

How Many Wars?

We are in the Beginning of the End Events

John W. Ritenbaugh

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My focus today in this commentary is going to be on a very short portion of Matthew 24, one that you're very familiar with. I believe that we can confidently say that the overall focus of Jesus' prophetic comments here in Matthew 24 is an admonition to His disciples, regardless of when they are living, to be alert and prepared. His comments begin by general being general in nature, and they become more specific as He moves through what is now Chapter 24.

Matthew 24:6 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.

I believe it is a fact that He is telling us that these first comments here at the beginning of the chapter are merely indicators that we are getting closer to His return. Verse 8 really nails this because He says there that "all these are the beginning of sorrows." These signs right at the beginning are similar to the first sure signs that a birth has begun, in this case the birth of the Kingdom of God. They might be compared to Braxton Hicks pangs that signal that a baby has dropped or is just about ready to drop into the birth canal.

It is a fact that almost any given time in the history of mankind, wars are being fought somewhere on earth. I read at one time that historians have calculated that in the 6000 years of man's recorded history, only 200—right around there; not an exact number—have been totally free of war anywhere on Earth.

Back to the Braxton Hicks. Now, it is true that there are false Braxton Hicks signals, that is, that the pangs occur sometimes somewhat prematurely, even though the baby is not ready. Thus, there are almost always some wars. So how can wars be a sign that this birth of the Kingdom of God is imminent? I believe that Jesus is also telling us that there will not only be wars as usual—they've always occurred—but a dramatic increase in the number occurring, and that's what is significant.

There is one other important factor that I believe must be added to this picture. This series of events must occur. I'm talking about the series of events in Matthew 24, but especially these ones here at the beginning. This series of events must occur at a time when the disciples can hear of them. So in other words, these things must occur at a time in history of worldwide, rapid communication.

It must be this way, because when Jesus spoke this prophecy, all the disciples were in one small area. However, since Christ's death and resurrection, the Christian church—and thus its disciples—have spread all over the entire Earth. Each person in Christ must be kept as alert as possible, and God has supplied the need so that no one has an excuse to not be alert. Today, because of electronic communication and especially because of the World Wide Web and satellite communication, we hear of events almost immediately, even as they begin. This past month contains is a good example with the disturbances that broke out in Tunisia, Egypt and now Bahrain.

Let's shift gears just a bit and come back to the United States America. It has been at war, seeming constantly, during these past 20 years, but it hasn't always been this way. Until the last 20 years or so in all of our history, to this point—we will say roughly about 1990-1991—the United States of

America has only been involved in nine wars: The War of Independence, the War of 1812, the Mexican American War, the Civil War—I'm advancing right through history—the Spanish American War, the First World War, the Second World War, the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

Those nine wars are spread over 210 years. That averages out to one war every 23 years and four months. Twice in our history, the period of peace has been much longer than 23 years. Between the end of the War of 1812 and the beginning of the Mexican American War was 33 years. That was also the number of years between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of the Spanish American War—again, 33 years. Interesting number.

But then a dramatic change began to take place. We're just about to turn into the 20th century. Between the end of the Spanish American War and our entrance into World War I was only 17 years. From the end of World War I to our entrance in World War II, it was again 23 years. But from the end of World War II until the beginning of the Korean War, it was only six years. And then from the end of the Korean War to the beginning of the Vietnam War, it was only eight years. From the end of the Vietnam War to the beginning of the Persian Gulf War, it was 16 years. But in those 16 years, tensions between nations were so intense that that period of time is called the Cold War.

Are you aware that, with the exception of the Civil War (which was a bloody family fight), we have been involved in only one war which we fought by ourselves? In every other war, we were allied with another nation or two. The one war that we fought alone was the Spanish-American War, which was over almost before it began.

There are wars—many wars—that are now going on and are officially listed now as "operations", though they may be referred to as wars in the media. These operations are under the auspices of the United Nations and involve many nations, but in most, America has borne the brunt of the deaths and the other costs. See if you remember any of these: Operation Urgent Fury was in Grenada. Operation Just Cause was in Panama. Operation Desert Storm in Iraq. Operation Restore Hope in Somalia. I should have given you the dates that was 1993. Operations in Europe—I bet that you've almost forgotten about that—were fought all through the 1990s in Bosnia. Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan. We got into that one in 2001, and we are still there. Operation Iraqi Feed Freedom in 2003, and it officially continues to the present.

How many wars are going on right now? According to Answers.com,

If you can't all current conflicts where hostilities are still present and conflicts that have ceased hostilities but are still unresolved, there are approximately 41. [Are you hearing of wars and rumors of war?] This includes the obvious conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as conflicts like the Korean War [between North and South Korea] that have ceasefires in place but are still unresolved, and the two sides still stare at each other over a gun barrel.

Brethren, do you need convincing that we are indeed witnessing the fulfilling of Jesus' prophecy, and that we indeed are living at the beginning of sorrows, and that the march toward the end and the fulfilling of the remainder of Jesus' prophecy is literally underway right now? How strong of a sign do we need?