

Warning Signs **(Matthew 24:4-13)**

Presented at Mt. Zion Baptist Church by Fred DeRuvo, Th.D (04/21/2024)

INTRO:

Life is filled with warning signs. Whether we go, we will likely see some type of warning signs and those signs are not necessarily meant to scare or instill fear within us. They are simply noting something and if we are aware of what those signs mean, we will heed them and be aware of the problems that the signs warn us about.

As one example, I'm semi-retired but I drive a school bus in the county. As you might imagine it comes with a good deal of responsibility to ensure that I get my bus full of students to and from school in as safe a manner as possible. Things like student issues on the bus can make that more difficult. But apart from that, situations outside the bus can also add to the problems.

Not too long ago, when we experienced a good deal of rain, numerous roads in the county were washed out and impassable. My bosses at the bus garage were diligent in staying in touch with road crews to learn which roads were closed to traffic.

During that time of major downpours I received warnings, either text messages the night before my route, or the morning of indicating which roads I needed to avoid. In essence, my bosses were warning me that if I went down those roads there would be serious problems.

So, because I was made aware of the problem – having been *WARNED* of it – I could successfully navigate through the problems and be on my way. Had I not been warned about the road closures, I would have simply run my normal bus route thinking that, besides the amount of rain prompting me to go slower, there was nothing to be concerned about.

The Bible also is filled with many warnings. We see these warnings in the life of the Israelites, King Saul, King David, King Solomon and many others in the Old and New Testaments. In some cases, problems were successfully dealt with because people paid attention to the warnings that God provided often through His prophets. In many other cases, those warnings were not heeded, and consequences ensued.

Jesus also spent time warning His listeners and followers. In **Matthew 24:32** Jesus warns his disciples, *“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch already becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So, you also*

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when you see these things, know that the end is near- at the doors!” Jesus is clear about our responsibility to look for and heed the warnings that we find in His Word. We need to be aware of these warnings so that we are not caught unaware.

In the *Olivet Discourse*, which we find in **Matthew 24**, **Mark 13** and **Luke 21**, Jesus outlines what will occur toward the end of the age in which we are now living. He clearly states the warning signs as He spent time with His disciples to warn them about the events and resulting attitudes that would seriously impact society as the time approached for His physical return.

Some of what He warned happened before all of His apostles died or were martyred. Some warnings remain as yet unfulfilled because they are still in front of us. I’m of the firm conviction based on Jesus’s warning in **Matthew 16:2-3**,

“When it is evening you say, “it will be fair weather for the sky is red; and in the morning, it will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.” Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.”

While Jesus in that statement was talking to the religious leaders, those warnings apply to us in that we should be aware that what Jesus warned about *is* happening now and will continue with greater intensity as we lead up to the coming final seven years of human history prior to the physical return of our Lord. This period is known biblically as *the* Tribulation period.

In the *Olivet Discourse*, Jesus warns of very difficult times that will engulf the entire world. We need to realize that all of what Jesus says that is to come to pass ***will*** occur in God’s timing, though Satan and his human agents on earth want to push things ahead with greater speed to bring the final kingdom of **Daniel 2** to fruition.

You’ll recall in that chapter; King Nebuchadnezzar sees a huge statue in his dream. It greatly concerns him as he notices the statue is divided into four parts, but it made no sense to him. Not one of his wise men could provide any rational explanation for the dream, until Daniel is called who is able to explain the dream to Nebuchadnezzar based on God’s revelation.

Nebuchadnezzar learns that the top portion of the statue represents Babylon. The chest and arms represent the next kingdom, Medo-Persia. The third section – the belly and thighs – represents Alexander’s Grecian Empire. The fourth points to the Roman

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Empire. All these kingdoms came and went and we now are awaiting the “10 toes” part which conservative biblical scholars call the “Revised Roman Empire” that will rise from the ashes in roughly the same area of the old Roman Empire.

It will be this empire that will ultimately be ruled over by the man Paul calls the “man of sin” in **2 Thessalonians 2**. This man of sin or Antichrist will literally be Satan in the flesh. If the Bible is true – and it is – we know that these things will come to pass though still in the future. So, in spite of how badly Satan and his human cohorts want this final new world order to become established, it will only occur when God’s timing allows as Satan and his agents are on God’s *leash*. Amen?

I have been studying God’s Word since I became a Christian at the age of 13. I just turned 67 and I often think I’ve just begun scratching the surface. Over the years, I’ve earned a Bachelor’s in Bible, a Masters in Biblical Theology and a Doctorate in Theology. But I’m by no means at the end of my learning. In fact, it seems to me that in some ways, I’m just beginning.

I’ve written over 30 books, most of them on prophetic discourse. I also write a weekly blog – two to three times per week – where I share my viewpoints on various biblical concerns and what is happening in the world today.

Because of all this, readers of my blog and books will often ask me, *Where are we on God’s prophetic calendar?* This is an important question, and Jesus expects us to heed the signs of the fig tree to recognize the times in which we currently live.

I realize prophecy can be confusing to some, unnecessary to others and can even – unfortunately – create tension between people over viewpoints and sometimes fear within the believer. Maybe the subject is important to you. Maybe it’s not as important as you would like it to be, but Jesus expects us to pay attention and heed his warnings.

Jesus warns us about the things that will occur toward the end of this current age before He returns. Instead of being fearful of those things, we need to take them to heart so that we can be aware of them and navigate through them.

While I don’t have all the answers, I believe, based on the truth of God’s Word, I can see clearly enough from what is happening in the world today, where we are and where we are heading. Certainly, I cannot know *when* certain prophetic events that are yet unfilled in Scripture *will* be fulfilled because I’m not a prophet. I can, however, discern the times

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and, using discernment, arrive at a general understanding of which part of the *70 weeks* that we are current in that Daniel speaks of in **Daniel 9**.

So, I'd like to take the remainder of time today to review Jesus' warnings found in the Olivet Discourse. These words, spoken directly by our Lord, enlighten us, warning us of a picture of the very end of the end times in which we live. Some of what Jesus warns can make us cringe or experience fear, some of what He says may cause us to be filled with gratefulness. It is in the Bible; therefore, it is important for us because God wanted us to know.

I'd like to highlight **four** things that Jesus points out as a warnings from the *Olivet Discourse* in Matthew **24**.

These four points are:

1. **Apostasy (24:4-5; 11)**
2. **Anarchy (24:6-8)**
3. **Apathy (24:12-13)**
4. **Affliction (24:9-10)**

Let's take a moment to read the text from the Olivet Discourse and then delve into the sermon, covering **Matthew 24:4-13**. **(Maybe pray after reading the Word)**

I. Apostasy

“let no one deceive you and many false prophets and messiahs will come in my name”

In **Matthew 24:4-5** and **11**, Jesus warns His disciples and us of the tremendous uptick in false teachers as the age draws to a close.

False teachers are liars and liars have always existed on the earth and that goes back to **Genesis 3** when Satan lied about God to convince Eve and Adam that what Satan offered was better than what God offered.

Jesus warns of false teachers and false prophets doing tremendous damage to believers in the churches over which they shepherd because they lead people *away* from the truth of God's Word as we see in many false churches of today, just as Satan led Eve away from God's truthfully spoken Word. Lies always end in people walking away from God and His truth.

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But it's not just false apostles, prophets and teachers either. In the text, Jesus is specifically pointing to the fact that false Messiahs will rise. Their only purpose is to deceive people. Currently, there are at least three to five people throughout the world who claim to be Jesus incarnate. They all have followers who pretty much worship those individuals.

We will likely see more and more people claiming to be the reincarnation of Jesus or Messiah. The belief in "the Christ consciousness" within the New Age Movement is a core belief. Hardcore New Age believers all look forward to the coming of what they call *the Christ Consciousness* in the form of *one* particular person they call *Maitreya*. When this person comes on the scene, he will be adored and worshiped by those within the New Age. It would not surprise me to see many leaders within Christendom point to this coming man as the "one" who will right all wrongs. Unfortunately for both groups, this future man will be the Antichrist, someone Paul called the "man of sin/lawlessness" in **2 Thessalonians 2**. He will take the world by storm and gain full control of the coming new world order.

This particular new world order is under construction now by the UN, the WHO, the WEF all working in conjunction with governments and corporations around the globe to create the one world government under 10 temporary "kingdoms" as represented by the toes of the statue in Daniel 2.

So, Jesus *warns* us to be aware of this growing deception. Being warned of it means we can avoid succumbing to it and this only happens with prior knowledge, and we can only gain that prior knowledge if we are continually immersed in His Word. This might be a good time to ask yourself, "Am I immersed in His Word?" If you are not, how will you avoid deception?

Don't forget Paul warns us that the coming man of sin cannot be revealed until the great apostasy occurs (**2 Thessalonians 2:3**). This is a major turning away from faith. Now does this mean actual Christians will deny Jesus? No, but we do know it must mean many who *believe* they are actual Christians but are not. They will be caught by the deception of the Antichrist.

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II. Anarchy (24:6-8)

“you will hear of wars, rumors of wars, nations fighting each other with resulting famine and pestilence”

The second warning that Jesus makes is about what we would call *anarchy* today. Anarchy, a form of lawlessness, is where people will do what they want to do and get away with it. It's very similar to the statement we read throughout the book of **Judges**, *There was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in his own eyes*. That statement is repeated throughout that book to emphasize the fact that people lived lawlessly.

We saw this a few years ago with BLM and AntiFa who caused millions of dollars in damages in some major cities in America.

We are seeing it today with protest groups blocking highways and even the Golden Gate Bridge in California to highlight their support for the so-called “Palestinians”. While peaceful protesting is **protected** in the USA, breaking the law to make a point is not and leads to anarchy.

Anarchy often leads to wars and rumors of other wars. As I'm sure you know, on October 7, the terrorist group Hamas waltzed into Israel and murdered well over a thousand innocent unarmed Jews who were enjoying a music festival. When Israel ultimately responded, the world said, *“Stop! Back down! Take it easy!”*

Since then, Israel has been eliminating or arresting one terrorist after another and most recently, Israel destroyed a building next to the Iranian consulate in Damascus. The building they destroyed was *not* the consulate. It was actually the headquarters of terrorists, and one big name terrorist was taken out with precision.

Iran then responded with well over 100 rockets and drones directed at Israel. Israel defended itself against that onslaught and now the world leaders want Israel to dial it back and essentially not go after Iran. One Jewish man, a scientist with a doctorate in physics was astounded at the precision with which Israeli defenses were able to completely obliterate the oncoming assault. He likened it to the parting of the Red Sea! Was God at work? I believe it because of what He has promised in Scripture regarding Israel and because He is not done with Israel.

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What does **Genesis 12:1-3** tell us? Anyone who blesses Abraham (Israel) will be blessed and anyone who curses Israel will be cursed. There are a lot of people and nations today that curse Israel and America is dangerously close to doing the same thing. Israel is the only nation God ever personally created and He did so to bless this entire world by bringing the Jewish Messiah and Savior to Gentiles into this world. Those who hate Israel even in their current state of unbelief will have to answer to God. God may clearly send His judgment to those nations that stand in Israel's way. In fact, it appears as though He has begun with judgment on Iran because tremendously severe weather turned the beach blood **red** in Hormuz, Iran.

If things continue to escalate in the Middle East, nations like Russia, Turkey and others may become physically involved against Israel. This will lead to worldwide ***anarchy***, a warning sign of the approaching end.

III. Apathy (24:12-13)

“lawlessness will abound and the love of many will grow cold”

The third warning that Jesus brings to the fore is *apathy*. Apathy is a state in a person where they essentially could care less. People often say the opposite of love is hate, but in reality, the actual opposite of love is apathy, where a person no longer cares for another person at all.

Jesus refers to the results of this problem in **verse 12**, stating, *“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold.”*

Are we seeing that in society now, an increase in wickedness? Of course we are – you know it as well as I do. In 2008 same sex unions were made legal in Kommiefornia...I mean, California. It wasn't long after that the Supreme Court of the United States confirmed its legality for all states.

Since then, what has come out? Now we're dealing with transgenderism, the notion that a man can identify as a woman, become pregnant and give birth.

So because of the *apostasy*, the *anarchy*, and the *apathy*, or in Jesus' words, the *increase of wickedness*, people will progressively become numb and stop caring. They are only immersed in themselves and apathetic towards all others.

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Now is Jesus talking about believers or unbelievers? He's essentially talking about *unbelievers*. However, it can happen to believers who become hopeless in light of what is happening in the world.

Notice though Jesus then says, in **verse 13** “...*the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.*” The implication is that those who endure are those who are authentically saved. Those who endure have a job of warning those who are in danger of not enduring and we'll get to that in a minute.

In essence, we who are authentically saved and heed the warnings of Jesus will not be caught off guard *will* persevere to the end, regardless of the cost. Is that you? Is that me? We need to be sure of that!

IV. Affliction (24:9-10)

“they will deliver you up, be offended by you, hate you and kill you and betray one another”

Jesus' warning in these verses of **Matthew 24** is about *affliction*. He states clearly, *“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. 10 At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other...”*

What I believe He is speaking of here is something that will climax during the coming seven-year Tribulation period that occurs just prior to His physical return to this earth as King and Ruler. But we are starting to see this on a global scale and if what Jesus is saying is true (it is), then we can expect it to increase in intensity in the world and our lives as well.

In 2023, 8,000 Christians were murdered by Islamists in Nigeria. That's according to the International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law. Since 2009 a total of 150,000 Christians have been slaughtered. Jesus warned that affliction in the form of martyrdom would come.

Just this past week, an ultraconservative pastor of the Assyrian Orthodox Church in Australia came under physical attack while he was preaching a sermon to his congregation. The pastor had fled Iraq years ago because after Saddam Hussein was captured and then executed, Islamists in Iraq began a campaign of attacking Christians.

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The pastor of the church in Australia was not murdered but suffered numerous knife wounds by the 15-year-old perpetrator. He is quoted as saying that the pastor was getting into his religion (Islam), so he decided to get into the pastor's religion. The problem of course is that the pastor was merely using the Word to teach his congregation in his own church. The young man went out of his way to attack a Christian who was preaching truth.

Persecution in the world against Christians is on the rise. We can be certain it will continue to increase. Are you prepared for the world to hate you? Be offended by you? We need to be aware of these warnings so that we can be prepared for what is coming.

Conclusion

So based on all of these warning of – **Apostasy, Anarchy, Apathy, Affliction** - I ask a question. As Christians, what should our attitude be in life? What should we be concerned about? Should we fear, what may well be on the threshold? Should we, in the face of these warnings, endeavor to hide from the problems that the Lord allows our way for our testing and growth and ultimately for His glory?

The answer to those questions is obviously NO. We should not fear, and we should not hide. So, then what *should* we do to prepare for these things? There are three things we can and should do as revealed in God's Word and I'll close with these.

First, we need to be in His Word on a daily basis. **Psalm 119:105** says, "*Your Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.*" If we are to know the way to walk, we need to open His Word, read it daily and consider its message to us as we apply it to our lives. We should also endeavor to memorize His Word so that it can be hidden in our hearts. One of my favorite passages is found in **Isaiah 41:10**.

Fear not for I am with you. Be not dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Yes, I will help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

It amazes me how often I repeat that verse to myself and as a prayer to God when I feel as though the things of the world are causing my faith to fail. If we memorize parts of His Word, we will always have it with us and can call on its promises anytime.

King David said in **Psalm 119:11**, "*Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.*"

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God's Word strengthens our faith. It works to keep us from sin. It allows us to walk away from Self and toward God. Are you in His Word? Am I in His Word? This must be our daily focus to be able to strengthen and equip us to heed Jesus' warnings.

Second, in **Matthew 28:19**, Jesus says, "*Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*" Jesus tells His followers that their main job is to spread the Gospel, to make disciples of all nations. The apostle Peter tells us quite clearly and succinctly that we need to "*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear...*" (**1 Peter 3:15**).

Since the time is short, we need to be ready to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul shares that he was "*...not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.*" (**Romans 1:16**) It is not only our job, but it is our *privilege* to share the Gospel with the lost so that God might open their eyes to their need for salvation. Are you readily sharing the gospel with unbelievers through the Word and in your life? Are you Salt and Light in a very lost world?

Third and finally, as believers we need to continue meeting together as part of his Body, as the writer of Hebrews exhorts in **Hebrews 10:25**, "*Do not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another- all the more as you see the Day approaching.*" We need to encourage one another in His great love for us as we see the Day approaching.

Our fellowship with one another is essential for remaining hopeful and prepared for the days that are approaching. We cannot "do" Christianity without fellowshipping with other Christians.

I sometimes receive emails from brothers and sisters who want to know if I know of any good churches in their area. They tell me they cannot find one where the pastor actually teaches expositionally and truthfully. Too often, the only churches around them are those churches who are at one degree or another of going "woke."

My heart goes out to those believers and I always tell them even though I may not be aware of quality churches in their area, that they should do what they can to find other

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believers in the same situation and start a home Bible study if nothing else to share in the reading and studying of God's Word and encouraging one another.

There is much happening in the world already that Jesus warned us about in **Matthew 24**. It can cause us fear and to be filled with trepidation because we do not know what 2024 will bring.

However, one thing that we should all know, and place our hope upon is the physical return of our Lord to this earth. He will then set up His Millennial Kingdom over which He will rule with a rod of iron and righteousness throughout the earth will have no end.

Jan Markell of Olive Tree Ministries recently stated that we cannot continue looking around at the world without looking up. I believe that. Do you? Let's close in prayer.