

A Spiritual Sense of Urgency Trumpets 2010

James Smyda
September 9, 2010

Well, good afternoon, everyone! I'd like to give a warm welcome to all of those who will be watching this message on DVD later. It's just recently been sent out across the world there.

Brethren, the Fall Holy Day Season is certainly a time that we all look forward to with great anticipation. In fact, one of the reasons for that is that the events that are pictured by the Fall Holy Days, for the most part, are things that when we look forward to them, when we even read about them, they're exciting. They're joyful events. They're things that we really look forward to and long to see them fulfilled.

The one exception of that really is kind of the Feast of Trumpets. And the reason I say that is because the Feast of Trumpets pictures the Day of the Lord. And when we look at the events of the Day of the Lord, they're the most cataclysmic, horrific, traumatic events that will ever take place in the history of mankind. They're not really events we look forward to with great anticipation to see them take place. We know it's a very necessary part of the Plan of God, but it tends to be a Day that when we really focus on the meaning of it, that really causes us to be sobered and sombered when we look at the meaning of what it pictures, and again, not something that we necessarily look forward to with joy and anticipation. It tends to be a very sobering event that also tends to make us look at ourselves and our own spiritual lives in the sense of urgency that we have for that.

And if you'd like a title for today's sermon, it's *A Spiritual Sense of Urgency*. Now as we get farther into the sermon today, it'll make more sense why I specifically call this *A Spiritual Sense of Urgency*. But again, if you'd like a title for this sermon, it's *A Spiritual Sense of Urgency*, because what we're going to talk about today is the Feast of Trumpets and the meaning of what it pictures. And again, later we'll get to why I call this *A Spiritual Sense of Urgency*.

So to start off with, let's go straight to Leviticus 23, a very common Scripture that we look at in the meaning of the Holy Days. We'll start off in Leviticus 23 and verse 1.

Leviticus 23:1. *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2) "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts.' (NKJ)*

God starts off making it very clear that these are His Feasts. These aren't just Days that He gave to ancient Israel for them to keep. These are God's Holy Days, His Feasts; He's commanding all of us to keep.

Let's just down to verse 4 and we'll kind of reiterate this same point. In verse 4, He says:

Leviticus 23:4. *These are the feasts of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim [on] their appointed times. (KJV)*

Again, these are God's Feasts. And He says, we "shall proclaim these at the appointed times." That's why typically on a Holy Day you hear a message specifically addressing the meaning of the Day and covering what it's about because we're commanded to proclaim these Days at their appointed times.

Now jump down to verse 23 where it specifically addresses the Feast of Trumpets. It says:

Leviticus 23:23. *Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 24) "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbathrest, a memorial of [the] blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation.*

25) 'You shall do no customary work on it; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD.'" (NKJ)

Now notice He calls this Day, "A Memorial of the Blowing of Trumpets." It's a Holy Day. We're commanded not to have to do any work on it. We're to keep it as a Sabbath, but it's particularly mentioned to be A Memorial of the Blowing of Trumpets.

Now to understand what this would mean to ancient Israel, we have to look at what they associated the sound of the blowing of a trumpet with. Again, as I mentioned, we tend to look at this Day as a very solemn sobering Day, but if we understand how they viewed the sound of a trumpet, we'll understand that they would have looked at it like this as well.

Turn with me over to Jeremiah chapter 4 and we'll look at, at that time, how they viewed the sound of a trumpet. Jeremiah chapter 4 and we're going to read verse 19. It says:

Jeremiah 4:19. *O my soul, my soul! I am pained in my very heart! My heart makes a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because you have heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. (NKJ)*

See the sound of a trumpet at that time was a warning signal. It was: "An army's about to invade! Calamity is coming! You take cover! You take appropriate action because disaster's about to happen!" To make it equivalent to kind of our everyday world, you could think of what the sound of a trumpet was for them, this wasn't a joyous sound that we're going to have a party. This was more like hearing a fire alarm or hearing a tornado siren, something just to equate it to our everyday lives. It's "You need to take cover or you need to run and get out of here! This place is about to burn down!" That's kind of how they would look at the sound of a trumpet. It's "Take warning! Take shelter! We're about to get attacked!" It was something that would cause a knot in your stomach. It would cause stress because you realize what it signifies.

Now turn with me over to Ezekiel chapter 33. We'll look at another passage that explains the same concept here. Ezekiel chapter 33 and we'll start reading in verse 1. It says:

Ezekiel 33:1. *Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying,*
2) *"Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and say to them: 'When I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from their territory and make him their watchman,*
3) *'when he sees the sword coming upon the land, if he blows the trumpet and warns the people,*
4) *'then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his own head.*
5) *'He heard the sound of the trumpet, but did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But he who takes warning will save his life.*
6) *'But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.'* (NKJ)

So again here, we're seeing this symbol of what was associated at that time. The blowing of a trumpet was an alarm. It was a sound of war. It was a warning to "Take cover; take appropriate action because you're about to be attacked. Something horrible is about to happen!" That was how they associated the sound of trumpets.

So if you can imagine, they had a Festival particularly for the Memorial of Blowing of Trumpets! They're going to think of this as a sobering Day, as a Day of warning them of impending calamity because that's how they associated the whole Day. And that's what it means for us too as we look at the meaning of the Day of the Lord and what this symbolizes.

Let's turn over to Revelation now and we'll look particularly at the prophecies fulfilling this Day, Revelation chapter 6 here.

The one thing we're going to find here as we go through this is that the number seven symbolizes completeness. It is something that God uses a lot in His Plan.

Just to look at the Holy Days in general, if you look at God's Holy Day Plan starting with Unleavened Bread and going through the Last Great Day, there are seven major High Days. There are seven Sabbaths that we have throughout those Holy Days that play out. If you look at the months in which they play out from Passover and Unleavened Bread all the way through the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day, all the Holy Days play out over a seven-month period. You see that number again. You'll see that in the Days of Unleavened Bread. There are seven Days of Unleavened Bread. And the Feast of Tabernacles is a seven-day Festival.

You'll also notice when we get into prophecy here there are seven seals that are unrolled as prophecy rolls out. In that seventh seal, we have the Day of the Lord, which is

comprised of seven trumpets. In that last seventh trumpet, we have seven last bowl plagues.

So you'll see the number seven plays out here numerous times as we go through the whole Plan here because seven symbolizes completeness.

Now what we're going to do is pick up here actually in Revelation 6 and verse 12. It's actually the sixth seal. Now this is the heavenly signs that actually come right before the Day of the Lord starts.

Now one of the reasons I start at this particular point is: Today in the Church of God, the greater Church of God throughout the world, there are a couple of groups and individuals and even organizations that are currently teaching that we are already in the Day of the Lord right now. That somehow this is already occurring. That the trumpets are already being blown, that's occurring right now. And what we're going to see as we read through this is that there's no way that this will sneak up on us. That when the come Day of the Lord upon the world, everyone's going to take note and everyone's going to know what's happening. We're told here right in these Scriptures.

So let's start reading here in Revelation 6 and verse 12 again. This is the sixth seal that precedes the Day of the Lord actually starting. It says:

Revelation 6:12. *I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood.*

13) *And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.*

14) *Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. (NKJ)*

Now notice the event that's just described here. This is an earthquake that shakes every mountain and every island! This is not a regional earthquake. This is the global earthquake that shakes the entire world! There's no way you can go through that and not notice that it took place. That doesn't slip past anybody!

You also notice that He talks about the sun being turned black like sackcloth, the moon looking like blood, the sky rolling up. These are events that everyone is going to take notice of. There's no way to miss this! And notice this is directly stated in the following verses here.

Pick up now in verse 15:

Revelation 6:15. *And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, 16) and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him*

*who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!
17) "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (NKJ)*

Now notice everyone, it says, on the planet takes notice! From kings down to slaves, every free man, everybody notices. Because again, how can you have a global earthquake and this massive events taking place and people not take notice? Everyone's going to notice that.

But notice also they're not questioning what's happening. They're not wondering "What's going on?" Everyone's going, "It's the Day of the Lord. It's all coming upon us." They know what's taking place!

How do they know that? Well, we can speculate here a little bit, but I admit, as you're going to see, it's not real wild speculation at all. The Bible tells us in other places—although we won't take the time to cover all the relative Scriptures—that the two witnesses will have already been on the scene for a couple of years prior to this event taking place. Now it tells us that they're going to be preaching and prophesying. It doesn't tell us all the details. But they're going to be preaching and being noticed by the world for a couple of years before this has happened. It makes great sense that they're going to be proclaiming that the Day of the Lord is going to be taking place. They're going to be telling the world that this is going to be taking place.

Now, again, this is speculation, but the way I personally picture this—and this is personal opinion—it's probably going to be very similar to what like Moses and Aaron did with ancient Egypt.

When they went to Pharaoh and warned him what was going to happen and each that there was a plague that took place, they announced. They said, "Look, next you're going to have frogs. Next you're going to have flies. And the firstborn are going to die." And they told him exactly what was going to happen. So when these things happened and they came about, nobody and the Pharaoh wasn't sitting there thinking, "Wonder how this happened!" He knew how it happened. Moses and Aaron had told him, "God's fixing to do this." And then when it happened, there was no question how it took place! He knew exactly what was taking place. God was bringing these plagues about.

That's how I would imagine the end's going to play out like this with the two witnesses letting people know, "This is exactly what's going to take place." So there's not really any question how this came about. And, again, it doesn't sneak up on anybody. Everybody knows what's happening.

So we can flip over now to chapter 8.

As I mentioned the Day of the Lord here, the seventh seal, is made up of seven individual trumpets. And we're kind of go through these. Now for time's sake, we're going to summarize a number of these events, to kind of give an overview of the events that take place here.

Now in the first four trumpets that play out here, these are primarily aimed at the world's ability to feed itself.

In the first trumpet, we have a hailstorm mixed with fire and blood. And it wipes out all of the grass on the planet. And it says, "One-third of the trees." Now if you think about that, if you wipe out all of the grass on the planet, that's going to wipe grain products—things like wheat, that's technically a grass. If you wipe out all the harvest for a year of all of those kinds of crops, you're going to effectively destroy food supplies significantly. Also if you wipe out one-third of the trees, you're knocking out fruit trees. You're going to have a lot more affected than just that, which are knocking out a lot of fruit as well.

In the second trumpet, we have one-third of the sea turning into blood. Now, as you can imagine, this is going to wipe out a significant amount of seafood because it can't live in pure blood. If one-third of it is turned into blood, you've knocked out one-third of the saltwater seafood supply of the planet. There are major societies today that, depending upon where they live, that's a major portion of their diet that's just been wiped out.

You get down to the third trumpet—this is in verse 10—we have one-third of the water, the fresh water, on the earth being poisoned—the rivers and the streams and such. And it says men are dying as a result of drinking the poisonous water. Well, in addition to that, animals and livestock that drink this water will die. And you can imagine plant life that's affected by this poisoned water will be affected as well. Again, we're having a massive effect on the planet in its ability to feed itself in poisoning people.

The fourth trumpet here, we pick up in verse 12. We have one-third of the light on the earth affected. It says one-third of the day and one-third of the night. Now, however exactly this is actually carried out, we wind up with about four hours of daylight taken away and about four hours of the moon's light at night being wiped out as well. Which you can imagine, with photosynthesis—if I can say the word right—the light is required for that to take place in plants; so, if you affect the sunlight, you're again affecting the world's ability to grow crops.

Now put all of this together, you basically wiped out one-third of the food supply to the planet.

Now today in the world, we have a number of areas in the world—specifically Africa is one that we're all familiar with—where there are currently famines and starvation and accompanying pestilence that comes with that that's going on right on right now. It has been for many years as a result of food supplies and again famine and starvation taking place there.

Now in this situation if you knocked out one-third of food supply to the entire planet, that's the equivalent of about two to three billion people, because right now there's between six and seven billion people on the planet today! So one-third of that, again, is over two billion people! If you wipe out the food supply to that many people, you're going to have a massive death toll!

You're going to have massive illness and starvation and, again, accompanying that is going to be pestilence. You're going to have famine and pestilence! You're going to have lots of disease epidemics that swipe through and kill a lot of people but that's what happens in areas where you have massive starvation. You have weakened people, weakened immune systems, and diseases that oftentimes wouldn't be fatal to people become fatal in those situations because of how compromised everyone's system is. That's what going to happen here. You're going to have massive death tolls!

Not to even imagine that if you have that much shortage of food supplies, you've got people fighting then over limited resources. So you wind up then with people with violence, and people killing one another just fighting over resources that are available.

Now notice pick up down in verse 13. It says:

Revelation 8:13. *And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!" (NKJ)*

Now notice even after given all that we've just described and devastation that's taken place, basically this angel's coming in saying, "Look, you haven't really seen anything yet. These next three, these are the Three Woes. What you've seen now is just getting started for what's going to take place."

Now if we drop down to chapter 9, we start off with the fifth trumpet. Now here we have—this is the angel of the bottomless pit (It's referring to Satan) is given power to torment men for five months. It says it's like the stinging pain of a scorpion. It's stinging men in terms of how it hurts and what it's like to go through. Now in this particular case, we don't have a death toll described. In fact, we have the opposite. It says "Men seek death and they can't find it." They're in so much agony they want to die! And they can't. There's a lot worse things in life than dying. There's living in agony! And that's what these individuals are doing. The rest of the planet then is suffering through this and they want to die and don't. That's far worse, again, than death.

You pick up down with the sixth trumpet. This chapter 9 verse 13 where this starts. We have events described here carried out by an army. This is the two-hundred-million-man-army. And, as a result of their actions, they bring about the death of one-third of mankind in the course of one hour! Now assuming that this is carried out physically, the only way that I know that this could be carried is through a nuclear war. That's the only way that mankind could wipe out two billion people, one-third of the planet, in the course of one hour. That's just the only way that that would be possible.

But we're still talking about, again, an incredible death toll that's taking place here. We have another two billion plus people all being wiped out. You put all this together this is going to wipe out about two-thirds of the planet with all of the plagues that take place up to this point! It's a massive death toll to think about.

But we also have to look at the bigger picture. I mentioned this was a very necessary part of the Plan of God. It's because the only way that God can start a totally new society is to wipe out what we currently have going. He's got to wipe the slate clean and start over. That's the only way to create a much better society and remove all of this is one of the reasons He's going through this.

Let's also notice the reaction of men as all this is playing out. Look down now to verse 20. This is Revelation 9 verse 20. This is after the million-man army has wiped out an additional third of mankind. It says:

Revelation 9:20. But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. 21) And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts. (NKJ)

Now realize throughout all of this it hasn't been a question for people as to what's happening. As we read to begin with, evenly as the heavenly signs take place, the whole planet knows the Day of the Lord's about to start. This is the wrath of God. And, as this has been playing out and the two witnesses have been telling people, "You need to repent because this is the wrath of God for all of our disobedience," still mankind is flagrantly disobeying God. They're not repenting at all. It's one of the reasons why this is necessary to basically just wipe the slate clean and just start over.

So let's move over to just briefly look at chapter 11. Now in chapter 11 verse 15, this is the blowing of the seventh trumpet. Now this is the one event that plays out on the Day of the Lord that we can say that we can really just look to with joy and anticipation. And that's the First Resurrection. Now it doesn't directly tell us here in this part of Revelation that resurrection takes place, but it tells us that it's the last trump. And if we put that together with 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4, we know that the First Resurrection takes place when that happens. And the firstfruits all get turned into spirit beings and are resurrected at that point.

Skip forward to chapter 16. We can look at the final seven last bowl plagues, which I mentioned are part of the seventh trumpet. It's a part of the series of sevens that plays out through the whole Holy Day Plan. And again, we're just going to kind of for time's sake summarize our way through a number of these.

Now the first bowl, we have malignant sores that are given to all those who have received the mark of the beast.

In the second and third bowls, these get very severe. We have basically all of the sea water and all of the fresh water on the planet all turn into blood! Now that's going to have a massive devastating effect! Now if you think about the first thing that happens here, fish can't live in pure blood. And that's what's going to happen here. The sea completely turns to blood as well as all the fresh water. So all marine life, all even fresh water life that's

there, is going to wind up very quickly dying. Not only that, you've just taken away the water supply for the planet. Human beings don't last very long like that. We can go without food for a while, but we can't go without having hydration. Without hydration for a while, people start dying in a hurry.

And again, this is on top of everything else that we've already described here. There's a cumulative effect playing out here. In addition, think about this. Animals and livestock, how long are they going to last without water to drink? With only blood to drink? How long is vegetation going to last in those kinds of situations. This is going to have a very massive effect on the planet that's going to play out here.

We get down to the fourth bowl. We have the heat of the sun turned up to the point it's scorching. It's scorching the earth. It's scorching the people! There are some very devastating things happening here.

And again jump down now to the seventh bowl. Here we have an earthquake that plays out.

Before I go there, let me actually finish up here in chapter 16 verse 9. Again, let's notice the reaction of men, of everyone who's not part of God's Family, as to how they're responding to these events playing out. In verse 9, it says:

Revelation 16:9. *And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory. (NKJ)*

You're going to notice there's a theme of this as this is all playing out. People are not repenting from this! They're rebelling against God!

Now again jumping down to the seventh bowl. Here we have an earthquake that is so severe it says, "It drowns all the islands." They all disappear. And it flattens the mountains. An earthquake that is so strong that it can do that—and it says it does it to all of them! This is a global earthquake. It's not regional to one particular area. It's affecting the entire planet.

And if it's so severe that it can drown islands and flatten all the mountains, you can pretty well guarantee there's no man-made structures that are going to survive through that! This is going to cause massive devastation. It's basically going to wipe out every building that we have. And obviously the way it's going to wind up drowning islands, massive tsunamis are going to take place here. People in coastal areas are just going to get drowned, get flooded by this.

And if you have an earthquake so severe it's knocking away mountains, I'm no scientist and I'm just wildly speculating here, but I wonder, "Can we even measure this thing on the Richter Scale?" An earthquake that is so severe that it can wipe out mountains! This is unprecedented in the devastation that's going to take place here!

Let's also notice the reaction of men. Let's jump here to chapter 16 verse 21.

Revelation 16:21. *And great hail from heaven fell upon men, [and every] hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great. (NKJ)*

And notice through the entire thing here mankind is rebelling against God through this whole thing as He's carrying out these plagues. Because one of the things we're also going to look at is until God grants people the ability to repent, they really can't truly repent. And that's one of the lessons we're going to look at later here.

But if we look at the extent of the devastation that has taken place here, it is really hard to fathom in our minds how severe this is going to be and what a massive effect this is going to have upon the earth. It's going to wind up looking very similar to the way the earth looked at the point of recreation when God said how wiped out it was when He had to start over and recreate it before creating Adam. Let's turn back over to Jeremiah chapter 4. And we'll see it described exactly in this fashion. Jeremiah chapter 4, this time we're going to start reading in verse 23.

Jeremiah 4:23. *I beheld the earth, and indeed it was without form, and void; and the heavens, they had no light. (NKJ)*

Now you notice that wording *without form and void* that's the exact same Hebrew words that are used in Genesis chapter 1 when it says, "And the earth became without form and void." And God had to do a recreation. The same thing is going to be pretty much the case when the Day of the Lord is done.

Now if we pick up again here in verse 24:

Jeremiah 4:24. *I beheld the mountains, and indeed they trembled, and all the hills moved back and forth.
25) I beheld, and indeed there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens had fled.
26) I beheld, and indeed the fruitful land was a wilderness, and all its cities were broken down at the presence of the LORD, by His fierce anger. (NKJ)*

In other words, as of the wrath of God; this is as a result of the Day of the Lord taking place is what he's telling us here.

But now notice in verse 27.

Jeremiah 4:27. *For thus says the Lord: "The whole land shall be desolate; yet I will not make a full end. (NKJ)*

In other words, He's not going to completely wipe everyone out even though it's going to be a massive death toll. The vast majority of the population on the planet will be dead by the time that this is done. Everyone's not going to be destroyed. There's still going to be

people left. Again, we can only speculate at the numbers, but maybe a few hundred million survive out of the six to seven billion that we have alive today. The vast majority of mankind winds up destroyed, but as He says, not everybody. There are still people left when Christ returns.

Picking up in verse 28:

Jeremiah 4:28. *For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black, because I have spoken. I have purposed and will not relent, nor will I turn back from it. (NKJ)*

Now notice that God's telling us up front that this is absolutely going to happen. "I'm not going to change My mind. I'm not going to change these events. This is something that's necessary and has to take place."

If you look back at our history in the Church of God—and I'm thinking particularly back in the sixties and seventies is what comes to my mind—there were times that some in the Church, even in Church leadership, kind of naively thought at times—and again I realize this was totally out of positive intentions. I'm not putting them down. I'm just saying but—at times we thought if we really do a great job in preaching the gospel and reaching out to the world that maybe we can get enough people on earth to repent and to turn to God and maybe the Day of the Lord won't have to happen. Maybe enough people will repent and change and we won't have to go down this road and have these events take place.

Well, as you can see here, God stated straightforward, "That's not the case. These events have to happen. This is absolutely going to take place." And He states here boldly, "I'm not going to change My mind. I'm not relenting from this. This has to happen. I've willed this to be the case that has to take place." Because see the point here in all of this is we can't repent without God granting us the ability to do so. That's something He has to open our minds and allow us the ability to do that. We can't physically on our own, turn to God. That's not how it works.

So, when we look at the meaning of this Day and the very sobering, sombering events that we're looking forward to in the meaning of this day, we realize that the rest of mankind can't really repent. They can't look at this. In fact, even while they're going through this and experiencing these events, they're not going to be repenting from it. But we in the Church of God, who God is working with and has opened our minds, can have a very different reaction to all of this. And we should have a very different reaction to all of this.

Let's take a look at what Peter tells us our reaction to this should be. Now turn with me over to the Book of 2 Peter. 2 Peter chapter 3 and we're going to start reading in verse 10. It says:

2 Peter 3:10. *But the day of the Lord (NKJ)*

Now the Day that we're picturing here in the Feast of Trumpets.

2 Peter 3:10. *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*
11) *Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness. (NKJ)*

He's saying, knowing the knowledge of these events should cause us to take a look at ourselves at how well we're living our Christian lives.

Picking up in verse 12:

2 Peter 3:12. *looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?*
13) *Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for [the] new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (NKJ)*

In other words, as we look at the meaning of this Day and we look at what this is about and look at the prophecies that again are very sobering and sombering as we look forward to them, it should cause us to take pause and look at how seriously we're taking our spiritual lives. That's what he's telling us.

Now Paul gives us a similar warning if we look over in Romans chapter 13. It's Romans chapter 13 and we'll start reading in verse 11. It says:

Romans 13:11. *And do this, 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.*
12) *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.*
13) *Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in [licentiousness and] lewdness, not in strife and envy.*
14) *But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. (NKJ)*

He's saying when we know that we're coming to the end that we should be making use of the time. That we should wake up out of sleep. We should take a look at ourselves and take our spiritual lives very seriously. It should be something that makes us take a look at our own sense of urgency.

Now we're all familiar when we look at the prophecies of the end time that we oftentimes talk about the subject of a sense of urgency. Of how well we're doing? How seriously are we taking it? What actions are we taking in our personal lives to respond to this? Because we know that the Bible tells us to watch. It tells us to be aware and to be watching as we're coming towards the end. But let's look at this particular subject and maybe see something that we might have missed in the past of what we should really be watching for.

Now Christ tells us in the Olivet Prophecy, if we look at all three accounts in Matthew, Mark and Luke that are parallel accounts laid out, if we put them altogether, there are seven different times in seven different occurrences throughout those books in the Olivet Prophecy where Christ gives us the command, "To watch." And He tells it in the context of, again, end time events and such. But let's take a look at all of those seven occurrences in the context and realize, "What really was Christ telling us to watch?"

So let's take a look at these and let's start first of all in the Book of Matthew, in Matthew chapter 24. Matthew chapter 24 and verse 42, it says:

Matthew 24:42. *"Watch therefore, for you do not know [the] hour your Lord is coming. (NKJ)*

Now let's skip over to Matthew chapter 25 verse 13 because we're just going to read through all the Scriptures where these seven commands "To watch" are listed. Again Matthew 25 and verse 13, it says:

Matthew 25:13. *"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming. (NKJ)*

Now let's move over to Mark chapter 13. Mark chapter 13 and we're going to pick up in verse 33. Now in the next four verses here, we're going to read through four different occurrences of this command "To watch." It's mentioned four times here in the next four verses. It says:

Mark 13:33. *"Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. 34) "It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. 35) "Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning— 36) "lest, coming suddenly, he [finds] you [asleep]. 37) "And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!" (NKJ)*

Now let's also move over to the Book of Luke. Luke chapter 21 and we're going to pick up in verse 34. It says:

Luke 21:34. *"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. 35) "For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36) "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." (NKJ)*

Now if you noticed as we went through all seven of these occurrences, every single one of them either directly stated or was in the context of "You're not going to know the timing, so therefore you need to be watching." That's basically kind of how it's presented. So

oftentimes the way we look at that is, "Well, you're not going to know the timing. So, we need to be watching world events so we can figure out the timing" is basically kind of how the logic goes. And it's oftentimes been taught and I've heard it most all of my life, "Well, what we need to be watching? Well, that's Europe and the Middle East. We need to be watching political events there and watching for specific prophetic events to come about there and watching world news and what's going on in our world in politics and things of that nature."

Now I'm going to ask you, "Is that really what Christ was telling us to do when He wrote these things?"

Now we can reveal the meaning of this just by looking at the Greek words Christ used when He told us "To watch." There are two different Greek words that Christ used when He used these commands "To watch." One of them is used five times and one of them is used two times.

The first one is the Greek word *gregoreuo*. It's spelled *g-r-e-g-o-r-e-u-o*. Again it's used five times and it's Strong's number 1127.

Now the definitions I'm going to use are going to be out of The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament by Spiro Zodhiates. On this word *gregoreuo* Zodhiates has quite an extensive write up on it. So what I'm going to do is just quote from several excerpts from it but you'll kind of get the idea of where he's going with this definition. Again, Zodhiates defines *gregoreuo* with the following. It says:

To watch, to refrain from sleep ... It denotes attention to God's revelation or to the knowledge of salvation ...; a mindfulness of threatening dangers which, with conscious earnestness and an alert mind, keeps one from all drowsiness and all slackening in the energy of faith and conduct It denotes the caution needed against anxiety resulting from the fear of the loss of one's salvation ...; the worry over salvation and preservation of others ...; the general attitude of alertness on the part of the Christian believer in view of actual or imminent tests of his spiritual life. Watchfulness or watching indicates that the Christian is alert or vigilant in order to defend himself against a spiritual foe. He is properly prepared for any surprise or sudden change in his circumstances and, above all, in order that his fellowship with God in prayer may be undistracted.

Now if you look at that definition, it's pretty clear what Christ was saying. He wasn't saying, "Watch Middle East and Europe."

Now don't get me wrong. I'm not saying, "Bury your head in the sand and never keep up with the news or things of that nature or ignore the world around us." I'm not suggesting that.

I'm saying that when Christ told us "To watch" He wasn't saying "Watch world events." What He was telling us to watch, we're not going to find on Fox News or CNN or CNBC

or whatever news source that you're looking to. He was telling us, "To watch our spiritual condition, to make sure that our spiritual house was in order." That's what He's telling us.

If we look at the second definition, it's right along with the same thing. Two times this other word is used. The word is *agrupneo*. It's *a-g-r-u-p-n-e-o*. Again, it's used twice in these seven occurrences we read through. It's Strong's number 69. And Zodhiates defines it as:

To abstain totally from sleep, to watch, wake, be awake; spiritually to be watchful and attentive to spiritual things.

It's very clear when you look at these definitions what Christ is telling us. He's telling us "To be aware of our own spiritual lives," making sure that our spiritual life is in order. Because if you noticed in the context of everything He said was "You're not going to know the time. So you need to be watching." He states it very boldly. "You aren't going to know the time. So you need to make sure your spiritual house is in order. So you're not caught by surprise."

But also think of it like this. Christ stated these words in the first century. And they were recorded soon afterwards and they have been canonized and preserved for every generation of the Church of God since then.

Now we can prove from the Bible the apostle Paul and those in his time thought Christ was going to return in their time. Just read 1 Thessalonians 4. He says, "And we who are alive at His return shall meet Him in the air." So Paul thought at the time he wrote that he was going to live till Christ returned. And he was off by about—what? About two thousand years!

It didn't matter the fact that he was off though. And again I think probably most every generation of the Church of God since the time he wrote that has believed they've lived in that time as well. And I personally believe God intended it to be like that. He intended us to have a sense of urgency because He knows we think physically, we're motivated physically, and we needed that to keep us on track.

Well, you know what? It didn't matter that Paul was off by about two thousand years because the clock stopped for Paul about two thousand years ago as well, the day he died.

Because you see it doesn't matter exactly when Christ returns for the entire world. What really matters is how much time do you and I have left? Because we can only qualify for our salvation—we certainly don't earn it. It's a gift from God, but He requires us to endure and to obey Him. We can only do that with the time that we have in our lives. And we have to take that with a great sense of urgency in our overcoming because we don't know how much time we have left. Again, and that's a separate issue from exactly when is Christ going to return.

And don't make the mistake of thinking, "I'm young. I've got plenty of time left." Let me tell you from experience. You can be in your thirties and you can suddenly find out that you're terminally ill. You can find out in June and you can be dead in September. Don't make the mistake of thinking you're young and you don't have to take this seriously! Because you can be dead in ten weeks and two days! I've watched it happen.

We all need to take the time that we have very seriously because it's not an issue of exactly when Christ returns. The issue is: "How much time do we have left?" And what we need to be watching for is in making sure that our spiritual house is in order, because, as I'm about to show you, the pursuit of knowing exactly the timing of when Christ is going to return is not going to give us anything. That information has been withheld. We aren't going to figure it out.

Now again, let me state for the record before I go down this road. Do I believe that we're living in the last days? Yes, I do! Do I believe that the vast majority of us hearing this message will likely live to see these prophecies fulfilled? Yes, I personally do believe that! But again, I think that's a separate issue from our own sense of urgency, because the issue is how much time we personally have left. But I don't think we should spend our primary effort watching world events trying to nail down the exact timing because that's not going to take us anywhere. And let me show you why I say that.

Turn back over to Matthew chapter 24. Matthew chapter 24 and verse 36:

Matthew 24:36. *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. (NKJ)*

What Christ is telling us is God the Father has determined for Himself that this information is on a "need to know" basis, and He's determined that nobody else needs to know. And He's withheld it from us and from everyone else. Now notice here in this Scripture, He tells specifically that the angels of heaven have been withheld from this information. Let's notice who else has.

Turn with me over to Mark chapter 13 and verse 32.

Mark 13:32. *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (NKJ)*

Now notice He includes Himself in this one. He says, "Not even the Son." Not even Himself! He's the Number Two Power in the universe. He's the God of the Old Testament and He's declaring here that He doesn't know.

Now let's address one other argument. Before I say this, let me mention that this is an argument I've actually used in my life before. I've said this many times until I studied this better. And it mentions here the day or the hour. A lot of times and again I've even said these words: "That well, He's only talking about the exact hour, the exact day. That's all

that's been withheld. That doesn't mean we can't figure out the week, the month and the year." Well, let's examine that logic.

Turn with me over to Acts chapter 1. Acts chapter 1 and we'll start reading in verse 6. It says:

Acts 1:6. *Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (NKJ)*

Now notice what the question is. It's: "When are you going to set up the Kingdom, Lord? When are all these prophecies You told about going to be fulfilled?"

In verse 7, He says:

Acts 1:7. *And He said to them, "It is not for you to know (KJV)*

Now notice the wording!

Acts 1:7b. *times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. (NKJ)*

Notice that's broader than day and hour! He's saying that the timing of these events. The timing of when this takes place, the Father has kept to Himself and He has not shared. In other words, He's saying "He hasn't even shared this with Me! He hasn't told anybody when this is going to take place. So, that's not going to be given to you."

Now think about that. If Christ Himself didn't know, why do we think we're going to figure it out?

And also think of it like this. Now at least once a year, I get an e-mail that's kind of been mass distributed across the internet and it's typically sending it to as large a group as possible. And the subject of it is: "Someone has figured out exactly when end time events are going to play out. They figured out when Christ is going to return." And they've sent their treatise basically articulating their argument for how it's going to be. And so often what they're basing their argument on is the Old Testament prophets. It's from Isaiah and Ezekiel and Jeremiah and Daniel and Minor Prophets and such.

Now logically think that one through. As of the Book of Mark and Acts, Jesus Christ Himself is saying, "I don't even know this information."

Now obviously there's a point where the Father has to share that with Him. And that may have already happened before now. We don't know, but we know at least as of the Book of Acts, Christ was saying He didn't know.

What do we also know about Jesus Christ? He's the God of the Old Testament. He even said in the New Testament, "I came to proclaim the Father because nobody knew about Him before." Because Jesus Christ Himself was who all the Old Testament prophets and

who Abraham and Moses and everybody else interacted with. So, He's the Guy that inspired all the Old Testament prophets what to write. He's the One that told them what to include in their books.

How could He have inspired them to write information that He didn't have Himself? You can't give information to somebody else that you don't have yourself. And Christ makes it very clear to us that at the time they were writing all those books, He didn't know. He couldn't have told them how to include that information in their books and write it because He didn't have it! There's no way that that could have happened.

He's also said that information has been withheld from us. It's not given for us to know.

Now, again, arguments have been made. And again, I personally made them in the past. I'll completely plead guilty to it. Maybe that was just as of at that time, but we at the end, we could figure out because, of course, maybe Christ would have been told by now and maybe we could know as well. Well, I'm going to suggest to you to today that we can prove from the Bible that all the way up to the point of us fleeing to the Place of Safety, we still won't know!

Now we know logically from things included in the Bible that once we get to like the abomination of desolation set up, the armies surrounding Jerusalem, the daily sacrifices stopped, we know from the Olivet Prophecy there's 1290 days left from there until the resurrection. We can put that together from Daniel. But up until, again, these things start playing out. I don't believe we're going to know. And let me show you why I say that.

Turn with me over to Matthew chapter 24. We covered some of these Scriptures before, but we're just going to kind of go through this again. It's Matthew chapter 24. We're going to start again in verse 36.

Matthew 24:36. *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. (NKJ)*

But notice also as we go through this set of Scriptures here, we're going to keep hearing it emphasized again and again and again—"You don't know. You will not know." That's stated again in almost every verse!

Matthew 24:37. *"But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*

38) *"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,*

39) *"and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will [be] the coming of the Son of Man.*

40) *"Then two will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left.*

41) *"Two will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. (NKJ)*

And we're about to look at these Scriptures in greater detail. We normally correlate these accounts here with information about fleeing to the Place of Safety because we put it together with Luke 17—which we're about to look with as well, which is a parallel account. But I'm jumping ahead of myself here.

Let's jump down to verse 42.

Matthew 24:42. *"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. 43) "But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would [have] come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. 44) "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect [Him]. (NKJ)*

Now notice first of all the theme there. Again and again and again it said, "You're not going to know. You've got to paying attention. You've got to be spiritual ready because you're not going to know!"

Now notice also, as I mentioned, it says "Two are in the field" and "Two are grinding at the mill, and one is taken." We normally associate those Scriptures with fleeing to the Place of Safety. And I think that's an accurate interpretation there. (And again, we're about to look, in a minute here, at Luke 17).

But let me share with you something about these particular Scriptures that a friend of mind taught me. I have a good friend of mine who's a farmer. And he kind of helped me understand the context of these particular Scriptures, something I would have never grasped if he hadn't pointed it out to me.

See I'm like a lot of people in America. I work in an office. I work in a cubicle every day and I get a paycheck every two weeks. And that's probably true of most of America these days. You get a paycheck every week or every two weeks or maybe once a month. But there's a fairly quick turn around from the time that you do the job to the time that you get compensation for it. It tends to happen like that.

It doesn't work like that for farmers. Farmers get paid at harvest time. And, as my friend explained it to me, he said, "The things that I needed for sustenance today, to get me by today," he goes, "I did that work months ago." He said that happened several months ago. He said, "And the work that I'm doing today," he said, "I'm going to get paid for that several months down the road. You know when we get to harvest time. So I'm always looking several months out."

Well after explaining this to me, he mentioned to me, "Have you ever noticed in this Scripture it says, 'The two are out in the field.'" He said, "They're farmers and they're out working in the field." He said, "I can tell you from experience being a farmer," he said, "If they thought they were soon going to be fleeing, if they had some advanced warning and thought, 'In the coming weeks or month or two, I'll like to be fleeing and I'm going to the Place of Safety. And earth's going to be destroyed by the time it's done anyway.'" He

goes, "I'm not going to waste my time out in the field working. What's the point?" He goes, "There's no benefit of it until you get to harvest time and you're not going to be around at harvest time anyway!" He said, "So it wouldn't make any sense." He said, "Obviously, they didn't have any advanced warning."

Well, let's turn over to Luke chapter 17 and look at the parallel account here. Luke chapter 17 and we're going to start reading in verse 31.

Luke 17:31. *"In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not*
32) *turn* *back.*
Remember *Lot's* *wife.*
33) *"Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.*
34) *"I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will*
be *left.*
35) *"Two will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left.*
36) *"Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left."*
37) *And they answered and said to Him, "Where, Lord?" So He said to them, "Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together." (NKJ)*

Again this gives us a little more detail, but as we mentioned, we normally always teach this—and again, I think this is accurate—that this is referring to fleeing to the Place of Safety. It mentions that it's talking about the end time in the sense of urgency here. And again, notice again, we have farmers out in the field working, which they wouldn't be doing if they thought there was advance notice.

But notice something else that takes place here.

A common idea that's been taught in the Church of God—and I know; I grew up in the Church all my life and I've heard again and even said these things—is the idea that there'll be some kind of organized effort to flee to the Place of Safety. In other words, when it comes time to go that somehow the Church leadership will get out the word to people and there'll be some organization and coordination in how people are going to get there.

Now if you think about these Scriptures in the reality of the setting it lay's out, that is logistically impossible for there to be any coordinated effort. For there even to be any coordination in getting the word out that it's time to go. So don't ever think, "Hey! Well, as long as I'm in the right group," or "as long I'm following this particular leader," or "I'm following this particular pastor," or whoever, "that they're going to tell me when it's time to go. And I can just follow them and trust them. And they'll tell me when it's time to go and I can follow that." I'm going to show you that is logistically impossible!

Now notice when it says here: if you're on the housetop, you have to leave in such a sense of urgency that even if you're right there next to the house, you can't down in the house and get your stuff. If you're out in the field, you can't turn around and go back to

the house. You just have to go. You just have to drop and run. Now think about the sense of urgency that that takes.

Now for there to be a coordinated effort—now think about this—if Church leadership is somehow going to get the word and then warn everybody, even outside of the issue of getting maybe several ministers together to agree upon "It's time to go," and to get the word out. Let's just look at the logistics of trying to warn people.

If you're going to try to do for example a sermon tape, let me just use an example here. What we're watching right now is a sermon tape that most of the people who are seeing this are going to be watching this on the Feast of Trumpets on September 9, 2010. This sermon was actually recorded on August 21, 2010. The reason being: to give time for the mailing and the duplication and the distribution to get to everyone in time. It was purposely filmed two and a half weeks in advance to allow time for distribution because that's the reality of it. Of course, in this case, this is being filmed in Texas. And it has to then be sent out to Washington and duplicated from there. But even if you remove that from the scenario, just to tape a message, to give it, to have it planned, to film it, to duplicate it, to print out all of the envelopes and the addresses and such, to stamp them all and then put them in the mail and allow mail time. Can you do that under a sense of urgency that's so urgent that if you're standing next to your house—you're standing on top of it—you can't even go inside and grab your stuff? There's no way that could play out.

There's no way you could do a member letter. It requires the same thing. You couldn't even do something as expedient, as you might say, writing a mass e-mail. Because you can press "enter" and send that out to a whole bunch of people instantaneously, but it takes time to write it. And again if you're not in the house, where's the laptop? It's back in the house where all the addresses are and you can't go back there. Biblical instructions forbid it.

Think about the sense of urgency that has to play out here. There's no way that that's going to happen. It's logistically impossible. There's no way there's going to be a coordinated effort because everybody finds out like this. There's no way that's going to take place.

There's now way you can do physical preparations for it. Sometimes people think, "Well, I'm going to be totally prepared and I'm going to have my house in order." In fact, I'm not picking on anyone in using this example. I'm just picking this because I've known a number of people in my lifetime who literally thought this. They literally had a bag packed. They literally packed their suitcase and thought, "I've got my stuff together. I'm going to be able; as soon as the word comes, I'm going to grab my bag and go." Well, according to Biblical instructions where you're not even allowed to go back into the house even you're right there next to it, unless you're going to have that bag on you 24/7 everywhere you go from this day forward until this prophecy is fulfilled, in all probability it will do you no good. Because think about it!

The scenarios describe "Two are in the field ... Two are grinding at the mill." They were at their jobs. And the Biblical instructions are they can't come back from the field and go back to the house. That's not allowed. That's specifically forbidden. It even uses the example, "Remember, Lot's wife!" You remember what happened to her. She turned around and looked back. She got turned into a pillar of salt. God took that very seriously. "Follow these instructions."

Unless that bag is with you, if it's back at the house, it's not going to do you any good. And the example it gives on the rooftop, unless you carried the suitcase up there with you on the ladder—I'm being ridiculous at this point, but just to follow the logic here—unless you carried it with you upon the roof, you can't go back in the house to get it!

The point being here is we can't rely on ourselves. We're not going to be smart enough to figure it out. We're not going to out-think God. We're not going to be so smart that we come up with information that Jesus Christ Himself didn't have. We're not going to be able to make physical preparations so that our socio-economic status that we've had in this life is going to pay off for us and because we were wealthy and we could make physical preparations ahead of time that we're going to come out better than everybody else. That's just not going to happen.

We're going to have to spiritually prepare to have our spiritual life in order to have a good relationship with God and Jesus Christ and depend upon them to take care of the rest. That's why He says repeatedly, "You don't know when the time is. So you're going to have to take preparations to make sure you're watching spiritually and your spiritual house is in order." Because that's the only thing that's going to save us!

Nothing physically! Our organization's not going to do it. Watching world news is not going to do it. Again, I'm not saying, "Bury your head in the sand and don't pay attention to what's going on in the world around us." But I'm saying, "If you think that's watching and that's going to take care of you, it's not.

The only thing that's going to take care of us is making sure our face is in this Bible, that we're following God, and that our heart is right, and that we're living a right spiritual life. That's the only thing that's going to take care of us. And that's going to do us well regardless of whether the end comes in our lifetime or not. Because again, the clock can stop when you don't expect it! And your spiritual life, you either made it or you didn't depending upon what you did with the time you had. And it doesn't matter whether you physically live to see Christ return or not or if you meet Him in the air after you're resurrected. You still made it.

So, Brethren, as we look at these events and we see the sobering and sombering events of the Day of the Lord, we definitely need to have a great sense of urgency, but it needs to be *A Spiritual sense of Urgency!*