

Rumors of War

A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth;
for the LORD hath a controversy with the nations, he will
plead with all flesh; he will give them that are
wicked to the sword, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah 25:31

The gospel of Matthew indicates that at the end of Jesus' life, He provided His disciples with a sobering glimpse into the last days of man's reign on earth. When describing this moment in human history the Messiah presented a picture of a world broken in every way possible. This world would be wrecked morally, physically, politically, economically, environmentally, culturally and even spiritually. One particular area that would experience a total breakdown in human sanity would be how mankind would resolve conflicts. In essence, this world would reach a point where bloodshed would become the accepted method of settling disputes. Furthermore, this bloodshed would become so pervasive that news broadcasts would be filled with talk of war.

And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom... (Mt. 24:6-7)

The term "nation" used by Matthew when recording Jesus' words is very interesting. It comes from the Greek word "ethnos". It is where we get the terms "ethnic" and "ethnicity." Ethnos is a term that pertains to race or nationality, not to country or realm. Here, almost 2000 years ago, Jesus was warning that in the last days, great racial strife would punctuate a significant part of society.

Jesus then warned that war and conflict would become commonplace around the world ("kingdom shall rise against kingdom"), and once again, He was right on target. Today, we live in a world that is truly on the brink of war. We even speak of terrorism as being "global."

Throughout history, the story of man has been a story of war. In six thousand years of human history the number of centuries where man has enjoyed real peace could easily be counted on one hand.

"Peace, Peace," When There is No Peace

Down through the centuries man has made many attempts to craft a sustained peace, but all have failed. Treaties and alliances have been forged only to be broken. Great institutions like the League of Nations and the United Nations have been assembled with the express purpose of building a lasting peace in the world.

But who really believes such institutions contribute to a safer world? Despite their cries for peace, war is everywhere. Despite their good intentions, institutions like the United Nations have become little more than a forum for nations to bicker and point accusing fingers at each other. The prospects of war and conflict truly are everywhere. The real tragedy to this is that we now live in a world where war is not an option. Its destructive power is so vast that the entire world would have to pay for the actions of a very few.

An Appeal For Peace

When addressing the United Nations over forty years ago, President John F. Kennedy warned that "mankind must put an end to war – or war will put an end to mankind." He went on to say, "Together we

shall save our planet or together we shall perish in its flames.” But regrettably war and conflict are still everywhere.

The Road to Peace

The great tragedy throughout human history is that man does not understand the root cause of war. However, the Bible does understand, and reveals this understanding in very blunt language. Notice the words of the apostle James in his epistle to the twelve tribes of Israel that were scattered abroad.

From whence come wars and fighting among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? You lust, and have not: you kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain: you fight and war, yet you have not, because you ask not. You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts. (James 4:1-3)

The only way mankind will ever achieve a lasting peace is to change the way it thinks. And to do so man must make the most radical of transformations. No longer can he be driven by self will, but rather by an uncompromising selflessness and a genuine outgoing concern for others. Jesus Christ possessed such a mind and heart. His love for mankind was so great that He divested himself of the infinite power and glory He had known before coming to earth as a man and took upon himself the form of a servant. He then suffered the indignity of a torturous death (Phil. 2:5-8). Jesus did this so that man would be spared the eternal consequences of sin and instead be reconciled back to the Father (Rom. 5:10).

Without true personal humility, as well as compassion for others, mankind has sealed its fate in a tragic future. This is a profound truth that some of the world's great leaders have pondered. The late American general Douglas MacArthur summed up the challenge facing mankind living in a nuclear age this way.

“It must be of the spirit if mankind is truly going to save the flesh.”

Tragically, these words continue to go unheeded. As a result, war and conflict continue to spread to every corner of our planet. Violence is everywhere. It stalks the earth in the form of great acts of savagery perpetrated by world leaders on their own people as well as on neighboring nations. Additionally, acts of human depravity and carnage thrive in societies that pride themselves on being enlightened. Violence has even become a part of their cultures. Consider the following example:

The United States is technologically the most advanced nation in history, yet its streets are filled with violence. Whether it's inner city gangs resorting to murder in defense of “their territory,” or small, rural high schools being ripped apart by students acting out a cold blooded fantasy, America has become a nation of blood. And why should anyone be surprised? Violence is actually promoted in this country. Our music and movies actually pay tribute to murder. Even sporting events are punctuated by bench-clearing brawls and riots. Recently, a basketball game between the Indiana Pacers and the Detroit Pistons erupted into a scene that looked like a full blown battle between players and fans. But it doesn't end there.

In the United States, simulated killing has actually become a part of its recreation. One of the most popular video games marketed in this country encourages players to steal cars, fornicate with a prostitute, then kill the prostitute in order to retrieve the money paid for her “services.”

One mother who bought this game had the unmitigated gall to make the following assessment of her purchase: “I don't think it's wrong because that is not where my child learns morals.” When her 13-year-old son was interviewed regarding the game he said, “I think it's cool. It's the closest thing to killing someone without really doing it.”

Meanwhile as America teaches its young to treat murder as a game, Arab nations around the world teach their children to aspire to become “suicide bombers.” They actually sing songs in primary schools that proclaim the nobility of strapping on explosives and going out to kill those who don't embrace their “faith.”

President Ronald Reagan once said, "The world is a dangerous place." His words are tragic but true. When giving the Olivet Prophecy, Jesus described the last days as being similar to those that took place in the time of Noah. And the book of Genesis describes that period as a time when "the earth was filled with violence" (Gen. 6:11).