

“...HE THAT SHALL  
ENDURE TO THE END  
...SHALL BE SAVED”  
(MATTHEW 24:13)

The horrible and tragic events of these past few months have affected everyone on this planet in one way or another. Even though there is so much hardship we do hear of many people doing their share to help others through acts of kindness and appreciation as well as following the recommended (albeit burdensome) policies we are asked of to help stop the spread of the disease known as the “coronavirus/ COVID-19.”

There have been many “conspiracy theories” concerning the origin of the outbreak of this disease, those of which I do not wish to go into at this time. Ultimately, we know where the origin of all sickness, disease and death comes from – the pits of darkness and certainly not God. There are times when God allows certain things to occur, even though we may not now or ever understand why He does. All we are called to do is trust Him. We must believe what He tells us in Isaiah 55:8-9, “***For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. <sup>9</sup> For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.***” I believe the real question we need to ask ourselves is, “Can God trust you and I to trust Him??!!!”

We must never forget that God is a “sovereign” God. This means that God is in complete control of all things and that anything and everything that takes place never, ever, NEVER takes Him by surprise. Everything, everything, EVERYTHING happens by and through His will and are for His purposes and His purposes, only. Being that He is totally sovereign, God acts, performs and/or allows every single event, situation and circumstance that occurs on this earth for the express purpose and reason of accomplishing His, and only His, purpose and plan in bringing forth His Kingdom upon this earth. This same thing holds true with the unfolding of and the fulfillment of the “end time” prophecies as found throughout the scriptures – from Genesis to Revelation.

As we go forward, please, keep in mind that this discussion has absolutely no political agenda. I will not be referring to, nor do I have, any person(s) or leader(s) in mind. I am also in no way trying to be “prophetic” saying that I have the answers to all your end time questions or that I have a “word from the Lord” concerning the difficult times we are all experiencing. What I would like to present is a few thoughts concerning what I do see or think, bound by my own finite mind, of some of the things that are going on around us these days.

The first thing that has caught my attention is the catch phrase, “We are here for you” or that “we are all in this together.” People from all over are telling us this – the banks, the utility companies, the different levels of our government (federal, state and local), TV personalities, TV Networks, sports personalities, car manufacturers, etc, etc, etc. We are hearing this throughout the world. Now, I am not suggesting that these are bad catch phrases. It is a wonderful thing for people to reach out and encourage each other. I do not mean to be skeptical, but as a believer am I really to place my trust in any of those mentioned above that if and when “push comes to shove” that they will really be there for me? If or when things ever “hit the fan” will I truly be able to trust that those of this world will say that “we are in this together” and give me what they have to meet my needs. The scriptures tell us quite differently concerning the “children of this world.”

What this really ends up doing is that it gives many people a false sense of “community.” It is a counterfeit sense of security that is contrary to what the truth concerning who we are to place our total trust in. Let’s face it. The truth of the matter is that the only One who always is and always will be faithful to truly “be there for you,” is God. He promises that He will never leave you nor forsake you. These days the Body of Christ is trying to keep up with the culture by doing their own version of the “...we are here for you.” The problem is that we are trying to “keep up” and give our version of what the world is presenting. We are not leading the way. We, as the Body of Christ are called to “lead the way” by leading and pointing the lost in this world to Jesus and to Father, God who is the only true source for meeting anyone’s need.

According to the scriptures, the Body of Christ is to always represent and communicate God's **original plan** of who is truly capable of being trusted to "be there for us." This is the message that God has been trying to communicate to this world from the very beginning. The message from the beginning was that God would be our God – if we simply yield and allow Him to be our God. This was the essence of the covenant with Abraham. God will be God to those who totally trust in Him and Who He is – the "I Am that I Am"- if they would simply let Him be their "I Am."

God has been telling this world that "I Am" – healer, deliverer, salvation, life, righteous, faithful, just, holy, etc. God is crying out to His most beloved of all creation, "I Am who I Am!!! Just let me, please, allow me to be your God." His heart is aching for us to turn towards Him, and Him alone – no one else. Yes, God may use others as tools of His love, grace and mercy. However, our hope, trust and reliance must only be in Him.

I would be remiss if I did not include in our discussion, as previously mentioned, that there are many in communities throughout our nation and the world doing wonderful things to help others who are in need during this difficult stretch of time. I do believe that there are those in the Body of Christ who are projecting the correct message of who God is. This is because God always has a remnant people that will bring forth His ways and truth in a world led by the forces of darkness. However, we must never forget who the true source of meeting our need is – Yahweh, Adonai.

There are other catch phrases that are permeating the conversation these days. Phrases such as, "the new normal," "social distancing" and there is a move for everyone to become "globally" minded. Again, these all sound wonderful, useful and "harmless." To many in the world today these terms are being embraced with the hopes of combating COVID-19 with a secondary benefit of bringing people, and therefore ultimately the world, together. We hear terms such as becoming "one global citizen," or "one team," etc. But are these terms or "movements" so wonderful and are they so harmless? Could they be a tool of the enemy to "counterfeit" and try to counteract God's plans and ways? Hmmm...

Let's take a look at the catch phrase, "the new normal." What does that mean? On the surface in these times it is referring to taking steps in keeping safe and healthy to avoid contracting COVID-19. It infers that what was in place before, what was once considered "normal," is no longer valid and needs to be changed. When used in health issues such as washing of hands and wearing face masks, as well as keeping your distance from people to avoid a contagious disease (social distancing), it would seem like a practical concept. However, what happens when we move forward past this pandemic we are in. The concept is in place. This "new normal" will become the "the normal." Again, what can be so bad about that? Again, on the surface, it would seem as if it would be anything but bad."

There are and have been many "new normals" established, fortunately, to change many injustices and sinful practices that needed to change because they were contrary to God's principals. These include the abolition of slavery, the civil rights movement and the right of women to vote in this country. We think of "apartheid" in South Africa and other Biblically founded changes that have occurred throughout the world.

Unfortunately, there are always movements to bring "new normals" that are totally contrary to the Word of God. The truth of the matter is that the concept of "the new normal" concerning things contrary to God's Word is not really new at all. The enemy has been trying and succeeding, little by little, to infiltrate our culture for thousands of years and especially in these past 40 – 60 years with "new normals."

Such "new normals" that are contrary to God's precepts being pushed forth in these times are as such: the legalization and proliferation of abortion, the LGBTQ movement and with it, same sex marriages and the redefining of marriage as well as the "rights" of the transgender faction. Many of the above have become the "new normal" even in many churches today. There are other "new normals" that are unfortunately, being successfully brought into the Body of Christ such as: "The inclusion doctrine," the inordinate hyper-faith and hyper-grace movements, etc.

The subtle forward advance by the enemy in these and other anti-Biblical “new normals” are slowly but surely gaining a stronger and stronger foothold in the fabric of today’s society and cultures throughout the world. As previously mentioned, unfortunately, these “new normals” have infiltrated and have become the “norm” in many of today’s so called, churches. The acceptance of sinful practices along with the false teachings permeating the Body of Christ concerning sin and lies such as that there is no need to repent are opening the doors for all of these “new normals” to be looked upon as now being acceptable even to God.

Another subtle attack by the enemy entering our world is a strong push towards the concept that we are all “one.” We hear terms such as: “one global citizen” or “one global family.” The athletic world is referring to it as being all “one team.” Again, on the surface this seems like a wonderful movement. But what is beneath the surface? What gives me pause to think that there is a hidden agenda behind this concept that the world may be totally oblivious to? What would possibly cause me to think that this may be a tactic being perpetrated by the devil and his forces of darkness?

Well, to begin with. I see this as a counterfeit of true “oneness” that Jesus had described to His disciples. Jesus tells us that true oneness is only available and can only be accomplished when we are in Christ. In John 17:21-23 Jesus teaches, *“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”*<sup>22</sup> *And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:*<sup>23</sup> *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”* Jesus calls this “oneness” eternal life – being one in Him and with the Father.

Another aspect to this “global oneness” is that it brings us one step closer to pushing the world into a mindset of a “counterfeit oneness” that can open the door for the concept of the “one world system” as prophesied within the scripture. The world is becoming much “smaller.” The events of the times we are in are proving to be an eye opener to the possibility of the “one world system” that once seemed a little far-fetched but is becoming more and more feasible every day.

The use of media, communications and internet are valuable tools for us these days. They are being used to “keep us and bring us together.” Again, this is not necessarily a bad thing. However, one of the caveats in the use of these mediums is its possible affects on the Body of Christ. As we “meet” more and more online with online services and meetings it is making many in the Body of Christ complacent in their walk with the Lord. Hey, we can “go to church” without even taking off our pajamas.

When the “all clear” is given for us to be able to congregate together, how many within the Body will opt to stay home and become watchers instead of participants. The Word encourages us to not forsake the gathering together of believers to worship. It will be the Body of Christ that may suffer from the lack of true community and intimate relationship and kinship with each other.

The world may be “mobilizing” and becoming as one but the Body of Christ may be “demobilizing” and becoming even more separated, thereby becoming even more ineffective. While many would say that the “stay at home church” is a good thing and that it opens it up to more people, but could it be a strategy of the enemy to divide the Body of Christ even more; hindering us from being “one,” not just with the Father but with each other? Isn’t this contrary to God’s Word of “not forsaking the assembly?”

A very important aspect found in the beginnings of the early Church was the concept called “fellowship.” We see this in the Book of Acts as well as in many of the New Testament letters. The term “fellowship” as found in the scriptures comes from the Greek word “koinonia.” The writers of the New Testament encouraged the believers to be in and remain in close, intimate relationship, not just with the Father and Jesus, but also with each other. They exhorted the believers to encourage each other through communion and relationship.

It is only when we enter into this true fellowship with other believers, face to face, that true relationship and a binding together can take place. The reason that the writers exhort believers to be in and remain in fellowship with other believers is because when the difficult times come, and they will, we can encourage and lift up each other with the truth.

There may come a time when the “remnant Body of Christ” might indeed need to go “underground” as great times of persecution may be on the horizon. During those times, it will not be the “online church” that will unite us but rather it will be the face to face intimate relationships that have been formed that will truly bring a real continuity of “oneness” among true believers.

The scriptures are very emphatic that there will be many deceivers in these end times that will try to come and deceive many away from the truth. The Letter of Jude emphatically warns us to beware of these “apostates.” Jesus, Himself warns us that there will be many false prophets and false christs that will come to try to deceive people in following incorrect doctrines and misplacing their faith and trust.

Now I know that this might sound as if I am one of those “conspiracy theorists” or that I may be an “alarmist.” I assure you that I am not trying to be either one. Neither am I trying to be “prophetic” in our discussion. What I am bringing forth is some observations that I have concerning the times we are all encountering.

If the events of these times that we are experiencing should do anything, it should get the attention of every true believer who is looking forward to the soon return of our beloved Jesus. In Matthew 24, the disciples remarked to Jesus as they were leaving the Temple area of how beautiful it was. They were in the moment with no clue of what was to come. They had a faulty concept of what was to come, both, in the near future concerning Jesus’ death and resurrection, as well as the future end times. They were somewhat oblivious.

Jesus responded that there will not be one stone of it left unturned. Everything that brought comfort and some stability to them was going to be totally overturned. The events that were about to take place were events that they never could or would allow themselves to think about. These remarks by Jesus got them to thinking. Later that night, when they were alone with Him, they came to ask Jesus about when will all these things happen and when will be the sign of His coming. Jesus responded with a dissertation of the end times as found in the remainder of Matthew 24.

Matthew 24:4-11 speak of the “beginning of sorrows,” the “birth pangs” that will lead up to the tribulation period. Jesus tells us this in verse 8. I believe these “beginning of sorrows/ birth pangs” spoken of in Matthew 24:4-11 began immediately after Jesus’ resurrection and that they are continuing into the times we are in. Jesus begins this whole dissertation with a warning in verse 4, “*And Jesus answered and said unto them, “**Take heed that no man deceives you.**”* This is the very first thing He tells His disciples concerning living in the times of the “birth pangs” – the times we are in, even to this day. Therefore, Jesus is telling each one of His disciples, included each of us today, to **beware that we be not deceived**. Deception can come if we do not take heed to what Jesus tells us in the remainder of Matthew 24, Matthew 25 and in all the scriptures concerning His second coming and the end times.

Deception comes if we follow after false prophets and false teachers. We must remember that the devil will come “as an angel of light” – he will come full of deception. The epitome of deception will come through the “anti-christ” who will first come as that “angel of light.” He will come with a “feel good” message for all people possibly telling them things like “we are all in this together” and that we are all citizens of “one big global family.” He will come with a message and words of peace towards Israel. We know through the

scriptures that all these “feel good” messages and “peace with Israel” will all “go south” very quickly. We are commanded by Jesus to “take heed” and to not be taken in by these deceptions.

In Matthew 24:13, Jesus concludes His segment concerning the “beginning of sorrows/ birth pangs” by exhorting His disciples as He states, “***But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.***” The word “endure” suggests that there will be a struggle to ward off the deceptions. There will be difficult times that we may encounter and there will be a need for every believer to stand fast. We are called to place our total trust in the Lord. We must “take heed” concerning the inordinate and unscriptural “new normals.” We must “take heed” concerning the movement towards “mobilizing to globalize.” The promise that Jesus gives to those who “...*endure to the end...*” is that they “...*shall be saved.*” PRAISE THE LORD!!!