

WATCHING FOR HIS RETURN – SAMUEL CLOUGH

BECOMING AN ESCHATOLOGICAL PEOPLE

“The coming of the Son of Man can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. When he left home, he gave each of his slaves instructions about the work they were to do, and he told the gatekeeper to watch for his return. You, too, must keep watch! For you don’t know when the master of the household will return—in the evening, at midnight, before dawn, or at daybreak. Don’t let him find you sleeping when he arrives without warning. I say to you what I say to everyone: Watch for him!” – Mark 13:34-37 NLT-SE

I. WE ARE CALLED TO BE AN ESCHATOLOGICAL PEOPLE

- A. Many in the church are weary of eschatology because of unbiblical teachings and predictions that did not come to pass. Because of this many treat eschatology as peripheral or even avoid it entirely.
- B. Jesus always intended that we be an eschatological people. The entire point of this parable is that the church must be aware of the events that accompany the His return and should be found eagerly watching for them.
 - 1. Our heart stays in a posture of watching because of our tender love for Jesus and our desire to see Him return. A people that truly love Jesus will eagerly watch for His return. An eschatological focus is natural for those that love the person of Jesus.
 - 2. Eagerly watching for these events helps us to keep life in focus. When we know that magnitude of the coming events, we are less focused on distractions in the present. When we understand the temporary nature of so much that surrounds our daily life, we are less apt to become entangled and distracted by cares that weigh our heart down. Watching for Him like a gatekeeper keeps us focused on Him rather than other distractions.
 - 3. Jesus warns that the pressures surrounding His coming will produce pressure on the earth that will never again be duplicated (Mark 13:19). He commands us to be a watching people so that we will have awareness of the times and seasons. He also expects us to be able to be a voice in that hour to billions who will be in the valley of decision with no understanding of what is overtaking them. It is not an accident that gospel goes to every tribe and tongue (Matthew 24:14) in the midst of this context of trials and shaking.
- C. Though Jesus is clear that only the Father knows the time, the focus of His instruction is clearly that we should be watching and ware of the times and seasons. It is clear that He expects us to be aware of the times and seasons and be prepared for the events that will come upon the earth.
- D. There is great urgency in Jesus’ commands to watch.
 - 1. Jesus knows that only an urgent posture towards His return will enable believers to live in an unencumbered manner. This urgency is necessary for every generation.

2. Jesus' urgency is also directly intended for the generation that will be reading this words and actually enduring the things Jesus describes. We are quick to say that we believe we are in the last days, but are we as quick to embrace the things that Jesus predicted and calls us to?
- E. Jesus command to watch comes with intensity and urgency. He intends the full force of it to be felt and that we respond to it.

“And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!” – Mark 13:37 NKJV

1. Mark records the summary of Jesus' discourse with a single command to watch.
2. Jesus does not just direct this command to a few but all. The language also indicates that this was not an isolated message for Jesus. The command to watch was something Jesus directed to all. It is not difficult to imagine Jesus lifting up a cry to all men to watch.
3. Just as Jesus preached repentance to all men, so too He preaches watchfulness to all men.
4. Jesus does not intend us to be surprised or caught off guard. He intends that we are fully prepared for the last days. He intends that we partner with Him by being a witness to the earth in the midst of the crisis. This is how He intends to fulfill Matthew 24:14.

II. WORLD EVANGELIZATION OCCURS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ESCHATOLOGICAL EVENTS

“And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake...And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold...And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.” – Matthew 24:6-14 NKJV

- A. Matthew's parallel passage is very clear to include Jesus' prediction of the proclamation of the gospel to every people group (Matthew 24:14) within the context of eschatological events.
1. Think of whatever you see as the most horrible period of pressure or persecution and then consider the weight of Jesus' words.
 2. There has never been a day like the day that is coming and that day will come in the context of global proclamation of Jesus.
- B. The completion of the task of world evangelization takes place within the context of massive political and geological shakings across the earth.

- C. Many have seen Matthew 24:14 as a requirement for the Lord's return, and it clearly is, but we must also understand that it is not just a requirement for the Lord's return that, upon fulfillment, will usher us into the last days. It is an event that actually occurs within the context of the immense pressures of the last days.
- D. God has so orchestrated the plan of history that the pressure of the last days and the evangelization of the earth are parallel events running together in partnership. The crisis of the last days is one of the primary mechanisms that cause the gospel to spread to every people group on the earth. *This is a staggering and terrifying reality.*
- E. Eschatological pressures are the mechanism that the Lord will use to cause the gospel to extend to every tribe and tongue. These events and world evangelism cannot be separated. It is a grave mistake to approach missions and global evangelism outside of the context of the pressures, trials, and tribulations of the last days because they are a critical component.
- F. While our hearts should rejoice that it may be possible to finish world evangelization within a generation, it is also a serious warning about the day in which we live. We cannot live as though the fulfillment of Matthew 24:14 will be the event that is a cause of eschatological events. Instead we must see it as a result. If world evangelization is near, it means we are entering in to the very troubles and sorrows that will help bring Matthew 24:14 to pass.
- G. It is foolish to engage in missions, ministry, or marketplace ministry without eschatological urgency and understanding. This does not mean embracing unbiblical ideas or predictions, but it does mean obeying Jesus' clear command to have awareness of times and seasons and to live in a posture of watching like a gatekeeper.

III. UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GLOBAL PRAYER MOVEMENT

- A. The modern prayer movement is a sign and a wonder. Beginning in Korea's prayer mountains and now sweeping all throughout the earth, the prayer movement is moving across the earth with a velocity that is staggering.
- B. It is critical that we have proper understanding of the prayer movement. The prayer movement has not arisen in a vacuum. There is a reason it is spreading across the earth.
 - 1. The prayer movement is God's way of preparing the earth for the house of crisis that is at hand.
 - 2. He will use weak and broken people huddled in prayer rooms around the earth to prepare the earth for a crises that Jesus warned would be un-survivable if God did not shorten it.
 - 3. God will shorten it on behalf of believers eagerly watching and crying out, as Jesus did, to others to watch.
- C. Prayer rooms are to be incubators in which the Lord prepares believers to endure the crisis and to lead masses of people who will be in disbelief and confusion as pressures increase. *This ministry will be critical to both believers and non-believers.*

- D. There is a divine strategy in the convergence of the last days, missions, and the prayer movement. It is imperative that we see all three of these things together. They cannot be isolated. They are not separate and distinct events. They are all in harmony with one another. You cannot have one without the other. Nor can one be understood without the other.

- E. The prayer movement is a very serious thing for the survival of believers. There is much more at stake in prayer rooms around the earth than we realize.