

CHURCH OF THE
G E T E R N A L

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” – Matthew 24:14

August 5, 2003

Dear Brethren:

When we look around us, we can tell that Christ’s return is near. Prophetic end-time events, that have been written about thousands of years ago in the pages of the Bible, are beginning to unfold. We know, for instance, that there is going to be one last resurrection of the “Holy Roman Empire,” consisting of ten European “core nations” that will give their power and authority to an influential military leader, called in prophecy “the beast” (Revelation 17:12–13), the “king of the North” (Daniel 11:40), or “King Jareb of Assyria” (Hosea 5:13). This “beast” will be supported by a religious leader, referred to as “the false prophet” (Revelation 19:20), the “little horn” (Daniel 7:8), “the man of sin” (2 Thessalonians 2:3), or “a woman sitting on a scarlet beast” (Revelation 17:3). We are told that this last resurgence of the “Holy Roman Empire,” that will be hostile toward the modern tribes of the houses of Israel and Judah, will only “continue a short time” (Revelation 17:10). In fact, these ten core nations and their leaders will “receive authority for one hour with the beast” (v. 12). Other Scriptures, such as Daniel 7:23–25, indicate that they will exert their full power for three-and-a-half years.

We see the beginning stages of the last resurrection of the “Holy Roman Empire” in continental Europe. We observe the Catholic Church’s heavy involvement to bring about a “*Christian*” European unification. We are also experiencing an unprecedented alienation of the relationship between the United States of America and Europe, especially Germany and France. We are confronted with constant and reoccurring problems in the Middle East, especially involving the State of Israel and the city of Jerusalem. In spite of all attempts to the contrary, there is no peace in that region.

We read in Matthew 24 about the events leading to Christ’s return—“wars and rumors of wars,” “earthquakes,” “famines,” and “pestilences.” Any honest observer must admit that these events have become common place. Christ warned that the very next event would be “the Great Tribulation”—a term including the persecution of true Christians as well as an attack by a powerful united Europe on the United States of America, Great Britain, and the State of Israel.

No human being knows how close we are to these prophesied events. Christ warned us: “Now learn this parable from the fig tree. When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! ... *But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.* But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, AND DID NOT KNOW until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be... *Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming... Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect*” (Matthew 24: 32–44).

No human being knows the exact hour, but to watch end-time events and our own lives will help us to be READY when Christ comes. *We can* know the *approximate* time or season. We are to follow Christ’s admonition in Luke 21:34–37:

“But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. *Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.*”

While mankind in general WILL BE caught by surprise when the prophesied terrible times—just prior to Christ’s return—come on this earth, God’s true servants need not be in ignorance. Notice Paul’s statement in 1 Thessalonians 5:1–5:

“But concerning the times and seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the *day of the Lord so comes as a thief* in the night. For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. *But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.* You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.”

We are to live and walk in the light. We are to have the light of understanding, illuminating for us Biblical prophecy. If we are not careful, however, by not constantly watching and examining ourselves, as to where we stand, we, too, could become “spiritually dead.” To the remnant of the Sardis church, Christ

says in Revelation 3:2–3, “*Be watchful*, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God... Therefore, *if you will not watch*, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.” This is a warning which all of God’s people should heed (compare Revelation 3:6).

Time is short (1 Corinthians 7:29). We have to diligently be about our Father’s business, “always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58) by preaching the gospel and feeding the flock (Matthew 24:14; Matthew 28:18–20). We know that God’s work will be finished and cut short in righteousness, and that “the LORD will make a short work upon the earth” (Romans 9:28). Satan knows that he has “but a short time” (Revelation 12:12), and that God will “crush Satan under [our] feet shortly” (Romans 16:20). The entire book of Revelation, which has been opened to our understanding, describes things “which must shortly take place” (Revelation 1:1; 22:6).

We are encouraged to “walk properly, as in the day” (Romans 13:13), “knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light” (Romans 13: 11–12). We are asked to “redeem the time” (Ephesians 5:16; compare Colossians 4:5), that is, to make the most of our time to please God. We are told to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33).

Watching prophetic events can and should help us to draw closer to God, seeing that the time is near. Just watching what is going on in the world and not doing anything about it in our own personal lives is useless. At the same time, we must not make the mistake and think, “Since everything is going to end soon, why should I prepare for the future? Why should I even look for a job, or find a better job? Why should I go to college or university to acquire a good education? Why should I think of getting married or having children?”

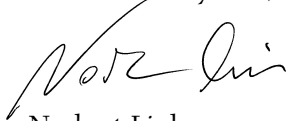
First of all, no human being knows when these terrible times will begin. Every indication is that they are not too far away from us, but we can’t know for sure. The Church thought in the 70’s that Christ would return soon, within a few years, and many made the mistake of not continuing to live responsible lives or preparing for the future. The Church had understood for a long time that Europe would unite and become the most powerful union of nations on the face of the earth. We expected all the things to happen then that are beginning to happen now. How long, though, did it take? Even now, we are seeing just the *beginning* stages of Europe’s unification. It might still take quite a few years until the final power bloc of Europe has arrived on the world scene, as prophesied in Scripture.

The Biblical principle is to always be spiritually ready. If we should die tonight, we should be ready to meet our Maker when we awake—which would be at the next moment of our consciousness. At the same time, we are to live, on a physical plane, as if a whole lifetime is still ahead of us. For instance, it is a *sin* not to work and make a living, if we have opportunity to do so (2 Thessalonians 3:10–12). In order to live successful lives, we need to have vision—a *plan* as to what to do with our lives (Proverbs 29:18, *Authorized Version*). We are not to just drift through life, like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. We need to be productive. We are told in Ecclesiastes 9:10, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.”

When God grants us fortunes, we are to use them and share them with others (1 Timothy 6:17–18). All of us are to “learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that” we may not be “unfruitful” (Titus 3:14). Paul tells us, “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need” (Ephesians 4:28). At the same time, we must always live a humble life subject to God’s Will (James 4:13–16).

Christ admonishes us to prepare for His return and the terrible times ahead. While becoming more and more perfect (compare Matthew 5:48), we are also, as productive citizens of God’s kingdom, to “increase[] in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (compare Luke 2:52).

With brotherly love,



Norbert Link