom shall be preached to all the nations. And then, the end.

The gospel of the kingdom. Now, what is the gospel of the kingdom? There is only one gospel, Paul says. Anyone shall come and preach another gospel, don't listen to it.

There is only one gospel, the gospel of Jesus Christ. But this gospel has many aspects. And there is one aspect which is called the gospel of the kingdom.

In other words, our Lord Jesus is King. And we need to submit ourselves to Him. Because the kingdom of God is coming.

Dear brothers and sisters, it's through all these travails, all these persecutions, all these trials, that God's people, even though many have fallen, but thank God, God's people began to realize that it's more than just a matter of getting saved. You know, sometimes we think the gospel is just the gospel of grace, getting saved. That's all that matters.

But dear brothers and sisters, there's more to that. And people began to realize it is more than just being saved. It is a complete commitment to the Lord.

Give ourselves to the Lord. And let Him rule over us. This is the gospel of the kingdom.

Now, brothers and sisters, this has to be a reality. Not only preach, but receive and respond it. And when the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to all the nations, in other words, God's people began to realize it is more than just getting saved.

It is to lay down our lives for His namesake. It is to put ourselves completely in His hands. That is the only way to get through to the end.

O brothers and sisters, if what you receive is just getting saved, then when all these things are happening, you won't be able to get through. You need to see the Lordship of Christ. You need to surrender your life to Him.

And only when you do that, you will be kept by His grace. You will be able to endure to the very end. The gospel of the kingdom must be preached to the nations, and then the end.

I personally believe four seals have already been opened. The fifth seal will be opened very soon. Now, why is there such a gap there? Because, as you read Revelation chapter 6, you will find that, and, verse 9, and when it opened, the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O sovereign ruler, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell upon the earth? And there was given to them, to each one, a white robe, and it was said to them that they should rest yet a little while, until both their fellow-born men and their brethren, who were about to be killed, as they shall be fulfilled. In other words, you will find at the opening of the fifth seal, you saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus. In other words, when the fifth seal was opened, you saw the martyrs of the ages.

The martyrs of the ages. We do not know how many of them. Countless.

They were slain because of the word of God, faithful to God's word. They were slain because they kept the testimony of Jesus. They were not compromised.

And you know, there under the altar, these naked souls were crying out, How long, O sovereign ruler, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell upon the earth? Dear brothers and sisters, you notice a change of time. What is our time? Our time is the time of grace. Since the Lord Jesus came, He brought into the time of grace.

And we are still in this time of grace. Not only our Lord Jesus on Calvary's cross, when He was crucified, what was His prayer? He said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. That's grace.

What was the cry of the first martyr of the church, Stephen? Before he died, he said, God, forgive them. Throughout the twenty centuries, when God's people were martyred and killed, some were burned to death, some were drowned, some were cast into lions' den, some were having oil poured upon them and burned. Dear brothers and sisters, in these two thousand years, so many have given their life to the Lord, but the last prayer, the last word come out of their mouth is not vengeance, but forgive.

This is the character, the nature of the time of grace. The church today is praying that God be merciful to this world. Even though we have been mistreated by the world, and yet we pray that God would forgive and God would save.

This is the character of this time of grace. But dear brothers and sisters, one day the time of grace will be ended. A time will change.

It will change from the time of grace to the time of judgment. And how does it begin? It begins with the cry of the martyrs of the ages. You know, whenever heaven is to do something, the heaven waits until God's people begin to pray.

And when God's people receive the impression from heaven as to what God is going to do, and begin to pray, then the hand of heaven will move. So here you'll find God is going to change the time from grace to judgment. Therefore at the opening of the fifth seal, all the martyrs of the ages began to cry out, how long? O sovereign ruler, will you not judge the world in revenge of the blood that they have shed? This is not the prayer of the church today.

We cannot pray this prayer today. It will be entirely opposite to the character of the age. But dear brothers and sisters, one day the prayer of the church will change.

They will ask God to judge the world in revenge of the blood that has been shed. That is the reason why I believe. And they were comforted and said, just wait a little while.

There will be more to be killed. O brothers and sisters, we are living at this time. Persecutions spread over great part of the world.

And so many of God's people have already given their lives for the gospel and for the name of Christ, even in our days. Until the number of the martyrs is fulfilled. How close we are living at the end of the last days.

Because at the opening of the sixth seal, what happened? Judgment began to come upon the earth. The wrath of the land. So brothers and sisters, we are actually living at the very end of the last days.

Why is it that these last days continue on for so long? It has been about two thousand years. And you will find there will be markers. As you find in 2 Peter chapter 3. People will begin to mark and say, where is the promise of his coming? For from the time the fathers fell asleep, all things remain thus from the beginning of the creation.

Ah, they do not know. But there will be an end. And the day of the Lord shall come as a thief.

Suddenly he will come. To borrow the phrase from the book of Isaiah. God asked Isaiah.

Isaiah is a watchman. God said, watchman, what of the night? What hour of the night is it? What of the night, watchman? And Isaiah, who is a watchman, is alert. He said, the morning comes.

Oh, isn't that good? The morning comes. And the night also. In other words, it is approaching the very darkest of the night.

But thank God, when the night is entering into its darkest stage, the morning is not too far away. Brothers and sisters, we are living at this time. We are living at the very end of the end of days.

We are living in the darkest of the night. But thank God, soon we will hear a cry at midnight. The bridegroom comes.

And when he comes, the day comes. The morning comes. How do we know that we are so near to the coming of the Lord? I have to rush.

I am just beginning. That's true. Oh, but I say on introduction.

How do we know that we, the Lord coming, is very near? Now, of course, no one knows the hour. The Lord said no one knows. If anyone would try to confuse and say the Lord is coming in a certain year, a

certain month, a certain day, he is a false prophet.

Do not hear him. The Lord said nobody knows. Even the angels, who are more intelligent than human beings, they do not know.

Only the Father knows the time. But one thing we do know. It is near.

Very near. How near? In Matthew chapter 24, the Lord Jesus said, Learn the parable from the fig tree. When already his branch becomes tender and produces leaves, you know that the summer is near.

Thus also ye, when ye see all these things, know that it is near at the doors. You know the fig tree is a symbol of the Jewish nation. When our Lord Jesus was on earth, not, oh, about two days before he spoke on the Mount Olive, two days ago, you remember, as he was going to the city of Jerusalem in the morning, he saw a fig tree.

He was hungry. And he saw a fig tree full of leaves. And if a fig tree is full of leaves, even though it may not be the time of harvest, it should have some figs on it.

Because if it doesn't have any figs on it, this fig tree will never bear fruit. So our Lord Jesus fully expected that there will be some figs on there. Now, if you know, the fig trees in Palestine.

In Palestine, you know, by December, the figs began to shed their leaves. And become bare. Until the, towards the end of March.

And when the end of March comes, you'll find the leaves begin to come out. And when these leaves begin to come out, then on the leaf axle, you will find tiny little figs. Now, these tiny little figs are the food of the poor.

And if they do not have these tiny little figs, that's to prove that the fig tree will never bear fruit. So what the Lord was trying to find are these tiny little figs. It was before the time of harvest.

Because the harvest came in two crops. One in June, and one in August. That is in the summer.

But, when you see the leaves begin to have tender branch and leaves, you know that the summer is near. It is not yet summer, but the summer is near. Because it will be end of March, April, beginning of April at that time.

But when the Lord went there and saw there was no fig. Not there, those tiny little figs there. So this fig tree will never bear fruit.

And the Lord cursed that tree. Our Lord never cursed anything except one, that fig tree. And of course we know it is because there is a symbolic reason behind it.

It is, the fig tree is a symbol of the nation of Israel. How our Lord Jesus on earth took care of that nation? Because that nation does not bear fruit. And the owner said, let's cut it down.

But the vine dresser said, let me try on it a little bit more. Put more fertilizer on it and see if it will bear fruit. But finally it never bear fruit.

So the Lord said, alright. The nation of Israel was cast aside for a time. Not permanently, as some people think, but temporarily.

And two days later, the Lord said, now learn the lesson from the fig tree. The fig tree began to bear branch and tender leaves. It began to come into life.

Now, that fig tree is none other than the fig tree that He has cursed. In other words, it is the nation of Israel. Israel shall be recovered, revived.

You know, who would believe that 50 years ago? But thank God, you know, in 1917 there was a Balfour Declaration. And the British government, the foreign minister, had a declaration saying that it is the nation, British nation is favorable for the Jews to have a homeland for themselves. And this is actually a reward to a Jewish chemist, a young Jewish chemist.

Because during the war time, if you know the story, during the war time the British government found that they lack a kind of thing for guns, Kodite, for gunpowder. Lack that kind of chemicals. So they asked the whole nation, all the chemists, to try to produce it, mass produce it.

Now, they can do it in small laboratories, but they cannot do it mass production. So finally, a young Jewish chemist discovered a way to mass produce Kodite. And when the British government asked him, what shall we reward you for that? He said, promise us to give us a homeland.

In 1917. And in 1947, November, the United Nations unanimously agreed that there should be a homeland for the Jews in Palestine. And then, you know, in May 1948, the nation of Israel, that victory began to bear tender branch, and have leaves.

And I do believe there are some tiny figs there too. But the harvest has not yet come, because the summer is near. It's coming.

There will be a day when all Israel shall be saved. You'll find that in Romans chapter 11. All Israel shall be saved.

That is the time when their bare fruit, the crop, the harvest, shall come. But dear brothers and sisters, the Lord said, learn the lesson. In other words, He's teaching the Church.

There is something more than just the restoration of the nation of Israel. What are we to learn? The Lord said, when you see all these things coming to pass, you know that it is near at the doors. Now, what is near? It is near.

If you read the book of Mark, you will find the Kingdom of God is near. When you see these things happening, you know the Kingdom of God is near. You know that the Lord is already at the doors.

Now, probably with the Western world, you cannot appreciate this. But we who come from the Orient, we know what it means. At the doors.

The door there is not singular number, it's plural number. Doors. At the doors.

Now, in this country, if you come to the front door, and after you step over that threshold, you are in the house. You have only one door to the house. But in the Orient, it is different.

If you want to come to the place where the family lives, you may have to cross a number of doors. Because there will be a wall. And there will be the door.

And after you enter into that front door, you will be in a courtyard. And if the family is rich, you may have to cross not only one door, but a few doors. Before you reach the place where the family lives.

But, if you are at the front door, then it is not too far from where the family lives. So, brothers and sisters, you know, when we see these things happening, in 1948, the nation Israel was born. Brothers and sisters, the Kingdom of God, the King, is already at the doors.

And if He is at the doors, it is very, very close. Closer than you think. Another thing, Luke 21.

In Luke 21, here you find the verse that we have read. That verse 24 marks the division of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and the destruction of the world, the judgment of the world that is coming. So that verse is the division between these two judgments.

What goes before verse 24 tells us the judgment of the theocracy. The judgment of Jerusalem, of the temple. And what follows verse 24 tells us of the judgment that is coming to the nations.

And what is the dividing line? The dividing line is the times of the Gentiles. Jerusalem shall be trodden, all the nations, until the times of the nation of the Gentiles be fulfilled. Now, brothers and sisters, I cannot go into details.

It would take several hours. But let me just say this. After the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, only a few months in A.D. 135, Jerusalem was in the hands of the Jews.

But aside from that short few months, for these almost 2,000 years, Jerusalem had been trodden under the nations. In other words, the nations, the Gentiles, controlled Jerusalem. Not until 1967, the Six Days War.

Not until 1967, for the first time, Israel took hold of all Jerusalem. Not only the new city, but also the old city. And they made Jerusalem an indivisible, eternal capital of the nation.

Brothers and sisters, we have been watching this for years. Whether this is the time of the Gentiles being fulfilled. And you know, so far as human reasoning goes, the whole world will not allow this.

The United Nations say, give back the old city. The Arabs will not allow it. And we were watching whether it will again go out of their hands.

But since 1967, up to the present time, Jerusalem is still in the hands of Israel. We wonder whether the times of the Gentiles have been fulfilled. If the times of the Gentiles have been fulfilled, then brothers and sisters, the coming of the Lord is very, very near.

The end is coming. Now there are many other things we can talk about, but I think my time is more than over. So anyway, one thing we need to know, the time that we live in, we are living at the very end of the end days.

It is an evil day. Perilous day. Dangerous day.

But thank God, it is a day that we can look up for our redemption. Dear Heavenly Father, as the whole world is trembling with fear, man would rather die for fear of what is coming. Oh, how we praise and thank Thee we can lift up our heads, knowing that our redemption draws near.

Oh, come Lord Jesus, come. Amen.

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