

## Five Themes Related to the COVID-19 Outbreak

Today I have several passages of Scripture to share, but let's begin in Matthew 24. I am going to move quickly and present the message today more like a Sunday School lesson. I hope to touch upon these points as time permits:

First, how does the current situation fit into Bible prophecy?

Next, dealing with worry and anxiety during this pandemic.

Next, I want to say a word about facing the future with Faith

Next, I want to exhort you to prepare to help others.

And finally, let's finish with the most important matter of all: facing death without fear.

You are looking at Matthew chapter 24 . . . (24:1-8).

I know many Christians are talking about the current COVID-19 pandemic as it might relate to Bible prophecy and the return of our Lord. I enjoy listening to other pastors, Bible teachers, and Christians discuss such matters. My only concern is the danger of reading too much into the current situation. I do not believe there is any special significance to this pandemic, but it is a part of what Jesus foretold in verse seven of this passage. Pestilences are a characteristic of these last days as are earthquakes and famines.

I just want to remind you of our Lord's statement in verse eight. All these are the beginning of sorrows. We are experiencing another "birth pang" as we approach the return of Jesus for the church and the subsequent unfolding of Daniel's famous 70<sup>th</sup> week of prophecy concerning Israel.

As you know, when a mother is about to give birth her birth pangs increase in frequency and severity until the birth occurs. With that said, it is significant to discern that the things detailed by Jesus in verse seven are increasing both in frequency and severity. Considering these things as a whole—coupled with the rebirth of Israel in her homeland—we can certainly conclude the “birth” is rapidly approaching.

Church, we should obey Jesus and *watch* for his coming with lives of obedience and holiness. As well, we need to warn those around us to be ready for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh!

Next, let me say a word about the problem of worry and anxiety. I am sure you are aware of the reports in the news indicating many across the nation are full of worry, anxiety, and fear. This is not surprising considering all the uncertainty about the future. However, our Lord speaks very clearly about this problem in Matthew chapter six. Please turn to that chapter with me and look at verse 25.

Let’s read the balance of the chapter . . . (Matthew 6:25-34).

These words apply as much today as they would in any other season of life. If you are going to overcome worry and anxiety it is necessary to focus on your heavenly Father instead of a troubled world. Our heavenly Father cares for us much more so than he does the fowls of the air. If he feeds them, will he not also feed us?

Look again at verse 30 and 31 . . . Take no thought, that is, do not be filled with anxiety and worry. Rather, exercise faith in God. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you. Amen!

Again, Jesus instructs us in verse 34 not to worry about tomorrow. Are you going to listen to him? Are you going to seek him? Are you going to obey him? Are you going to exercise faith in him?

And that brings me to my next point, we must face the future with faith instead of fear. It is interesting to note our Lord references “little faith” four different times in the gospel of Matthew. First, here in Matthew 6:30, but also in the following verses:

Matthew 8:26

*And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.*

Matthew 14:31

*And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*

Matthew 16:8

*Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?*

Now before I move on let me read these powerful words from Jesus as recorded in the gospel of Mark where we read:

*22And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.*

*23For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.*

*24Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*

Our Lord expects us to face the future with great confidence in him. My word of exhortation to you today is simply: *have faith in God!*

Now. Let me quickly say, we need to be ready to help others during this pandemic and the economic fallout occurring as a result. I know you have opinions about the behavior of our State governments across the nation as they attempt to balance fighting this pandemic and getting the economy opened again. I think we need conversations about public policy, but while we are doing that families, widows, and others are facing real needs. It is time for us to help with those real needs.

Must I remind you as disciples of Christ we are called to walk in his Spirit? Listen to these words and get ready to be an instrument of God's provision as you minister to others in the love of Christ:

*Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. (1 John 3:16-18).*

Again, the Word of God says:

*Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. (1 Timothy 6:17-19).*

Again, the Word of God says:

*If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. (James 2:15-17).*

Again, James says:

*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. (James 1:27).*

To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction means to reach into your pocket and help them get through their trouble. Ladies and gentlemen, in the weeks ahead just get ready. Many around you are facing unexpected difficulties not of their own making. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and as the Lord prospers you be ready to help others and minister to them in the love of Jesus Christ!

Remember Jesus says, *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”*

Consider one more passage on this point and I must move on:

*11Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.*

*12For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.*

*13For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:*

*14But by an equality, **that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want**, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:*

*15As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack. (2 Cor. 8:11-15).*

## Conclusion

Now, I need to conclude with the most important point in our study today. As the current pandemic sweeps through the land many people in their thinking (whether it is fully justified or not) are facing the fear of death. This explains why so many are frightened and perhaps afraid to engage the regular routine of life.

May I ask you this question: are you afraid to die?

There is only one way to face death without deception and fear. Victory over the fear of death is only found by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Listen to the risen Christ as he speaks to John the Revelator:

*Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the living God, came for us . . . he then died for us bearing our sins . . . he then descended into the realm of the dead abiding in paradise declaring his victory over the realm of darkness, until God raised him from the dead. He is now alive forevermore. As the risen Lord of lords, he now possesses absolute authority over the realm of the dead. He has the power to save you and he alone can grant you eternal life. Consequently, all who trust him as Savior know from his promises they will never perish.

Believers face death without fear because they belong to our Redeemer and thus know heaven is their home. You can have this same peace today as you trust Christ alone for your salvation (John 3:15-17; 5:24; 6:35-40; 6:47; 10:27-28; 11:25-26). Call on him and ask him to save you and take away the fear of death.

Praise his name, He will do it!