

Stand Firm!

- This past Wed, mgntd 5.7 eqk rocked cntry Nepal, killing 6. But nthng cmprd to 2015 eqk in Nepal that regstrd 7.8 on Richter scale, killing 9k; or 2004 eqk in Indonesia, reg 9.3, killing 228k. On Feb 24, Rus invaded Ukrn. So far in war, Ukrn sustained estmtd 100k military caslts, 40k civilian caslts, incl hndrds chldrn. But nthng cmprd to 20 mil lives lost in WW1, and 80 mil in WW2. ~30 yrs ago guy named Dvd Koresh claimd be Mes; even had grp/follwrs. But when FBI raided his compnd in Waco, TX in spring 93, lost life & follwrs. But nthng cmprd to relgs mvmnt startd by 24 yr old Josph Smith, who in 1830 found some golden plates, buried undrgrnd, inscrbd w/msg he transltd into Bk/Mormon, thus beginning the now 16-mil member Mormon or LDS religion.
- Now, what these eqks, wars, and false tchns all have in common, besides fact emerged in only last 200 yrs or so? Here's common: J predicted all! J said these thngs'd hpn! They shld not surprise us; in fact we shld even expect these sorts of natrl, intrntnl, thlglc disasters! J: **vs. 8-9a, 10-11**. And said that 2k yrs ago; and for 2k yrs he's been right. The entire NT era (time from ascnsn to return) is filled w/trbls like these. We call them signs of end times, and every genrtm exprncs them – just like J said.
- Also said: **vs. 9b** – tchs us 2 thngs. 1) All these signs meant remind us: end/wrld coming. Ev disaster, eqk, famine, hurricane, war, pandmc shld make us say: “Lord coming back, soon; J will return; don't know when, but as wrld arnd me collapses, I'm reminded: God'll bring this wrld to an end.” That's 1.
- 2) Each disaster, terrible tho may be, is not end. It's sign that end'll come, but not end itself. Remem, J spoke these wrds as he/discs walkng by tmpl, and discs commntng on **how...vs. 5b**. “Man, what awsm bldng!” But J' respns: pretty dark: **vs. 6**. “What! Tmpl?! When? How we going know this is coming?” Then J delivrs what's called ED; rest this ch is all re eschtlgy, thngs pertng to end/wrld. And in this ED, J weaves tog 2 terrifying, disastrous, earth-shtrng events: 1) end/wrld; 2) Jewish War of 1st cent. Now I'm not going turn this sermon into hstry class. But you need know: ~40 yrs after J rose fr dead, in year 70, Roman army besieged Jrslm and compltly destrdy city. Tore it down, burned to grnd, demlshd tmpl, killed evone. 1.1 mil resdnts/Jrslm, annhld. Devastatn: catstrphc, on order of WW2 but confined to Palestine. And J, seeing this future catastroph, prophesies: **vs. 6**. And later in ch: **“When you see Jrslm being surrdd by armies, you will know that it's desolation is near... Jrslm will be trampled on by the Gents” (20, 24)**.
- Now, I bring up this 1st cent Jewish War bec in today's Gos J weaves this catastroph & end/wrld tog into 1 prphcy. For us, Jewish War, just ancnt hist; but for discs, right arnd corner! And that's how J wants us thnk re end/wrld: it's coming; rgt arnd corner; could come at any time! And it will be catstrphc, like no war wrld's ever seen. Jewish War: not end/wrld; neither WW2, invasion/Ukrn, Covid-19, eqk in Nepal. But all these catastrophes point ahead to, and remind us of, glorious/terrifying day of J' return – the day Mal says **“will burn like a furnace” (4:1)**; day 2 Thes says **“the LJ is revealed fr hvn in blazing fire w/his pwrfl angels... [to] punish those who do not know God and do not obey Gos of our LJ” (1:7-8)**.
- So, what can we expect in meantime? More wars, plagues, pandmcs, eqks, false doctrn – you betcha! What else? **Vs. 12, 16-17**. If you think Xian persctn is limited to 1st cent, head in sand. If your Xian exprnc so far's been reltvlly pain-free; if you've nvr really been harassed/abused for your belfs, let me tell you: that day's coming! For many already's come. And if you are smone whose fam/frnds have betryd, even persctd you for your faith in J, then you know what he's talking about! Xianity does not make life easier; life as NT Xian in this crumbling wrld is very diffclt – that's what J tchns us here.
- So what do we do? I'll tell you what not to do. Do not let these dark days steal away your faith in J. Do not let persctns & betrayals, wars & bldshd, natrl disasters & false tchns rob of you of the saving faith HS's worked in your hrt. That's what Satan wants! He wants every hardship to harden your hrt and callous your soul, until you're just a bitter unbel. Don't let that happen!

- Instead, do this: vs. 19. SF! In face of fear, hatred, disaster, pain, and every other terrifying trble J foretells here in this psg, SF. SF in your faith, bec J did not speak these wrds to scare you, or even just prepare you; spoke these wrds to reassure you: there is an end in sight. The devastations of wrld will smday cease. The God who guides/governs this wrld will bring this wrld to end, in due time. And he proms: vs. 18 – which of course does not mean you’ll nvr suffer or even die for faith. The whole ch/ED says just the opp! But it does mean that fr God’s eternal perspctv, you are: safe, spared, saved! The end/wrld is your delivrnc fr wrld. Later in ch: **“When these thngs begin take place, stand up & lift up your heads, bec your redmptn is drawng near” (28)**. Your Redmr, who brngs you redmptn, didn’t come to spare you fr wrld’s atrocities, but to endure wrld’s atrocities for you! He didn’t just let the Romans destroy tmpl bldng; he let them destroy the tmpl/body. They tortured him, destryd, nailed to cross. And he endured that awfulnss for you, to pay for all sins. And then rose fr dead! **“Destroy this tmpl, and I will raise it again in 3 days” (Jn 2:19)**. And just what did! On ES morn J raised his tmpl to life. And by faith in J, he has built you into the tmpl/Ch, his Com/Snts. As a Xian, you: living stone built into this tmpl, built on: fndtn/Gos; fndtn of God’s love for you; fndtn of forgvns/sins won by J for you thru his death/res. No Roman soldier or earthly tragedy can ever topple that tmpl down, or tear you away fr your Sav! And under his protctn, vs. 18; w/J your eternity is safe/secure.
- So SF. SF in your faith/J, even as wrld crumbles arnd you. Vs. 19, or prhps better transltd, “acquire,” receive it by grace, fr one who laid down his life, and took up his life, to redeem your life, and give you etrn life. There’s a lot scary thngs re end/wrld and days leading up to it – wars, disasters, fearful events. It’s a frightng psg we have here today. But God: not oblivious to what’s going on; has plan in place & end in sight. Justice’ll be served; jdgmnt’ll come; wrld’ll end; and you’ll be delvrd. So SF in your faith/Xp. SF, and you will acquire life.

Luke 21:5-19

⁵Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, ⁶“As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down.”

⁷“Teacher,” they asked, “when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?”

⁸He replied: “Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and, ‘The time is near.’ Do not follow them. ⁹When you hear of wars and uprisings, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away.”

¹⁰Then he said to them: “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. ¹¹There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.

¹²“But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. ¹³And so you will bear testimony to me. ¹⁴But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. ¹⁵For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. ¹⁶You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷Everyone will hate you because of me. ¹⁸But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹Stand firm, and you will win life.