

I. QUESTIONS ARE WORTH ASKING

- A. News Headlines: Natural disasters, global government and economic instability.
- B. Questions are worth asking. Are we living in the End Times? Along with that question, other important questions come up:
- Does God punish us with hurricanes and earthquakes?*
Where is God in this economic turmoil?
Does God still care? Is He still listening?
1. There are many prophecies in the Bible. We will look at a few throughout this series. The information is not given for our curiosity or novelty. It's given to prepare us, to equip us to have peace in a turbulent world.
 2. We can't cover everything in the topic of the End Times, so we will focus on the main points/highlights & what is practical and applicable to us.

II. THE BEGINNING OF BIRTH PANGS (MATT. 24:3-14)

- A. Jesus lays out for us indicators of the times in which we are living in (Matt. 24:3-14).
1. False christs (v. 4-5)
 2. Wars and rumors of wars (v. 6).
 3. Famines, pestilences, and earthquakes (v. 7)
 4. Offense, betray, and hatred will increase (v. 10)
 5. False prophets will deceive people (v. 11)
 6. The love of many will grow cold, a great falling away (v. 12)
 7. The Gospel of the Kingdom preached in all the world (v. 14)

Matt. 24:6 For all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

- B. Jesus refers to this period as the beginning of sorrows or birth pangs (v. 8)
- All these are the beginning of sorrows. (Matt. 24:8 – NKJ)***

All these are the beginning of birth pangs. (Matt. 24:8 – NIV, NAS)

1. Following this is a period of hard labor pains that Jesus refers to as the Great Tribulation (v. 21).

Matthew 24:21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.

2. From Daniel 9:24-27, we learn that the Great Tribulation is the second 3 ½ year period of the final 7 years of this age. So we are living in the Last Days of the beginning of sorrows, but the final 7 years of this age are still ahead of us (Dan. 9:24-27).
3. The Bible does not tell us the date for when this final 7 years of this age will begin. No one knows the day or the hour (Matt. 24:36), but we are not in darkness, so the day will not surprise us. We will be waiting and expecting it (1 Thes. 5:1-6), watching and praying.
4. We don't know when, but we know exactly how the final 7 years will begin: It will begin with the anti-christ making a peace treaty with Israel. Prior to that, the stage will be set with a one world economy, government, and religion, as there was at the Tower of Babel. We will discuss this more later on in the series. And we know how the final 3 ½ years will begin: abomination of desolation: the anti-christ setting himself up to be god.
5. After the 3 ½ years of the Great Tribulation, Jesus will return from heaven, riding on the clouds with power and great glory. And then the rapture takes place. Everyone goes through the Great Tribulation, and then at the end of the tribulation, the rapture takes place.
Matthew 24:29-31 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days.. .³⁰ Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.³¹ And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

III. THE FOUR SOURCES OF PRESSURE

Does God send judgments? Why will there be these signs?

Does God punish us with hurricanes and earthquakes? Is God angry at America?

- A. There are four sources of pressure in the world in this age. This applies not only to geopolitical struggles but also on a personal level as well:
 1. God's judgments (Heb. 12:26-27).
Hebrews 12:26-27... "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven."²⁷ Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.
 2. Satan's rage. Satan opposes the things of God. He is the adversary and goes out to deceive the nations (1 Pet. 5:8).
1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.
 3. Man's sinfulness (2 Tim. 3:1-5).
2 Timothy 3:1-5 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:² For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,³ unloving, unforgiving,

slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴ traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

4. Creation's convulsions (Rom. 8:19-22).

Romans 8:19-22 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; ²¹ because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

- B. Sometimes we know where the source of the pressure is. Many times, we don't.

IV. WHAT ABOUT NATURAL DISASTERS?

- A. Geologists and prophets are saying the worst is yet to come. Earthquakes, tsunamis, and solar storms.

Luke 13:1-5 There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? ³ I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. ⁴ Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? ⁵ I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

- B. Jesus gives an example of 2 recent disasters. Luke 13:1-3 is an example of human violence. Pilate had some religious people put to death, apparently for their rebellion. Luke 13:4-5 is an accident. 18 people were killed when a tower collapsed and fell on them.

1. The question that people were asking was: Were they worse sinners than others? Isn't that why God let this happen to them? Otherwise God would have protected them from this accident."
2. Jesus says "I tell you, no." These judgments are non-selective. Accidents happen to "good" people and to "evil" alike.
3. Most disasters are not God's specific judgments against people. If God wanted to bring specific judgment, He could, but that was not it.
4. All are guilty. The point is not that they were innocent, but that they are not *more guilty* than others. All are guilty. We all may die at any time. Potentially only 1 breath away.
5. Usually it is not helpful to say that some natural disaster was God' judgment.

- C. God does require a response from people: Repentance. Repentance means to change one's mind, to change one's direction or purpose in life.

1. Repentance is not meritorious. It is an acknowledgement that one has no merit.
2. Repentance is not mere sorrow over sin (sad because of the wrong that I have done, the injury I have caused to others, etc). Not just sorry that you got caught.

3. *Penance* is to try to do something to atone for sin. Repentance is to say that I cannot do anything to atone for sin. Jesus did all that was necessary for my life and salvation. Because I'm grateful, now I live for Him.

Isaiah 26:9...For when Your judgments are in the earth, The inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

V. WHAT IS GOD'S HEART REGARDING JUDGMENTS?

- A. "Are these natural disasters God's judgments against us?" This is not a helpful question. It's important to ask the right question. Otherwise, the answers will not be helpful to us. This question is not helpful to ask because it assumes that God is mad at us and wants to punish us.
- B. Did God cause this earthquake because He's mad at us and wants to punish us? No. Does God judge in that way? Yes, He has and in the future He will.
- C. A better place to start is: What is God after? What is God's heart?

Luke 9:54-56 And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?"

⁵⁵ But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. ⁵⁶ For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." And they went to another village.

John 3:16-17 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

1. God is in the saving business, not in the condemning or destroying business. If God destroys them, He can't save them! This is God's heart: to save people.
 2. This does not mean that there is no judgment. God does judge, but even when He does, it is redemptive, meaning that God allows judgments so that people can come to repentance and a true life of righteousness.
 3. **The principle of judgment:** God uses the least severe means to reach the greatest number of people at the deepest level of love without violating anyone's free will.
- D. At the end of this age, things will be different. Jesus is coming as the Judge. There is a Great White Throne of Judgment and everyone will have to give an account. Anything that is not founded in the Kingdom of God will crumble. This will be Judgment with a capital "J."

Hebrews 12:26 whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven."

1. When a parent judges, disciplines their child, it can seem like the parent is angry at the child and wants to punish them. But what is the parent's heart? Why not want them to stick a paper clip in to the outlet? Because want to lead them in the way of life.
- E. With God, even His judgments are redemptive. This is God's heart when He judges in this age.
- Isa. 26:9 ...For when Your judgments are in the earth, The inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.***
- F. God will shake things, including the economy.
- Is God Angry at America? Is God Angry at me? Was the earthquake God's judgment against Japan? Is God particularly angry at America? Does God send earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, oh my, to disrupt and take people? No. God doesn't do that right now. There is a Day of Judgment. All will stand before the Throne. This is not yet.
1. God allows judgments so that people can come to repentance and a true life of righteousness.
 2. God is patiently waiting for us to return to Him. God's heart in judgment is that all would come to repentance, not just particularly those in disaster areas, those who suffered and or died.
 3. Judgment is coming upon the earth as Jesus returns. This reveals God's patience, giving more than enough time.
- G. What is God after? He is after your heart. The language of God's heart: God desires for a family, sons and daughters that love Him voluntarily. He wants a bride for His Son. I can't force my wife or my son to love me, to have affection for me.

VI. CONCLUSION: FINDING PEACE IN A TURBULENT WORLD

- A. You can find peace in a turbulent world. This peace is found only in Jesus Christ. You can't put your trust in anyone or anything except Christ. Are you free from fear, anxiety, confusion, curiosity?
- John 16:33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation (trouble, affliction, anguish, distresses, persecution); but be of good cheer (be bold, take heart), I have overcome the world.***
- B. In this world, we will have tribulation... losing a job, facing a difficult economy, crime, terrorism, natural disasters, relational tensions... How do we find peace in a turbulent world? When we take our eyes and heart off of the things of this world and focus on Christ and upon heavenly realities.
- C. Jesus says that there is a peace that is available to all of us.
1. Peace is not... everything in your life lining up. Peace is not the absence of trouble, conflict, pain, persecution, or distress. It is not having a "perfect" life.
 2. Peace is... the inner quality of the heart that Christ gives that allows us to pass through all of those things.

- a. When you have peace, you will not be stuck in fear, worry, and anxiety because of our relationship with God. Christ is in me and I am in Christ, and He has overcome the world.

ARE WE LIVING IN THE END TIMES?

WEEK 2: *MONEY IN THE END TIMES*

Where is the US and world economy headed?

- A. Finding Financial Peace and Liberation. Where to put your investments? Storing up food, buying gold or silver is *not* going to be the most important thing. How do you get your heart free is the issue.
- B. Money is one of the key issues in the End Times. What is the Mark of the Beast and what does it have to do with me? It's not about "just say no" to the chip implant on your arm or forehead!

WEEK 3: *UNLOCKING THE BOOK OF REVELATION*

- Revelation important for us. It speaks of what will happen on the earth just prior to Jesus' return. This book is not an optional book, especially for ones living in the End Times.
- The key to understanding the Book of Revelation: When people take the book symbolically, there are unending different opinions about what it means. Taking the book literally! It begins to unlock the book and open up the rest of the Bible to you.
- This book talks about things that are just on the horizon. God has given us these truths to prepare us so that we will be victorious in love and not live in fear and anxiety.

WEEK 4: *WHAT'S NEXT ON THE HORIZON?*

- If this is the End Times, what's next?
- Understanding the prophetic time frames (Daniel 9) and the Millennial Kingdom.
- Q&A time
- Root Beer Float Party after the worship service.