

Covid-19, This Is Not the End

by Shane Idleman

Shane Idleman addresses the fears surrounding COVID-19, emphasizing the need for faith, repentance, and understanding biblical prophecy regarding the end times.

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Scripture: Matthew 24:6

Topics: "Faith in Crisis", "Spiritual Preparedness"

Description

Shane Idleman addresses the fears surrounding COVID-19, emphasizing that while the situation is serious, it is not the end. He encourages believers to focus on God's sovereignty and to guard their hearts against fear, reminding them that God is in control. Idleman highlights the importance of repentance and humility in the face of crisis, suggesting that this moment could be a wake-up call for the church and the nation. He stresses the need for spiritual preparedness and unity among Christians, as well as the urgency of sharing the gospel amidst the chaos. Ultimately, he calls for a return to God, urging individuals to seek Him and turn from sin.

Transcript

I'm going to talk to you about an important topic, and that is, is this the end? Is this the end, what we're going through? And I don't wanna minimize what's taking place with COVID-19, but we also don't wanna maximize fear. We wanna look at God's word, we wanna remember that he's in control. But I want to just talk about a few things before I get into the message, mainly for our local body of West Side Christian Fellowships that is listening, and also those maybe who follow us from a distance.

There's going to be a link on the Facebook page, if you're listening to the Facebook Live now, there's a link to our church website. And if you have questions, comments, you need prayer, reach out to us, let us know. Also, don't forget to hit the share button, hit that button, share it, we wanna get this message out there, we're hearing from people all over that are really just finally being open to what God's word says to them.

And I also wanna read just five things that I think might be an encouragement to you. This is from Todd Coconato with Remnant News. And I actually would encourage that if you're on Facebook, you can find Remnant News on Facebook.

If you go online, I think it's rmntnews.com. They've got a lot of good resources there. Here's five things that we need to remember as we go into this. Number one, recently in the news last week, they got the mortality rate and the projections way wrong.

In other words, they did this huge estimate on the mortality rates and it just, this number that was astronomical and they got that way wrong. And number two, the people who got them wrong changed their projections on what those actual numbers are, which are actually much, much lower. But you're not gonna hear about that a lot in the media.

Remember, we talked about this last week. Now, there's a lot of truth in what's out there and we don't come against the whole media system per se. But many in the media are using this as an opportunity to now put down this current administration, to now collapse the economy and finally get rid of the president.

It's not just my belief, it's the belief of many, many people out there. Of course, this wasn't designed to do that necessarily. I don't buy into that.

But they are using this as an opportunity to spread fear in the minds of many Americans. So we have to guard our hearts from fear. Number three, there are now several viable treatments which are showing promising results, really promising results.

So you've heard the different medications or you could call it vaccines. It's really an antidote that really helps those who are sick with this virus. And you're gonna be hearing more about that, these promising results.

And I wish I could share news stories with you, but I think we've had enough of news stories for a while. Also number four, we knew there would be a spike in cases this week because of the number of new people who are getting tested. I've been talking about this now, I think for two weeks.

Once you start bringing out the tests and now thousands and thousands and thousands of people are being tested, the numbers of COVID-19 are going to go up. And I believe personally that this has been out a while. I don't think it's something brand new.

I think this has been out a while. I might talk about that in a minute. But number five, the death rate is not rising nearly as fast as the numbers are saying.

Meaning 99%, again, from Remnant News, 99% of people fully recover. And these are all backed by mainstream stories in the media. And you have to remind yourself of this.

Now, of course, look what's going on in New York. Look at what's going on even 60 miles from here in Los Angeles. And a lot of things, San Francisco.

I mean, this is a big deal. So as Christians, we're not minimizing it, but we are reminding you that God is in control and we have to get our facts from reputable sources. And I want to get my information from those who want to encourage me and you with the truth.

Hey, here's the facts, here's what we need to do. And go away from those who are simply starting to want to spark fear. And remember this, it's all in the title of the headline.

That's how they draw you in. And be careful, not too much time on the media. I don't want to blabber this point, I did last week.

I just ran into somebody at the store. Kept a six foot distance, of course. But he stopped me and he said, I went to bed Sunday, I think it was last weekend, and I was so scared and frightened.

I heard the message and I was very encouraged. Thank you so much. And I asked him what was adding to all this fear? And he said, he keeps looking at the media and keeps reading all these stories.

And again, we've got to stop that. We've got to get back into God's word. So, here's something else.

I want to point you to an article. The title is Why the Economy is Just as Important as COVID-19. Let me repeat that.

Why the Economy is Just as Important as COVID-19. Notice I didn't say more important. What it is, though, as an economy, if you keep the economy going, you keep the infrastructure going.

You keep peace and stability. You keep healthy treatment. You keep sanity in line when there is a healthy economy.

If that crumbles, folks, I don't even want to talk, I don't want to give you a picture of what that looks like. So, what the president is trying to do with getting the economy sparked again in certain areas, that should be applauded. Sure, quarantine certain areas.

If there's hotspots and you go out and you have precautions, we have the same precautions, but you've got to keep that wheel spinning in order to really serve and help people. So, this is not about minimizing people and elevating money. It's actually about helping more people by keeping a strong, healthy economy.

So, before I get to the message, people are asking me, well, Shane, what are your thoughts? How long? And I wish I had that insight. I don't know how long, but I do know that this is the new norm for a while, the new normal for a while. It's something I think we need to get used to.

Again, if you want my take, what I think is, and looking at the news, looking at the facts, not conspiracy theories, I believe that this was possibly launched. If you want to say a bioweapon, that's fine. It could be just coincidence, who knows.

But we do know that I don't think this is new. I think this has been going on for a while. If I had time to tell you, I would go into different reasons why.

It's been going on a while. I believe people here in America have been affected by this, have overcome it, people who are sick. And I believe that China, if it's behind this, was allowing this to happen.

Our economy crumbles, and they begin now, they're beginning to purchase and pick up companies in our nation. You can look all this up, it's all legitimate. Not only that, not only that, now China's saying they have a success rate now on the cases, I guess now it's disappeared.

But of course, we can't trust their numbers. So there's a lot of fishiness going on behind the scenes. Why does that matter? Well, it matters because this is, I believe, a spiritual warfare.

I believe that God has allowed this. We don't know exactly what its source is, but I believe we will in the future. But this is a spiritual battle.

Now, let me give a mini-sermon here before I get into the real sermon. And don't worry, I won't keep you too long, but it's not like you have anything to do. So you can go back and listen to this later if you need to.

If you want to kind of absorb this, listen a little bit now, listen to a little bit later. But here's my mini-sermon. Here's my big concern.

It's not really with the economy, although that's a concern. It's not with necessarily the percentage of those being affected, which that is a concern. My big concern right now is I don't see America yet humble and broken.

I see her fearful, but I don't see her really repentant. I see her anxious, but I don't see her humble, broken before God, crying out to God. Because here's what we do.

We get fearful and like, well, when's the next stimulus package? That's my answer. And we're looking to everything but God. So that's my concern.

God is allowing this. Remember, before judgment starts out there, it starts in here. He says, I will judge my house first.

So this, first and foremost, could be a wake-up call to the church. The lukewarm, secret sense of churches of today, God is waking us up, saying, get back to my word, get back to repentance, get back to holiness, get back to righteousness, let the fire of God fall on the pulpits again. That's what we need to have revival.

So that's my concern is, what's it going to take to get America on her knees, praying and crying out to God again? Now, of course, many people are. This has increased spirituality in many people. But as a whole, we're seeing chaos and fear.

We're seeing, well, if we could just pass this program and this stimulus, and how long? Oh, hopefully this is over by Easter. And what about if it's not? What about, and personally, I think this could go on a little bit for a while, until we finally cry out to God. So I think it's more up to the church how long this goes than I do the CDC.

I believe that God is waiting and calling the church to a place of just repentance and crying out to God. God says, if you cry out to me, I will answer. So that's my big concern right now, is with this hopefully breaking the church.

I see a lot of arrogant Christians out there, and I see a lot of people just not really seeking God to the degree he needs to be sought. So that's my rabbit trail. Here's what I wanna talk about.

Again, I don't wanna keep you too long, but this is so important. Is this the end? COVID-19, what's going on? Is this the end? And I'm gonna get to that in a minute. I would say this is obviously one of the signs of the end.

There's been pestilence before, black plague, the Spanish flu, even the swine flu, maybe over a decade ago, quite over a decade ago, H1N1, there's different things. By the way, we haven't reached levels yet that the swine flu's reached in deaths or infections and different things. So a lot of this is being blown out of proportion.

Where it leads, I don't know. We need to take precautions. I'm all for what the government wants to do for now.

They're not asking, they're not telling you not to worship God. They're just saying, hey, we wanna get these precautions in place so we can help more people. So is this the end? I don't know if I'll do part two next week because I don't think I can get through all of this.

But the Bible talks about, it's interesting, the Bible doesn't talk about an end as a finality. Oh, it's over, everything's erased. What the Bible talks about when it talks about the end of an age, it talks about a completion or a fulfillment or a transition.

And many of you right now are reading the book of Revelation. I know it might be a little bit confusing, but revelation means to unveil or to reveal. So God gives a prophetic word or speaks into the future, which is called prophecy, and I think, I should've looked this up, so don't hold me to it, you theologians out there.

28%, I believe, of the whole Bible is prophetic, meaning God is speaking to people in the future. Some of those prophecies were back in the Old Testament. They were fulfilled in the Old Testament.

Some were fulfilled in the New Testament when Jesus came, and there are other prophecies yet to be fulfilled. Now, what's the point of prophecy? Well, I believe, a lot of different points, but number one, it's to prepare us, to prepare God's people. God says, here's what's happening, be prepared.

But I also believe it's supposed to change our hearts. When God sees what's going on and when we see what's going on inside of the heart and character of God, it should change our hearts. Folks, if what's going on out there doesn't change your heart, there's something wrong with your heart.

And as I often say, if you don't like what I'm saying, it's because you need to hear what I'm saying, especially as I go into this a little bit deeper. This is the time when God challenges our heart, when God changes our heart, and when God prepares our hearts to draw us closer to him. So, I don't know how I should tell you this, but let me just try to explain it the best I can.

When God speaks prophetically, so let's say 2,000 years ago in Matthew, Matthew 24 is one that many of you will be looking to. I'm sure many of you end times buffs out there. What end times is called eschatology, the study of the end times.

And when you look at that, you have to look at the historical context and also the cultural context. What was the culture? What was the history? In other words, if John in Revelation did see armies, he's probably not gonna mention a tank and a missile in the book of Revelation because obviously that never existed. So, it's kind of challenging because there's a lot of different ways to interpret in regard to metaphor or typology or historical context or the cultural things.

And there is a different big divide in the church on this issue. I don't know how many of you know this, but I'm gonna tell you, here it is. If you want the two extremes, and they're both good, Mark Hitchcock, Mark Hitchcock, the end, he would be a futurist.

And then Sam Storm, love Sam Storm's teaching on the gifts of the spirit, has a book, Kingdom Come. They are as far out there as I could get them. Well, this is a futurist, this is a preterist.

He says, revelation is still coming. He says, revelation has passed. The millennial reign of Christ is still coming.

Millennial reign is not what we think it is. The rapture, the rapture in a different way. I mean, you can just keep bringing down.

The church and Israel have separate plans. God says that Israel, that he doesn't have a plan for Israel and the church anymore. It's now just the church.

Those promises have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. So you see the two different views here. So it can be challenging.

Why are there two different views on the rapture, the millennial reign of Christ, post-trib, mid-trib, pre-wrath, all these different things. Why is there a different view? Well, let me tell you what they do agree on. This is important.

All Christian theologians, well, let me say 99% of them that are true Bible-believing theologians believe two things for sure. Here they are, you ready? You got your pen and paper ready? Kids, we're gonna test you tomorrow. Get the highlighter out and remember this.

Jesus is coming back. Amen, amen, amen. I know I can't hear you clapping, but I'm sure you're clapping out there.

Jesus is coming back. That's why we look to all those scriptures that say every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. It doesn't matter that you don't like what I'm saying.

You need to hear what I'm saying. It doesn't matter what you think. It matters what is true.

Christ is coming again to judge and to rule and to reign, and we better be prepared. Now, what is the second thing they both agree on? By the way, I'm reading both of these at the same time. That's interesting, but it's fun.

Both very knowledgeable men I respect greatly. Number two, they all agree on this. There is a final judgment.

There is a final judgment coming, and I think that's why people are so fearful right now because they're not right with God. Now, don't get me wrong. You know, if you work in a medical facility and you're exposed to patients, fear's gonna come up.

Fear comes into our hearts sometimes, but it's what we do with it that makes a difference. Now, as a believer in Jesus Christ, that God has filled me with his spirit, the reason a lot of people don't fear is because what can man do to you? Oh, you could get sick and die. Yes, and then I'm with the king of kings, and I leave this miserable, God-forsaken earth.

I've got a family to lead and a church to lead and kids to raise, so I'm not ready just yet, but you see, that's why there's nothing to be worried about because you have that right relationship with God. So here's the two things that people agree on. Jesus is coming.

Are you prepared? There is a final judgment. Are you prepared? Do you see a consistent theme there? Being prepared. Are you prepared? I'm glad to see, finally, bookstores are running out of Bibles, and it's not just toilet paper.

It is Bibles. They are running out of Bibles. Praise God, people are hungry, so this can be a very, very good thing.

I'm not minimizing life that has been lost. I'm not minimizing that it's going to get tough before it gets easier. It's going to get more difficult before it gets easier because this has to run its course.

There's gonna be more studies, I mean, more cases now that there's more testing and people with an immune system that's been taxed, and you could see more people dying from this, and I don't minimize that whatsoever, but this is time to look at God, not away from him. So, Shane, where's the disagreeing at then here? Well, timing and fulfillment are the dividers. Timing and fulfillment.

They agree on Matthew 24, but the fulfillment and the timing is where there is a division. I'm gonna get to that in a minute. But Jesus mentions his second coming at least 21 times from what I could find.

21 times Jesus talks about his second coming. So, is this the end? I don't think that this is the end. I think this is one of the signs that we are getting close.

I think it's a birth pain. I think like Jesus said, look at the fig tree. When you see that it is blossoming and that bud is near, that fruit is coming, be ready.

There are signs of the times. So, when we don't know certain things, we have to trust God. I think that's why there's a big divide in eschatology.

Some people embrace amillennialism, some embrace premillennialism, some embrace postmillennialism, and if we had 48 hours and some extra time, I could talk about all these different views, but there's so many different things out there about eschatology, but I believe this. We aren't sure, which means we have to trust God and we have to practice unity. We have to trust God.

Lord, I don't know how this will all pan out. That's actually what I am, I'm a pan-trib. I'm gonna see how it all pans out.

So, we just have to trust, we have to walk in unity, because often this camp is divided against this camp if we're not careful. You see arrogance on both sides. You see going at each other on both sides, and there's an arrogance there because knowledge puffs up, and we read Augustine, we read early church fathers, we read the works of Josephus in regard to Titus in 7070, and we think we know everything, and we're gonna tell everyone off.

So, I would just encourage you, have unity in this area. So, let's look at one of the controversial scriptures. Again, listen to this later if you need to.

A brief look at Matthew 24. Again, I would need a couple hours. I'd have just trim, trim, trim, trim, trim, and I'm hoping I can talk to you more next week about this.

Matthew 24, I'm just gonna share five points to consider about is this the end? What does Jesus say about this? But before we go to Matthew 24, you have to remember something that's very important. When Jesus said these words, there were no chapter and verses that you have to read the Bible as a flow, unless it breaks up itself, unless the reading of it itself shows there's a breakup. But chapter 23, remember chapter 23? Well, if you're not familiar with it, Jesus goes off.

Did you know Jesus goes off sometimes? Jesus was a preacher. He was a fiery preacher when he needed to be. He whipped him out of the, he got him out of the temple.

He drove out the money changers. He said, you brood of vipers, you whitewash tombs. And he was preaching this passion, this call to the Pharisees and the religious leaders, and he began to call them on the carpet.

He said, you killed God's messengers. The blood of the prophets will be required on this generation. So you see now, it's a rebuke against the nation of Israel.

It's a rebuke against the religious leaders. You brood of vipers, you killed God's messengers. You killed God's prophets.

You know what I find that's ironic? It's not much different today. People say, give us smooth sayings. Give us, Shane, can you give me an easy sermon? But when a true spokesperson for God preaches, it's hard to hear sometimes because it cuts us deep.

It confronts the sin in our hearts. It's prophetic preaching that cuts and divides and tears sin out of our hearts, and they hated those types of messengers, and it's not much different. It's not much different.

I've told many of you, many of you have told this before. If you wanna build a big church, just be popular. If you wanna build a church filled with God's spirit, then you yourself be filled with God's spirit, and you talk about the difficult things.

So that's the context. I'm getting into Matthew 24, but that's the context. Jesus just rebukes these people.

He says, there is a judgment coming to this generation. So Matthew 24, then Jesus went out and departed from the temple after he rebuked them, and his disciples came up and asked him about the buildings of the temple, and Jesus said to them, do you not see all these things? Surely I say to you, not one stone will be left here upon another that shall not be thrown down. So they all agree on this as well.

40 years later or so, a Roman general by the name of Titus came in and conquered the city of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Josephus writes about this, and it was a massacre. I believe it was close to a million Jews were killed.

It was incredible, it was one of the biggest massacres. I believe, actually it was one of the biggest events to that point in history. It was just incredible what they did to the Jewish people and to the nation.

But remember, God said, I will require the blood of those prophets on this generation. So many feel, and I agree, that this was a judgment on the nation of Israel. So if you're wondering what my view is, maybe I'll tell you that in a little bit.

But let's go into verse three. Now Jesus, well, let's just keep reading because it flows right in. So Jesus says, do you not see all these things? As surely I say to you, not one stone will be left upon another that shall not be thrown down.

Now he's set there on the Mount of Olives. The disciples came to him privately, this is key. And they said, tell us, when will these things be? Number one, when is this destruction of the temple? Number one.

Number two, and what will be the sign of your coming? Number three, and what is the end of the age? Now here's where it gets controversial. I believe the disciples thought this was one event. It wasn't, oh, okay, when's this going to happen to the temple, and then is there something else going to happen 2,000 years later? I believe they were asking as a question that this, hey, is all this going to happen at once? So that would be, let me separate these.

That would be this side. That would be this side. They believe it was all one event.

And then verse four, Jesus answered and said to them, take heed that no one deceives you, for many will come in my name saying I am the Christ, and I will deceive many. I'm sorry, and they will deceive many. 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 rise against kingdom, and there will be famines. Guess what else there will be? Pestilence.

What is COVID-19? It is a huge pestilence. And earthquakes in various places. If we had time, we could go to all the different earthquakes that have occurred.

Even just since January, Russia was just hit with a 7.5, somewhere off the coast there in Russia, and earthquakes and increasing. So this is why, personally, I can't say that all of this already happened. If I'm gonna lean in a direction, I'm leaning in the direction that this is coming.

Now, it's interesting, though, when Jesus, we'll get into it later in Matthew, Jesus said, this generation, meaning the contemporaries that he was speaking to, this generation. And I believe it was D.A. Carson said, if Jesus is talking to us, but he's saying this generation, then it's the only recorded time throughout all of the gospels that this is now an audience shift from Jesus' disciples to now us 2,000 years in the future. And he makes a great point.

That's why they're on both sides. Both sides have good points, and they've dug their heels in, and they really take a position, and they hold that position. But I'm caught in the middle.

When good men of God are divided, who is a stupid country boy gonna do? Who am I to come up and say, oh, this is what the truth is, this is what I believe? I believe that God allows some mystery there, so we will focus on unity. We will focus on trusting God to show us. But also, after the rebirth of Israel, the early 1900s, the current events, scriptures that I don't believe are fulfilled yet, that kind of leads me to believe that a lot of these things are still coming.

For example, in the futurist view, I don't really gravitate towards the timing of the rapture. I also don't see a revised Roman empire. I also have problems with sacrifices during the millennial reign of Christ.

But on this side, they focus more on metaphor, more on typology, more as Jesus being Israel, and there's not a separate plan for Israel. And again, they have great points, but I lean towards a lot of these things are still coming. Jesus is speaking to us today.

I believe that something called dual prophecy can take place, where actually something that is happening then can also happen now, because they did have famines, they did have pestilence, but we're seeing this at a much greater rate. So here's what I wanna get to. And there'll be famines, pestilence, and earthquakes in various places.

He said, all these are the beginning of sorrows. So he's putting it, the emphasis, like a woman in pregnancy. She's first month, second month.

You get to that nine month, and there's gonna be a time of birth, and there's sorrow. So we see this pregnancy happening. We see the world about ready to implode.

Many people who say that revelation isn't for today, that's hard for me, because the one world government looks like it's coming. I don't know if you know this or not, but a certain party in Washington tried to slip in the digital coin, where money will go digital into the stimulus pack. It was pulled out, thank God.

But that's where everyone will go digital in many areas. And then you couldn't buy or sell unless you did a certain thing. And so you see all this could really come to fruition.

But here's what I wanna do. I wanna pull some things from what we just read. Again, you need to go back and rewind if you need to.

I might need to go back and remind myself, my mind tonight, because there's a lot here. Jesus is telling us, I've just got five things I wanna share with you. Be prepared for deception.

He said, take heed that no one deceives you. That tells me you can be deceived. I can be deceived.

Well, Shane, how do we know? How do we know? I'm glad you asked. Here's how we know. Does it line up with the word of God? Not CNN, not Fox News, not the Huffington Post, not MSNBC.

Does it line up with God's word, the character of God, the nature of God? Well, I'm not sure if it does. Then you better live in his word. You better turn off that television, get into God's word, and begin to have God's word just fill you.

Because what happens when you read God's word, you understand his character, his nature, his principles, his precepts. You understand what true godly wisdom is, and you're able to make godly wise decisions. And then you're not deceived because you know what the original looks like.

So if somebody comes up, and there's actually a guy who's in Florida. He said he's the Christ. I don't know if you knew that.

Couple years ago, he says, I'm Jesus Christ. You know, you're not. No, you're not.

I'm not going to be deceived. But hundreds, if not thousands, were deceived by this man. All the different cults that have risen up.

You have to look to God's word and use wisdom. Also, what we see here, there are not other ways to God. Do not be deceived because people say always, always lead to heaven.

There's other ways we can worship. No, there are no other ways to God. If you don't take anything from this, except this, let me make this clear.

Jesus is the only way, the only truth, the only life. Nobody can go to the Father except through him. Amen.

I can't see you. I can't see anybody. So I don't know if you're getting upset or not, but that's the truth.

He's the only way, the only truth, the only life. No other way but Jesus Christ. Every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that he is Lord, and I will preach it from the rooftop as long as I have breath in my lungs that he is our Savior.

I don't know if you saw this, but the Pope recently made this statement. Are you ready for this? The Pope said, in case you're wondering, we are not Catholic, we're not Roman Catholic. We are Bible-believing Christians, so we don't submit to the authority of the papacy.

But it's interesting, here's what he said. He said, many people are asking me, Father, I can't leave the house, and I want to make my peace with the Lord. I want him to embrace me.

How can I do that unless I find a priest during COVID-19? Do you know what the Pope said? You can go directly to God. Hey, I could have told you that 2,000 years ago. You can go directly to God.

Finally, the Pope realizes you don't need a man sitting in a box to free you from sin. You need to go to Christ, and Christ alone, the mediator. He is our high priest.

He took on our sin. He took on our iniquity. He stands before God and mediates between you and the Father.

You don't need to go to man. You go to Jesus Christ. This is shaking up all false gospels.

This is tearing down all false religious systems, because when you're sitting in your home, you realize the only thing I have is God and God alone. There's no hope in religion, too. I don't want to burst bubbles, but it doesn't matter what religion you belong to.

Well, Shane, I'm Baptist. It doesn't matter. I'm Methodist.

I have people say, Shane, I'm a good Christian. I'm a Mormon. I'm a Jehovah Witness.

How could you say that? I'm a Catholic. It doesn't matter. Do you know Christ? That's the answer.

Do you know Christ and Christ alone? You're not gonna get to heaven and say, well, I was part of this religion. What did that religion do for you? Many of those religions out there will lead you astray. People are being deceived.

And number two, we find here, be alert. Be alert. Discern the times.

This, this is a pestilence. There are famines. Have you seen pictures in East Africa of the millions of locusts consuming the, am I, if this is not biblical manifestation on a large scale, I don't know what is.

You have pestilence. Right now, all over the world, you have famines taking place, scorching the earth. You have people just, the suicide rate is now reaching epidemic levels.

That's why the president recently said, we gotta get the economy back somehow because the suicide rate might take more lives than COVID-19. You've gotta bow. I praise God I don't have that job.

We need to pray for that man, pray for that administration. That is the hardest job on the planet right now because this is a very, very difficult thing. And we don't have answers many times, but I believe God does and he will lead us.

So be alert. Discern the times. What do I mean by that? Look what's happening.

This is a time to run to God. You use discernment. We use discernment and we run to God, not away from him.

And then number three, what we gleaned from this text, be prepared emotionally. Amen? Be prepared emotionally. What do I mean by that? Here's what I mean.

Jesus said, see that you are not troubled. See that you are not troubled. What that means is don't be troubled.

Don't let worry and fear dictate your decisions. Don't let worry and fear control you. Why? Because your father has predetermined this course if he is your father.

Jesus said, all these things are gonna happen. My father is gonna judge the world, but because you know me, you know the father, you are safe and secure. Sure, you could die from this.

You could die from anything. I could die driving home, but my trust is in Christ and Christ alone. And what God has done in and through my heart and he wants to do it in your heart as well.

But you have to open that heart and embrace God's wonderful gift. So be prepared emotionally. Don't fear.

And let me throw this out there. If you're fearful and you're not a Christian, this is a no-brainer. Without God, there is no peace.

You don't know peace until you know Jesus Christ. So you have to turn your life completely over to God and experience that peace that surpasses all understanding. In other words, it doesn't make sense.

Why am I going through this, but still have tremendous peace? Because you know the God who created the heavens and the earth. You know him, you've been set free. But what about all those people who say they're Christians? Let's say the ones who are Christians and they're very fearful.

I would love to take a look at your calendar. I wanna see where you're spending your time, how you're spending your time. Are you looking at all the news threads? Are you turning to the God's word? Read Psalm, Psalm 1 through 3, chapters 1 through 3. And you leave there and you tell me you don't feel much better.

Psalm 1, you just open up. Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. In other words, get your information from a good influence.

Don't sit around with sinners and gossip and scornful. But meditate on the word of God and you'll be like a tree planted by living waters and you will bear its fruit in season. And the Psalms begin to build you up because I read this morning, oh, that God is my strength.

God is my comforter. I also read that he who protects Israel does not sleep or does not slumber. He said also, look to the hills.

Where does my help come from? My help comes from almighty God. It says, what will flesh do to you? Nothing, but God says, I will hold you. I will lift you up.

Though the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, though he falls, he will not be utterly cast down because God upholds him with his right hand. And you start to encourage yourself in the Lord. And yet that fear begins to flee and you are built up by the spirit of God.

Oh, it's hard to preach to a camera. Verse nine, talks about being hated by all nations for Jesus' sake. And many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

Watch out for false prophets. If it's all about peace, peace. If the, here's a good indication.

If a preacher, if a pastor, if a teacher is avoiding the difficult things, be careful. If they don't wanna talk about judgment, they don't wanna talk about hell, they don't wanna talk about sin, they don't wanna talk about holiness, what they're doing is they're making the gospel palatable. They're making it taste good and they're presenting a false gospel.

Now also be careful of those guys that that's all they preach. And you can almost see the fire coming out of their mouth and they're so arrogant, it makes me sick because they're not broken and they're not humble. And Jesus says, but he who endures, he who endures to the end will be safe.

I don't believe a genuine blood-bought Christian sealed with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit has given to you as a guarantee you're a child of God. I don't think you can just walk away from that. I believe that you are secure and you're sealed.

I'm making all the Calvinists happy right now. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. There's an, it is interesting, it doesn't say he who glides through life, he who endures, what is endure? It means I'm getting through something I don't like.

I don't want, this is not comfortable. That person who can hold on to their faith to the finish line, that's the person who is sealed and saved by God, that's a genuine believer. Because when the heat is turned up, you look to Christ, you don't run for cover.

And this gospel of the kingdom, Jesus says, will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations. And I believe all does mean all. And then he said, and then the end will come.

Oh, and then the end will come. This gospel will go out everywhere. That's why I believe we're not there yet personally.

Again, I'm not a theologian. My expertise is not on eschatology. My heartbeat is with revival and repentance.

And I love end times things. But when men of God are divided on this, I hold my opinion very loosely. But I do know this, I think that the gospel still needs to go out there.

I see a lot of promises that aren't yet fulfilled in scripture. I see that there could be a time where there's a one world leader. And I won't get into this this week, but maybe we'll talk about Daniel 9 next week and a few different things.

But Jesus said, and the end will come. So I'm gonna share two points and I am done. You can get back to dinner.

How's that? Number four, be prepared for an easy life. Nope, mm-mm. Be prepared for persecution.

Let me speak to this issue real quick. A lot of pastors out there, there's actually some arrogant pastors out there who say, I don't care what the government says, we're gonna have church. That's not good right now because you have an administration who wants to honor God.

All they're asking is for people to make wise decisions to keep others safe. They're not telling you to get rid of your Bible, to not worship God. They're simply, and you can look, I think it was the Puritans.

Actually, John Stone Street talked about this this morning on a radio station where the Puritans would talk about when the, I think it was the Spanish flu, or no, that was probably too early, the plague or something came through the colonies and they said to respect the governing authorities and you isolate for a season to allow that to run its course. So there's no harm in obeying this type and this form of governmental authority. I have no problem with that.

But the persecution I'm talking about is Jesus used strong language here. He didn't say, they kinda don't like me. He said, you'll be hated.

You'll be hated because of your faith. Go to the underground church in China and ask what's happening in China. Go to North Korea if you can even find a Christian there who will speak out.

Go to Iraq and Iran and Syria. Go to these places where the gospel is moving and they are literally killed for their faith. So we see all this happening.

Jesus says, hey, listen, there might be fear. There might be this, but don't worry. I'm preparing you.

There will be persecution because if you love me, you love the Father and they will hate you. And then number five, be prepared spiritually. This is the most important thing.

People, listen, go back and listen to this if you're with family members right now. If it's a little noisy at home, I've got five kids, so I know it's hard to watch a 40-minute message, let alone, I mean, five minutes, let alone 40-minute message. So go back and listen to this.

But I wanna talk about this last point. Be prepared spiritually. Jesus said, and then the age, and then the end will come.

Are you prepared spiritually? Now remember, let me take you back. Remember Matthew 24. Remember Matthew 23.

Jesus rebuked those religious leaders, those brood of vipers, he said. You whitewash tombs. But then he said something very interesting.

Jesus changes from scorning them and rebuking them. And then he goes, and then he cries out, oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem. Oh, God, I see what's going to happen to you.

Have you ever seen someone you love walking to the edge and they're about ready to fall off the cliff, and Jesus could see they're going to reject him, reject the Messiah that was set for them, so he calls out, he cries out, oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, and I can almost hear it now. Oh, America, America, won't you turn back to God? Oh, I wish I could gather you, God says, as a chicken gathers her little hands, and I want to gather you and I want to hold you, but you were not willing. See, God is not a puppet master.

He doesn't demand that you do certain things. He calls, he beckons, he draws, and he asks that you make that decision to bow your knee to Jesus Christ. Oh, Jerusalem, Jesus said, oh, I weep over you.

Why was he saying that? Because he could see 40 years into the future when they would be desolate and destroyed, and an end to sacrifice would come, according to Daniel nine. A lady sent us an email today. Her name was Patricia.

Great reminder, she said, many are feeling the pressure of not being able to repay their mortgages, their debt. And she mentioned this, and I thought of this as well. Not only are people feeling the pressure of not being able to repay financially, they're feeling the pressure of not being able to pay spiritually.

They're carrying a debt. They're also feeling the pressure of their sin debt. So you see what's happening.

The financial pressure and the pressure of sin, that's why people are taking their lives. That's why people are losing their mind. That's why everyone's angry.

There's so much animosity and fear is because that weight is being carried by them. And the Bible is clear on this. Jesus says, give me your cares, give me your sin, and I will take that.

Do you know you have to say no to God? God doesn't say no to you. You have to say no to, you literally have to say no. I don't want you, God.

I don't wanna have anything to do with you or your son. I reject that. That's not God.

God is drawing. God doesn't linger, though, remember that. God doesn't linger, life doesn't linger, judgment doesn't linger.

Don't linger. The Bible says three times in the book of Hebrews, when you hear his voice, harden not your heart. What kind of wake up call do you need? This is drawing people back to God.

This is showing them that they don't have control of anything. One thing, a little thing, a virus we can't even see is causing the whole world to go crazy. So I just wanna close with that.

We're gonna have the worship team come back up and close with worship. And I just wanna encourage you, though, if you need to make that decision, Luke, maybe you could open the door for them. I don't know if they're locked out or not.

But if you need to make that decision this evening, and you might be listening this Sunday morning or some other time, if you need to make that decision, the Bible is very clear. It just says, call out to me. Repent of your sin.

Say, God, I was wrong. You know America, it's hard for America to hear that. America needs to hear, I was wrong.

I made a mistake. Lord, break us. That's what we need.

We need to be broken by God. We need to be humbled by God. We've become too arrogant.

We've become too puffed up. And God says, humble yourself. Oh, here it is.

Here we go. Humble, pray, seek, and turn. Humble, pray, seek, and turn.

You need to humble yourself. You need to cry out to God. You need to seek him with all of your heart.

And then you turn from your sin. We've gotta get back to that final point. You have to turn from your sin, turn from your arrogance and your hard heart, and cry out to God.

Boy, Shane, that's mean-spirited. No, it's not. It's actually very loving.

It's actually very loving to tell someone the truth. What's mean is to hide the truth from people. And to never talk about difficult things.

To never talk about hell. Never talk about judgment. Somebody who truly loves someone else will tell them the truth.

That there is a God who loves you, but you can't keep fighting God. Listen, listen, you can't keep fighting God. There has to come a point in your life where you say enough is enough.

I surrender. The Bible says Jesus surrendered to the will of the Father on the cross. And we have to surrender our lives to him.

Give him our lives and repent of our sin. And God will fill you with his spirit. He will save you.

And that burden I just talked about, that burden of sin and guilt.

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