

Pastor Brian's
Midweek Message
March 23, 2022

“THIS IS IT?”

“You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet.” (Matthew 24:6)

You would think that with the advances of humanity here in the 21st century we would have moved beyond the barbarism of war. The indiscriminate killing of our neighboring nation(s) for the sake of domination, expansion or just plain hate is something that we should have left behind long ago. We most certainly should have, but this is something that humanity just can't get past. That's because of the sinful nature of all people, the selfish corruption of the heart and soul that we're all born with ever since the events recorded in Genesis chapter 3. It didn't take long for the killing to begin. In the very next chapter (Genesis 4) Cain kills his brother Abel out of a heart of jealousy. With what is happening in Ukraine, and the possibility of escalation into something far bigger, and even far worse, although that's not to diminish the suffering of the Ukrainian people in the present hour, some are thinking “could this be the beginning of the end?” Will the destruction of the earth by fire and the ushering in of God's eternal kingdom be the result of global nuclear incineration? That's something we just don't know. Many Biblical scholars are looking at the signs and comparing them to the prophecy of Scripture, but the bottom line is that we just don't know, and we won't know until it actually happens. Jesus clearly tells us that just moments before He ascended back to the Father's right hand. *“It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.”* (Acts 1:7) God the Father knows exactly when Christ will return, when Judgment Day will be, but He's not telling. At least He's not telling us.

In Matthew chapter 24 Jesus provides his disciples, including us, with a little foreshadow of what will come as we approach the end. The first disciples ask him, “what will be the sign of the coming of the end of the age?” (24:3b). His very first words are a warning...“see that no one leads you astray.” Keep your eyes, your attention, your faith and hope fixed on me. Why? He goes on to say that many false christs will come in his name to deceive them, saying “I am the Christ”. Many will follow. Then he speaks of wars and rumors of wars. That's been a constant through all of human history. Nations rising against nations and kingdoms against kingdoms. That being continually the case, and it's happening right now. Jesus goes on to predict famines and earthquakes, but these are just “the beginning of the birth pains. Next comes the persecution of the Church, our being delivered to the authorities to suffer and die for the faith, and our being hated in all nations for the name of Jesus Christ. That too has been happening since right after the Church was born in the 1st century AD. False prophets will arise and inject heresies, false teachings into the Church and many will be led astray. Again, that something that has been going on for nearly 2000 years and is just as rampant today. Jesus tells us that lawlessness will increase and love, true love as God is love, will grow cold in many people...check, and check! Ultimately the Gospel is to be proclaimed throughout the whole world. Once that all has happened, in all its fullness, the end will come. Are there places in the world where the Gospel has not yet been preached? I would imagine there are some, but not all that many.

The key words in Jesus' sermon here are found in verse 13; “But he who endures to the end will be saved.” Those of us who stand firm in our faith that Jesus is our Savior, the Resurrection and the Life, and in the truth of the entire counsel of Scripture, which in its entirety points directly at him, will be rewarded in eternal life on the other side of Judgment Day. Could this war lead to the end of this age, be the instrument in which God engages in the recreating of the world, the new earth? It could be, but maybe not. We're not going to know in advance. The message that Jesus our Savior has for us it to be ready. Remain faithful at all times and carry out the good works that God has preordained for us, empowered for each by the Spirit of Christ that lives in us. *“It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.”* (Matthew 24:46)