

**Until All Shall Hear**  
**Matthew 24:3-14**

Last week we began a series on the church and God's intention for us through the ages. We considered a passage that establishes the church squarely on the shoulders of Jesus. He is both its founder and its foundation. The church was not built on man, but on Christ the Son of the living God. The church is comprised of those who, like Peter, confess Jesus to be who He claims to be. The church will continue to be added to daily until He returns and even the "gates of Hades", referring to death, will be unable to keep anyone from eternal life who has confessed Christ as Savior. Because Jesus lives having been victorious over death, we too will live and be victorious over death.

The passage that we are looking at today comes with a qualification. Let's set the stage by having you turn in your Bibles to Matthew 23. In this passage Jesus gives a number of warnings to the multitude and specifically targets the Pharisees with seven woes about them. This will be His last public sermon. It is not a message on His Kingdom or righteous living but rather a message of condemnation against the false teachers who were leading Israel from the truth. He then exhorts the disciples and other true spiritual leaders not to follow the practice of these false teachers.

In verses 13-36 Jesus denounces the Scribes and the Pharisees for their blatant hypocrisy and false teaching. In the closing verses of chapter 23 Jesus expresses His compassion for unbelieving Israel who will one day return to Him in faith in fulfillment of God's promise to them.

Jesus ends chapter 23 by His weeping for the nation longing for them to return to Him. **(Read v. 37-39)**

As we open up chapter 24 we see that these words were spoken to crowds in the Temple, but now Jesus and his disciples had left and were on their

way out of the city of Jerusalem. According to verse 3 they had made their way up to the Mount of Olives that rises above the city. It was so called because of the olive groves that grew there. It was a place that Jesus frequented when He was in the area. It was both serene and quiet. We might find such a spot among an apple orchard or a quiet place along a beach or river. The Mount of Olives was a great place to sit and think, or to pray or to teach. As they were walking up the path that would take them to the summit one of the disciples must have looked back to get a view of Jerusalem. From that vantage point they had a good view of the Temple. It was a spectacular view of the Temple that rose above the height of the walls that surrounded the city. It was a beautiful as it gleamed in the warm sun.

The first Temple was built by King Solomon and then destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar when Babylon conquered it in 586 BC. Years later Ezra, under the authority of King Cyrus returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. That Temple was desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanies and later underwent a renovation under Herod the Great in 20AD. Today Jews pray daily that the Temple will be rebuilt a third time.

It was Herod's Temple that they are now looking at in all its magnificence gleaming in the sunlight. As they were letting its view sink in, Jesus commented that this Temple would also be destroyed. Of course He was speaking about the conquest of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple that would take place in 70AD. It was on the Mount of Olives that the Roman legions would camp as they lay siege to the city.

Jesus was then asked several questions by the disciples. What unfolds now in what has become known as the Olivet Discourse are some of the details that will happen in the end times. These events are yet to happen, they are still future. Chapter 24 is about end time activity and won't

involve the church as Jesus describes events that are part of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week and events that are outlined in greater detail in Revelation 6 with the seven seal judgments that are poured out.

While the passage is about end time events that don't affect the church there are some principles that I believe are applicable for us today.

Between verses 2 and 3 the small group had reached the Mount of Olives. The disciples were now curious about what the Lord had said earlier.

Notice their question in verse 3:

**“Tell us, when will this happen (referring to the destruction of the Temple), and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”**

Will there be bright lights to announce it?

Will there be daytime darkness?

Will angels announce the coming as they did when Jesus was born? What will the signs be?

When will the Temple be destroyed?

What are signs that will reveal your coming and consequently the end of the age?

Verse 4 – **“Jesus answered.”** As I said, although this is an end time prophecy there are three truths that I want for us to glean from the passage.

There is a warning.

There is a waiting.

There is a witnessing.

## I. THERE IS A WARNING

Notice several things that we are warned about.

*There is a warning about deceivers.*

As the end of the age draws closer and closer there will be an increase in those who deceive others about the truth. They are in our schools. They are in our government. They are in our institutions and television programs. They are in the pages of books, newspapers and magazines. They are even in our churches. What they teach will cause many

to question the truth of Scripture they have been taught and cause many to be led astray.

Jesus has two words that are important for us – **“Watch out.”** It means to look out, to perceive with the eyes, to understand their ways. It has the idea of watching with the express intent of avoiding them. It's an admonition that Jesus gives repeatedly when He wanted others to be wary of danger that was ahead. The warning here is to watch out for false teachers. He said that many would come in His name claiming to be messengers from God, some even claiming to be Christ Himself. The sad truth is that many have been and will continue to be deceived by these false teachers. They have been led astray to disbelieve what the Bible has to say about heaven and eternal life and godly living. They have left following Christ altogether.

I think of my friend Cliff who once was a strong contender for the faith but now embraces atheism. Then there is the son of my friend Dick and the brother of Dick's wife, both taught in the hallowed halls of our country's great institutions. They too believe God is a myth, a figment of the imagination, dreamed up by people with a hope of something that will never come to pass.

False teachers and false prophets have always been around subverting the truth. The very first was Satan himself when he twisted and perverted the truth of God and led Eve and then Adam away from their relationship with God.

He knows that his days are numbered so he is out to deceive as many people as possible that his way is right. His desire and his delight is to take as many to hell along with him.

That Noah and his family were the only persons to enter the ark leads one to believe that there were many false teachers undermining the message and witness of Noah. Everyone on earth with the exception of 8 people all lost their lives for lack of

obeying the truth because they were deceived into thinking that Noah must be mad and that God wouldn't destroy the earth with a flood.

False teachers led people to erect the tower of Babel in defiance of God's command to go throughout the world and populate it, to trust God.

Moses encountered the false teachers of Egypt.

Elijah faced down the false prophets of Baal.

Jeremiah was imprisoned because the King chose to listen to a false prophet rather than the truth from God.

Ezekiel faced false prophets in Israel. God called them **“foolish prophets who are following their own spirit and have seen nothing.” (Ezekiel 13:3)**

False prophets and teachers have been around since the dawn of time and not just during Biblical history, but beyond and into our present day and they will continue to abound.

Confucius, Mohammed, Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy (Founder of Christian Science), Jim Jones (founder of the People's Temple), David Koresh (founder of the Branch Davidian cult in Waco, TX), Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Shintoism, and the list goes on ad nauseum with respect to the number of religions and cults that claim the truth but are nothing more than lies. I have several books in my study that describe the plethora of the world religions teaching us to watch out for false teachers.

My own extended family is littered with individuals who were atheists, followers of Confucius and Shi'ites (a branch of Islam).

Watch out for deceivers. We combat their false teaching by knowing the truth, immersing ourselves in God's Word so that we can discern the spirit of

truth from the spirit of error. If we don't know danger is coming we won't know what to look for.

As a senior in High school or little class traveled to the capital for a few days to tour Washington D.C. We weren't the only group touring that week. Bus after bus after bus of high school students pounded the pavement. It was a ripe spot for unwary students who hadn't been out in the world much to be approached by false teachers. As we came to the steps of one of the tour spots there was a small group of college students standing around handing out pamphlets to people passing by. They handed one to me. They talked about God and how wonderful He was and how they met regularly to pray. I thought to myself, that's cool. I believe in God. I think He's wonderful. I pray to Him. They must be like me. I gave them a dollar donation. My twin brother, who is much savvier than I, came up and asked me if I knew who they were. He took the pamphlet out of my hand, turned it over and showed me that they were part of the Hare Krishna cult. Talk about being kicked in the gut. I was awash with guilt. How could I be so stupid? It was a strong lesson in how easily someone can deceive the unsuspecting. BEWARE of false teachers is the warning from Jesus. *Be warned, be watchful.*

*There is a warning about wars.* War is defined as open armed conflict between nations or between factions within a nation. In 2012 alone there were 24 countries in Africa engaged in war or civil war. In Asia there were 15 various wars. In Europe there were 8 wars. In the Middle East there were 8 wars. In Central and South America there were 5 wars being waged.

Like false teaching, war has been around a long time. There will be more to come and when the day of Jesus' judgment approaches war will exponentially increase. The only time this world will not know war is when Christ reigns as its ruler

and then in the end Satan will be loosed for a season to deceive and incite one last major conflict.

Notice Jesus' words in verse 6 – **“see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.”**

We have been duly notified so don't be taken by surprise. Jesus said it would happen. An escalation in war around the world is just a warning to get ready because the Lord's coming is just around the corner. *Be warned, be watchful.*

Then there is a warning about famines. A famine is an acute shortage of food. In 2011 South Sudan, which fought for its independence in 1998, experienced such a severe famine that 36% of its population was directly affected.

During that same period of time 9.5 million Africans in Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Kenya were hit with the worst famine in 60 years.

Throughout history there have always been periods of famine somewhere in the world. Some say that famine is coming to America and we should be prepared. *Be warned, be watchful.*

The KJV includes pestilence which is plagues of all sorts. A plague is anything that afflicts or troubles, any contagious epidemic disease that is deadly. Historians estimate that 25 million people in Europe died in the 14<sup>th</sup> century as a result of the bubonic plague. Did you know that it is passed on by a little flea, an insect you can hardly see with the naked eye, yet the bite of a flea carrying the deadly disease is devastating.

The aftereffect of war and famine is lethal. Plagues of some kind typically break out. *Be warned, be watchful.*

If that weren't enough, there is a warning about earthquakes. It's a shaking of the earth's crust

caused by underground volcanic forces or by the breaking and shifting of rock beneath the surface. In 2012 Indonesia experienced an earthquake with a magnitude of 8.6. That was the largest. But the deadliest occurred in Iran where 604 people died.

There is a warning about persecution. According to records from the Voice of Martyrs, last year they ministered to believers in 60 nations due to persecution. *Be warned, be watchful.*

There is a warning about increased wickedness. If we thought wickedness was rampant now, just wait, it will get worse. In Flint alone in 2010, property crime was double that of the national average with over 6,000 acts. Violent crime was four times the national average. And while the nation mourns the deaths of those in places like the movie theatre in Colorado and Newtown, CT school, wickedness will increase. *Be warned, be watchful.*

There is a warning about defection from the faith. There will be many who will abandon the church because they won't want to face the coming persecution. Statistics show that 60% of teens going to college will drop out of church by the time they graduate.

About this group of people that Jesus is referring to John MacArthur writes “such people abandon Christ's visible church because they were never part of His invisible church. They forsake God's earthly family because they were never born into His heavenly family.”

But these people won't just leave the church, they will betray it. They will turn people over to the police. *Be warned, be watchful.*

The force with which these events will hit the world will be unprecedented. It has known these cataclysmic events but never to this degree. All these events show us one thing; they show us how desperately the world is in need of a Savior now.

Jesus gives us a grave warning about events leading up to the final judgment. It's a terrible picture of a world that is spinning out of control. The global events that are occurring now are just a foreshadowing of worse things to come.

There is a legend in Holland of Hans Brinker. His father was responsible to open and close the large oak gates that held back what he called the angry waters. One evening at dusk as Hans walked through the meadow along the canal he heard a faint sound and wondered about it. He noticed that there was a little trickle coming from one of the gates. Water had found its way through a small hole. He thought that if it should give way, his mother and father would be lost. Quickly Hans climbed up and thrust his finger into the hole and was glad that the water had stopped and the town would be saved.

His delight soon evaporated when he realized that the chill night air was making him cold and the pain in his finger was growing. He cried out for someone, anyone to come to his aid, but his voice was silenced by the night winds. He eventually called out to God and the answer came through the resolution that he would stay there all night.

As the darkness enveloped him and his little body gave way to sleep a restless hand would rub the outstretched arm and keep him drifting off. In the morning a passing clergyman who had just been to visit a sick parishioner thought he heard the moans of someone coming from the canal. Peering over the edge he noticed the boy writhing in pain and asked what he was doing. He told the clergyman that he was holding back the waters and asked to send help quickly.

As a church we should heed the warning given by Jesus and while it's not as bad as it's going to get as the light of Christ we need to take the warning to the world and be the finger in the dike before it bursts open.

There is a warning.

There is a waiting.

## II. THERE IS A WAITING – v. 8, 14b

**“All these are the beginning of birth pains...and then the end will come.”**

And Jesus says that all these things will take place but even then that will not be the end. Jesus uses a very graphic illustration to depict what it will be like. They are like the labor pains of a woman about to give birth. They are not the birth itself, but just signal that the baby is on the way, get ready. Just as a woman waits in expectation of the arrival of her child, she must first endure the pains of labor that precede the birth.

**“As a pregnant woman's birth pains indicate that her child will soon be born, so these universal conflicts and catastrophes will mean the end of this interadvent Age is near.”**

It is an indication to us that there is still time. The dike hasn't fully burst yet. We must be patient and wait, because the event of Christ's return is not here but it is getting closer and as it gets closer cataclysmic events will increase. It was the great 19<sup>th</sup> century preacher Alexander McLaren who said that life on the whole demands endurance and endurance implies waiting. We must be patient for God's timing, but even at that we proclaim with the Apostle John, **“even so come Lord Jesus.”**

Just as the farmer must wait for the harvest after he has planted, we must wait expectantly, but watching vigilantly for the Lord's coming. I must learn to wake up each morning and ask the Lord expectantly if His coming is today and then anticipate it throughout the day.

Are we more excited about upcoming activities or seeing a friend than we are of the Lord's coming? As the bride of Christ, His church, let's eagerly expect that it might just happen today. In the

meantime we must wait patiently. In light of that expectation we have a responsibility.

There is a warning.

There is a waiting.

There is a witnessing.

### III. THERE IS A WITNESSING – v. 14

**“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to the nations.”**

Orlando Costas in *Liberating News* writes that “no individual Christian, local congregation, or denomination can be content simply with ministering to the multitudes that lie geographically and/or culturally near. They should always seek to extend their witness beyond their frontiers.”

John Decker sates that “our task is a world task.”

David Howard writes “Every Christian must be concerned for the world and actively involved in helping to get the gospel to those who do not have it.”

Someone has written that “a church without missions is a church without a mission.”

David Brainard was an 18<sup>th</sup> century missionary to American Native Indians. He wrote “here am I, Lord, send me; send me to the ends of the earth; send me to the rough and coarse non-Christians of the wilderness; send me from all that is called comfort in the earth; send me even to death itself; if it be but in Thy service and to promote thy Kingdom.”

How eager are we to pray such a prayer, how broken hearted are we for the lost, how impassioned are we to see that others around the world have the same opportunity as we did to hear the gospel, to be presented with the loving grace of God? Should we not pray earnestly that the Lord

would give us a burden for the souls of lost mankind who have yet to hear and respond in faith to trust Christ as Savior?

The promise was made to Abraham in a covenant made by God that through him all the nations of the world would be blessed. In a window of the future, John was given a vision of all those nations standing before God in loving praise for the great salvation He provided through His son.

**Revelation 5:9 “And they sang a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.”**

**Revelation 7:9-10 “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’”**

### Psalm 67:1-7

We’ve a message to give to the nations –  
That the Lord who reigneth above  
Hath sent us His Son to save us  
And show us that God is love,  
And show us that God is love,

For the darkness shall turn to dawning,  
And the dawning to noonday bright,  
And Christ’s great kingdom shall come to earth –  
The kingdom of love and light.

We’ve a Savior to show to the nations  
Who the path of sorrow hath trod,  
That all of the world’s great peoples  
Might come to the truth of God,  
Might come to the truth of God.

For the darkness shall turn to dawning,  
 And the dawning to noonday bright,  
 And Christ's great kingdom shall come to earth –  
 The kingdom of love and light.

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As the living Church of Christ we have the responsibility, the commandment to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, to preach it to the ends of the earth. What an exciting day it will be to stand in the presence of God as together with all people groups from the world are represented in that great anthem of praise.

While there is still time, while the Lord tarries in His coming, until the end of the age comes to a close there is to be a witness. We are to be that witness.

John Piper puts the urgency of the gospel message into perspective when he attests the motivating factor behind our need for a vision for worldwide missions when he writes “If people all over the world are under condemnation for sin and cut off from eternal life, and if calling on Jesus is their only hope for eternal, joyful fellowship with God..., then love demands missions.”

It should be love for God because of what He has given to us in salvation and love for the lost who otherwise are condemned to an eternity in hell that compels us to plead more earnestly and urgently for their souls to respond to God's grace by repenting of their sin and trusting Christ as Savior. There must be a witnessing on our part to proclaim this truth, not just from a life of godly character, but from lips that boldly speak the truth of the kingdom of God so that, as Paul wrote to the Romans, **“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone**

**preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’” (Romans 10:13-15)**

In his commentary on Matthew after giving a brief sketch of the impact of missions from the beginning of the church age at the time of Pentecost until the present day, William Hendriksen poignantly writes that “The word has not been completed. Even today it can hardly be said without qualification that the heart of Africa, of Asia, and of South America has been thoroughly penetrated. (We could add our own country.) But it cannot be denied that the prophecy of our Lord is approaching fulfillment. Consider this important fact that 70 years ago the Bible (as a whole or in part) had been translated into only 300 languages; today (at the time of this writing) into about 1400 languages and dialects. And the work is still continuing; in fact, more vigorously than ever, many forces combining to bring it about.”

With today's technology getting a Bible into the language of unreached people groups is faster than ever. About every 45 days a new translation is printed. There is a great witnessing that must be done.

**What is our response as a church, as God's people to the urgency of the gospel message?** Time is drawing to a close. The church – God's people – must be earnestly praying for the nations that the gospel will be given and souls saved. Our response as a church is to be more diligent in our prayers, more intentional in our giving toward global missions and more boldly proclaiming the gospel to those who have yet to hear.

There is a warning.

There is a waiting.

There is a witnessing.

**As we bow our heads in prayer if it is your desire to take a more active role in getting the gospel message to the world would you stand?**

Now let's all stand in a closing prayer.