

Don't Be Indifferent

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I want you to turn to Daniel the 12th chapter and in verse 4. This is a very familiar scripture for many of us. (My age has a little bit to do with the beginning.)

Daniel 12:4 [he says] "But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."

Most of the time we spend our time expounding upon the last third of that scripture, and I am going to do the same thing because the words were closed and sealed, the book was shut up, but we do have a bit of a prophecy there that says that many shall run to and fro. There are two angles that we can go with "running to and fro" because there are those scholars who say that the running to and fro can be done simply in one's mind. In other words, perusing things through one's mind of things that have happened in the past. Then again, there are other scholars who say that it literally means a running to and fro.

Either one will apply depending upon the subject that is being used by the pastor. My take here is to divide the two up and I am going to use them both. I said that my age is going to have a bit to do with the opening of this because I have gotten old enough to where I can look back on a life that is now almost 87 years. And I can look back further than that in the books that I read, magazines, and so forth. I can read some of those things with a measure of envy for those people who lived at that time, 150 to 200 years ago. Life was busy for them, but I am sure that because many of the everyday chores that are now carried out, performed, by time-and-energy saving machines, those people were busy. I am sure that they were busy in Abraham's day, and before Abraham people were then busy doing things as well. And I have come to the conclusion, just in thinking about this and the state of the world as it is right now, that I do not think that the time and work-

saving machinery has really, in one sense, done us any good. We just turned our attention to the time and work-saving machines and we use the time using them.

But those people did have a life that was far more labor intensive and there was much that they did by hand. If they had to go to the store, it was a time consuming horse and buggy affair, especially if they lived outside of town. Almost every meal had to be prepared from scratch. Hearing of news events going on in the community and in the county, state, and nation was rare because there was no radio, no television. In fact, there was no electricity!

Radio did not come on the scene even in the United States until 1921. And the first radio station broadcast (this was in Pittsburgh, by the way), was election results. That was the first broadcast over a station that reached out into a general area. Incidentally, I do not know whether you are aware of this, but the second station opened in the United States was WBT here in Charlotte, North Carolina. So I have been associated where radio was opened up in 1921, and then just a little bit later the same year in Charlotte. And a radio had a great deal to do with Evelyn's and my conversion. In fact, it led to it directly. But now we use it for news. Then they did not even have a newspaper.

There were no beauty salons. You could not dash off to a movie theater for diversion. Social life at that time, 150 to 200 years ago, centered on the local church and school. And those events were infrequent. Your next door neighbor may very well have lived at least a mile or so away.

I believe that the labor saving of modern technology has been very greatly overvalued. I think we need to face it honestly, that they have not made our character any better nor have they really saved us anything but time-consuming hand labor. But those things keep on advancing and I think that might be one of the things that is covered here in Daniel 12:4. I do not believe that we have even saved a great deal of time because we just use it elsewhere. In many cases, the time that we have saved with machinery is not used for any practical improvements of the mind. And most of the time I believe that we have filled it with vain entertainments that tend to separate us from something much more valuable and that is the other members of your family.

We are spending very much time running to and fro in the automobile apart from one another, listening to inane music, or trying to keep in touch with what is going on in the world through the news broadcast coming from a media source that is so heavily liberally slanted it is almost absolutely impossible to be trusted for accuracy.

Now, I worry probably far more than I should at this busy way of life that we pursue here in the United States of America which has a way of making us indifferent to focusing on things that are of far, far greater value. And I fear that I see confirmation of this in God's Word. I do not know whether you are aware, but He consistently shows that as a cultural crisis approaches, the people you read of in the Bible are inexplicably indifferent to the more important preparations that they should be making. He cries out; He cries out through His prophets and nothing changes. Surely they can see that something is going on in the land that is not good. Even as we are very well aware of it today in what we see on television and what we hear of on our radio.

What do we hear? It is not good news. Nothing is really improving except the quality of machinery. But what about people? The people are degenerating and so as we improve mechanically, we degenerate spiritually. That seems to be a lesson that we can learn as time goes on. I think that the character in the people of the United States, since those who preceded us in this 150 to 200 year period that I am talking about, has degenerated. I mean, it has degenerated so much we can see it in the streets, we hear of it daily of what is taking place here in America.

Well, the thought occurred to me several times in preparing this sermon, that there is probably more about Trumpets written in the Bible than any other holy day. We just heard a string of things that involved the times of the end and leads up to what Trumpets is about from David's [Grabbe] sermonette ["The Sixth Seal and Israel"]. Indeed, I have gone this far with my thinking that there may be more written about Trumpets than all the other holy days *combined*. Approximately one-third of the Bible is prophecy. And it is, I think, fairly likely that between 70 and 80 percent of that one-third concerns what Trumpets is all about. So it is going to be a time that is jam-packed with very critical things that will be occurring in the entire world.

Let us turn now away from Daniel, and go all the way back to the beginning of the book to Leviticus. We began in Leviticus 23:23 this morning, and we are going to go right back to that because there is one word that I want to pick out there.

Leviticus 23:23-24 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation.'"

What I wanted to bring to your attention, it is not a critical attention at all, but Trumpets is not only about end time events. That comes as a surprise to many of us, I believe, since that is what we usually talk about in regard to Trumpets. It says there right at the beginning, that Trumpets is a memorial. Now, memorials commemorate, they preserve the memory of an event or events that has already occurred so that we remember that event as important to the history that helped form our national personality and maybe our character and personality and culture to this very day.

I do not know the answer to this question. Maybe you do. I will put it out to you. What is that memorial? A memorial commemorates something that happened in the past and yet we are keeping Trumpets every year, every time it comes up as something that is yet off in the future. But right at the beginning, God says it is also something else. It is a memorial. That is what memorials do, they commemorate something that happened in the past.

Now, here we are in Leviticus, right at the beginning of the Book. What happened before Leviticus ever even got there? It is not critical. I just want you to see that the day is a little bit more expansive than we might think. There is something or somethings tied to it that we are not well aware of. We are aware of many of the things about Trumpets and the future, but what about the past? Well, there is an inference that is given in one of the psalms and I want you to turn there to Psalm 81. Now, I do not know that what I am going to tell you is correct, but at least it is marked.

Psalm 81:3-5 Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon [Hey, that is the right day], at the full moon [it is expanding here], on our

solemn feast day. For this is a statute for Israel, a law of the God of Jacob. [that is certainly what Leviticus 23:23 is. This [notice] He established in Joseph [he certainly lived before us] as a testimony [and that seems to indicate something that happened in the past too], when He went out throughout the land of Egypt, where I heard a language I did not understand.

At least there is a biblical reference to Joseph in relation to Trumpets and the full moon as well.

Is it possible that Joseph's redemption from Egypt to second in command in Egypt in one day, that it may have taken place on Trumpets? Well, we can think about this, but it is nothing we are going to resolve. Was that a big enough deal to do that on Leviticus 23:23? I do not know. Those things that occur on the holy days, on the festival days, are usually pretty big events. That was pretty big for the people of Israel, Joseph being released, and it was a fine and wonderful thing that God did. But we are not going to be able to answer that because I have seen speculation that maybe it had something to do with the original creation. Is it commemorating the original creation since it is something that occurred in the past?

We will go no further with that. I just want you to see that Trumpets is more expansive than it appears on the surface and something happened in the far past which was pretty significant.

Trumpets is a solemn day because it is so thought-provoking. That is, it is a time of serious reflection on what this day pictures. Trumpets is unique in a way that no other holy day can claim. And that is, again, not a big thing, it is just interesting. It is right in the middle. The fourth of seven festivals, three before and three following.

God usually does things in patterns and there is something significant there because we know that Trumpets is going to open the way to the World Tomorrow and the return of Jesus Christ. That is pretty significant. And He has it placed right in the middle before we get to the things like the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. So there it is, the fourth of seven festivals, three before and three following. It commemorates events on which history pivots and a good bit of my sermon

subject here is going to focus on this history pivoting, because there is no doubt whatever that history is going to pivot on that great day that is coming, on which Trumpets is celebrated.

You might recall, some of you anyway, a sermon that I gave on what I titled as the Axial Period. I did this a number of years ago after I heard the term used by Ernest Martin who was with the Worldwide Church of God for many, many years (and he was my teacher there for one full year in a prophecy class). He was quoting a Swiss historian by the name of Jaspers. I think his first name was Karl. He was a very good scholar and a very interesting writer as well. He was the one who termed the Axial Period as being a title.

You might wonder why he called it an axial period. An axle is a shaft on which something turns. It might be the shaft itself is turning, but it also might be turning a wheel, a gear, a pulley, or maybe turning another shaft on the end of that shaft. An axial period though, can also be a slice of time. This is the way Jaspers uses it. A slice of time during which pivotal historical events occur that the world and its history turns into a configuration it never had before. I think you can see this plainly, that is what is going to happen when Christ returns. The world, the history of the world, the cultures of the world, *everything is going to change*. History is going to do a massive flip-flop.

Now, what Jaspers discovered is that this did not happen infrequently at all. In fact, it happened fairly often and usually when it did pivotal things happened to the nations of the world. And it may occupy a period of time that is critical in terms of the time that goes by—a decade, a generation, sometimes as much as a 100 years or so—the axle takes that time for it to turn.

The one that I used for my model spanned the 5th and 6th centuries BC. I chose that one because that is the one that very, very much of the history of Israel and Judah takes place. Now, in that 100 year period that spans the 5th and 6th centuries BC, Israel virtually disappeared from view. It started down significantly. It was already another 50 to 100 years in front of Judah as well. But so did Assyria fall during that period of time. Ammon fell during that period of time, Moab fell during that period of time—disappeared from

view. Edom and Philistia either disappeared or became minor nations. But in the places of those nations that fell, the nations that rose were Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and then another couple of centuries later, up came the nations of Northwest Europe to take their place.

If you are beginning to get the feel of an axial period, it is a period in which major events take place.

I want you to turn back to the book of Daniel once again. Daniel went into his captivity in Babylon as that 6th century Axial Period was just beginning. The researchers feel that he went as a captive of the Babylonians in the second invasion of Babylon and of Judah, sometime around 586 would be the the shortest period of time for us to deal with something that may have been as much as about ten years longer than that, or about 596. So by the time we get to Daniel historically, his imprisonment in the 6th century BC, those nations were on their way down. Babylon was on its way *up*.

Now, in Daniel the 2nd chapter, what happened here was that Nebuchadnezzar had a dream and nobody could recall that dream to his memory. And he was frantic, so frantic he was going to kill all their prophets and their wise men until another prophet heard about it and he put Daniel's name before the king, and said, would you call this man and see if he can interpret it? That is what we are going to get.

Daniel 2:31-35 [here is what Nebuchadnezzar was told] You, O king, were watching; and behold; a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. The image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. And then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from before the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

While you are looking at that, I know that you understand that that is what is going to happen to the nations of the world and you know the head of gold disappeared, the shoulders, and all the way down to the feet until this massive statue is completely dissolved by the Kingdom of God.

Daniel 2:44-45 "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain and its interpretation sure."

So by the time we get through Daniel's imprisonment, the 6th century Axial Period was well underway. But God used the vision given to Nebuchadnezzar and interpreted by Daniel to show an overview of where the rise of these new world powers was headed.

We are looking at a description of several axial periods all jammed into one statue that God showed to Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel interpreted, because there have been quite a number of axial periods that have taken place in the earth besides the 6th century one that I am speaking of here as a foundation. Certainly when Britain and America rose to power, that was the beginning of the working of a major, major Axial Period, and those two nations together turned the world practically upside down—and the world has never been the same since.

God engineered that. But while we were rising, other nations were going down at the same time. That is the way God works things until He has everything in the position that He wants it to be in.

Actually what God did with the head of gold and the shoulders of silver and so forth, is that *He* reveals when the historical period that they were in was completed, that another Axial Period was coming, and when that next one

was completed, the Kingdom of God would eventually be on earth. Now, it is somewhere very close to 2,500 years later and we are getting exceedingly closer, much closer to that final prophesied one.

Now, the Bible says that God will do nothing except that He reveals His secrets to His servants the prophets. Just as He prophesied (I am bringing you through history pretty fast), of the former Axial Period, primarily through Jeremiah, but also some by Daniel and Isaiah, He has also prophesied of the end time Axial Period through Jesus primarily, Psalms, Daniel, Ezekiel, John, and the minor prophets. One of the more interesting things about these prophecies is that God only predicts what is going to happen in terms of the nations of the earth. But He also even tells us what people's attitudes are going to be like and how they will react to these awesome events we are going to be witnessing together.

In fact, there is a great deal of information regarding one's attitude towards this awesome event and the remainder of this sermon will be focused there.

Please do not fail to misjudge this fact: a person's perspective of what is coming is exceedingly important in terms of profiting from it. (That is one reason David [Grabbe] went through what he did before this message and the reason Richard [Ritenbaugh] did what he did this morning. We are doing what we can to help prepare your mind, through what has happened, toward what is coming.) We are already fairly aware of what is going on in the United States of America, but I think things are going to get a great deal more intense than they already are. Many a misjudgment has been made because one's perspective was not correct.

Now, the next series of scriptures that we will refer to occurred either just as the axle of events was beginning to turn or while it was in the process of turning. In one sense, this is my own judgment, this may be the most important part of the sermon because we are going to get this out of the book of Amos and the entire book of Amos *could have* been written about Britain and America today. It was not though, it was written about the ten northern tribes of Israel after they separated from Judah, but just before, maybe a generation or so, they went completely and totally into captivity. Well, that is the kind of period that we are in. The United States and Britain and the rest of northwest Europe is collapsing.

Please turn with me to Amos the fifth chapter. If you want to get a pretty good read on this, read our booklet on the book of Amos [*Prepare to Meet Your God*] because it is a lot more detailed than I am going to be able to go into here. Now, I want to tell you before we get into it again, it is talking about God, in the book of Amos, showing the Israelitish people what their attitudes were about what was collapsing on their heads. Notice the way that God starts out here in Amos 5.

Amos 5:18 [God is speaking] "Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord!"

Can you imagine that? No really converted person would want to see that occur. The Israelitish people were not converted, but they thought they were! That is the problem. Do you remember that scripture that Richard went into this morning? Amos 3:5, "With you only have I made this deal with people." They thought they had contact with God. They were, we will say, a religious people, just the way the people in the United States and Britain are. They go to church, they do some things like that. But in the United States there are an awful lot of people who seriously believe that they are converted Christians. We can see that they are deceived. Sincere, absolutely. Nice people in many, many cases, wonderful people, but they are not converted, but they think they are. And they think that Jesus Christ is going to come to intervene and save them. That is their perspective. That is the way they are looking at things.

"Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord!" You just heard what David read, what the Day of the Lord is going to be like. Does that look like that is going to be fun? It is going to be terrifying! These people were self-righteously proud.

Amos 5:18-19 "Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord! For what good is the day of the Lord to you? [God says. These people thought very highly of themselves religiously. God says back to them,] It will be darkness and not light. It will be as though a man [listen to this] fled from a lion and a bear met him! [Which one

would you rather fight huh?] Or as though he went into the house [a place of safety], leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him!"

Do you get the picture? God is telling these people there is going to be no escape. They would be frightened out of their minds, like I would be if some bear was chasing after me, and right behind him was a lion, and right inside the door was a serpent that was going to bite me. Where does one go for safety? That is what He is telling these people.

We do not want to be like our ancestors who are in the Ten Northern Tribes of Israel and became what we know today as the nations of Europe. A lot of those people over there are Israelitish. It is not just Britain and America, it is not just Ireland. Those people are Norwegians and they are Swiss and they are Swedish and they are Danish and they are French and they are Belgians—they are Israelites and their eyes and minds are shut to it. I should pick my ancestors too. A lot of them are Germans. So, it is good to remember what David said: In the Family of God there is no ethnicity, there is no race. We are just one Family. But unfortunately for the way things have gone, that is the way it is in Europe and the United States of America.

Let us go up to Amos the fourth chapter. The chapter begins with Amos describing the immoral conditions that are going on within the nation itself.

Amos 4:1 Hear this word, you cows of Bashan [this is directed at the women, the females amongst the Israelitish people], who are on the mountains of Samaria [mountains is a symbol of nations and Samaria was the capital city.]

They are living, as we might say, high off the hog. Samaria, Israel, the Ten Northern Tribes, were pretty wealthy. Just like the United States. It is a rich nation.

Amos 4:1-3 who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, "Bring wine, let us drink!" The Lord God has sworn by His holiness: "Behold, the days shall come upon you when He will take you away with fishhooks [Listen to this forecast. He is saying this to the women of the Israelite nation.], and your

posterity with fishhooks. You will go out through broken walls, each one straight ahead of her [He is talking about being prisoners of war.]"

Amos 4:6-8 [God is reminding them the way He treated them here.] "Also, I gave you cleanness of teeth [that is, nothing to eat, biblically, it means you are starving to death] in all your cities, and lack of bread in all your places; yet [He says all these things that I have done to get your attention] you have not returned to Me," says the Lord. [How set were the Israelites' minds?!] "I also withheld rain from you, when you were still three months to the harvest. I made it rain on one city. I withheld rain from another city. One part was rained upon, and where it did not rain that part withered. So two or three cities wandered to another city to drink water, but they were not satisfied; yet you have not returned to Me," says the Lord.

It is just a simple question: Why would a people do such a thing? That is, receive all the blows that God Himself could send in order to gather the people's attention so that they would begin to get down on their knees and cry out to Him to do something. What kind of an attitude of mind was in them that they said to themselves, "Who, me? Why is this happening to me?" They could not see their sins. Now, we might say, well, they could not see them because nobody told them. Oh yes, they were told! That is what the book of Amos is about. God told them *directly* why they were receiving the pains that they were. I mean, He told them directly through Amos. There are scholars who feel that one of the major reasons that the Israelites did not repent was because Amos was a Jew and they hated him.

It is really interesting to read the beginning of the book of Amos. Basically what he said was, "Well here I was standing here when God says, 'Hey, Amos, I want you to go up to Israel.'" He was not a preacher. Do you know what kind of work he did before he went up and preached because God sent him up to preach? It says that he worked on sycamore trees. He was a tree dresser of some kind and he also was a shepherd, as many of those people were. So maybe it was partly their feeling that they were far better than this Jew from down in Judah because they were not Jews, they were Israelites. They were really prosperous people and those Jews, look how badly they treated God in the past. That is what the researchers say their real problem

was. They could not repent because they thought they had no sin, even though it came to them directly, and Amos got chased out of town for all his efforts.

At any rate, God made His judgment clear through all these disasters that were piling up on them. And then He added to it the message that Amos brought that they better repent.

What I am trying to drill home here is that this throws light into our understanding of their actual attitude. Their desire for the Day of the Lord was in reality proud, careless, scoffing self-righteousness. Do not overlook at this. It might be that we can tell a great deal from the way things are going in the United States of America, where we can see things written in the paper and hear the comments of this politician and that politician, but let us not forget that we are not above this sort of approach that our ancestors patterned out here for us.

I wrote myself a little bit of a note here and that is: This is one reason why you will *never* hear me preach that, if you are with the Church of the Great God, you are a sure bet to go to the Place of Safety. Everybody has to prove themselves, individually, before God and to bend and yield to the direction that God gives, because He knows what we need in order to really be in the Kingdom of God. And we do not run the show. We only speak what we are able to speak. There is no blanket salvation. Please brethren, understand this. Every one of us is saved as we were called, individually. That is part of the terms that we make with God. It is His will and not ours. And we have to take what is dished out by Him because He sees from His point of view that we need to go through these things that He is giving to us.

Let us turn back to the New Testament to II Peter 3.

II Peter 3:1 Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), . . .

In a way I am trying to do that, only I am using the writings of other men far above me in their discernment and understanding of things. But I at least

understand a little bit about what they say. And I can see what is happening in the United States of America and I know it is impossible for us not to be affected in some way, to some degree, by what is going on in this nation.

II Peter 3:2-3 . . . that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets [like Amos], and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, . . .

That is what is happening. The United States of America is almost filled with intellectual scoffers who say there is no God, that the Bible is not true, that the Book—the Bible—is a book of lies, it is filled with misunderstandings.

II Peter 3:4-5 . . . and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, the earth standing out of water and in the water.

Peter is only beginning there to remind them that what God said, what God promised in the past, those things came to pass. And some of those things were really disasters, like the Flood.

Let us go from II Peter back to Isaiah.

Isaiah 5:18-20 Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as with a cart rope; that say, "Let him make speed and hasten His work, that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come, that we may know it. [How ignorant of God can you be?! They are putting this challenge up to God, challenging Him.] Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.

There, in verses 18 and 19, the people are challenging God.

Let us go to Jeremiah chapter 17. I am only reminding you of these things because that is what is happening in the United States. They are constantly challenging God in the newspapers, on the television, you name it, they are daring Him to do something.

Jeremiah 17:15 Indeed they say to me, "Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come now!"

Maybe I should change that reading a little bit. "Let it come—now!" Another challenge.

Now, if the ancient Israelites were this bold when maybe they had more contact with God by far than the people do today. Maybe, I do not know. But those people were pretty bold in challenging God. "Come on at me. See what You can do to me." That is what they are saying, scoffing at Him.

Let us go to Ezekiel the 12th chapter. It is not just in one book, it is not just Amos.

Ezekiel 12:22 "Son of man, what is this proverb that you people have about the land of Israel, which says, 'The days are prolonged, and every vision fails'? Tell them therefore, . . .

You see what the people are saying. They are taunting those who gave the prophecies at the behest of God, that God inspired to make the prophecies. But what people are saying, "Well, it hasn't happened yet." See the days are prolonged, it will never happen. And that is why Peter said, "Oh yes, it did happen." Are you understanding that it is not the lack of the Word of God that the people lack, because the Bible was always available to them in most cases here in the United States of America. Do you understand? It is so simple. They simply do not believe it. I mean, it is not hard. It is that simple. They simply refuse to believe what it says.

On the other hand, God says they have no excuse. God does not lie. The truth about His existence has been made available to mankind. And by that I mean the whole thing. They do not know the details. Could not understand it, could not grasp it, even if they could know what the Bible actually says. But they will not believe what they do read.

(Incidentally, my next sermon, which God-willing will be on Saturday, I am going to read you a series of, we will call them reasoning thoughts, whatever you might call them, that the author of the commentary that he and his cohorts put together when they were making that commentary on the book of Hebrews, writing it. They were so moved by the first chapter of Hebrew, they wrote reasonings as to why mankind cannot possibly refuse what God says here in Hebrews 1. And they came to the conclusion that the church of God, the true church of God has claims on every individual who lives, and that is what that sermon is going to be about—the claims. They are simple, but they are absolutely right. Even these unconverted men can figure that out.)

Ezekiel 12:22-23 "Son of man, what is this proverb that you people have about the land of Israel, which says, 'The days are prolonged, and every vision fails'? [Yes, what God tells the prophet to say never comes to pass. It fails.] Tell them therefore, 'Thus says the Lord God: "I will lay this proverb to rest, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel."' But say to them, "The days are at hand, and the fulfillment of every vision."

Ezekiel 12:26-28 Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Son of man, look, the house of Israel is saying, 'The vision that he sees is for many days from now, and he prophesies of times far off.' Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: "None of My words will be postponed [Here is God's promise. "None of My words," the words that He gave to them, that is, to the prophets in their visions that they then delivered to the people of Judah and Israel.] anymore, but the word which I speak will be done," says the Lord God.'"

The time is coming.

So, in Amos you can be sure that they very much knew that the times that they were living in were not all that good. There was violence everywhere and a great disproportion of wealth between the top and the bottom. They very much coveted the fulfillment of the good times on the other side of the prophecies, feeling—here comes their self-righteousness—that God owed it

to them. Amos meets that hypocrisy by warning them that they had nothing in common with God and the Day of the Lord was going to be for them a time of continuous terror and death.

God warned the scoffers to prepare to meet their God. Have you ever read that in Amos? It is there. It says, tell the people they better get ready. They are going to meet Me head-on, and through Peter, he warns us in the end times that, just as surely as He brought the Flood, destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, sent Israel into captivity, the judgments of His great Day are coming and we better not be indifferent and bet that our eternal life is that far off.

When will it be? God has graciously not told us the time. If He did, do you know what I believe would happen? Those who were converted would overwhelmingly believe what He says and prepare. Those who are not converted would do exactly what Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Amos said. They would just fritter away at the time, laughing at the Christians. That is what they always do.

Now we see a witness in books like the book of Amos where God deliberately sent a prophet to prophesy, to proclaim something to the people. What did the people do? What did Jesus say the people do? They killed the prophet. That is how hardheaded we are.

Why am I giving this sermon? I do not want us to be hardheaded! God's Word is true and we are here because we believe it and we are willing to do something about it.

Let us go to Luke 21. This is just a general instruction that comes from Jesus regarding the times that we are talking about. This is Luke's version of the end time prophecy. And he says in verse 22.

Luke 21:22 "For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled."

He is talking about the time when they really start to unravel.

Luke 12:34-36 [Further encouragement. He says,] "Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come upon 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 stand before the Son of Man."

That "watch therefore" usually means be alert, be on guard, be ready. Do not let yourself fall away. Jack yourself up, keep yourself going. Run, keep on going. So not only to what is happening in terms of prophecy, but what is happening in one's life and attitude in relation to the times when these prophecies are being fulfilled. In other words, I cannot amplify it: watch, be alert to what you are doing with your life. Do not get caught up in the same attitude as those in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Amos had to confront. It is realistic that the time is drawing nearer every day, and watching, being alert to world news can be helpful, but we can watch world news and still do nothing of any value spiritually. It is a crutch that gives way pretty easily.

Why so much concern about this? Richard and Martin both went through sermons within the past month or so that, in Richard's case was pretty detailed, about the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3. And Martin was giving additional information from a somewhat different angle. But I will tell you what I got out of those seven or eight sermons (at least that many that were given). That the prophecies show in Revelation 2 and 3 that the church is not in anywhere near as good a condition, a spiritual condition as we might hope. There are in the group in Revelation 2 and 3, how many would you in your judgment say are really good congregations? Two. Only two good congregations. There is Philadelphia and Smyrna.

While I am thinking on this, I may as well get it off my mind (maybe I heard it in one of the sermons that the men gave, I do not know), but we always hear about, we will just call them the lazy Laodiceans, and it dawned on me to look that up. God never said the Laodiceans were lazy. He said they were

blind. And I remember what Richard said in the sermon, that they were hardworking people. They were pretty wealthy people. They were making money. They just had their minds on the wrong things!

That is what I am talking about here as we move to the end of this sermon. I am concerned that we will get caught up by the action that is taking place outside, just kind of sucking us along with it. And we will begin to adopt the same kind of attitudes as those people are carrying with them, which was nothing but a hardheaded self-righteousness, that they felt that God *owed* them the wealth that He had given to the nation. They deserved it. No, they did not! That is why God sent Amos to straighten them out. You know, it was not long after this last thing I read about Amos the prophet and what is in the book of Amos, you know what they did? They threw him out of town. They got tired of him saying bad things about them and so they got rid of him. I cannot remember right now, they threatened to kill him, but I do not think they did. But they got rid of him. That is what Jesus said the Israelites always did. Every prophet God sent, they got rid of the prophet.

Let us finish off here in just a few minutes. I want you to turn to Matthew 25.

Matthew 25:1 "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom."

Now we know what this parable is about.

Matthew 25:5 "But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept."

I think that is interesting. Most of the time we go right over those two verses. *All* the virgins went to sleep. If that pictures the church, I hope it does not, I mean totally anyway, but we see that even this potential of falling to sleep is there, with what is going on or agreeing with in some ways what is going on outside the church, or the willingness to agree with it is there. It is not very comforting to think of. That the potential to go to sleep just like everybody else is asleep out there, is there. The potential is there. We do not *have* to go to sleep, but the potential is there and that is why Jesus put it in the parable.

I think, that as a group, we are awake because God awakened us by calling us through the preaching of Herbert Armstrong and the Worldwide Church of God. But I think we have to face up, we are not all as awake as we could be, and perhaps as we need to be, and again, it will show in what we do with our lives.

One of the greatest problems is what to do with our time. You may say you do not have that problem because you have more to do than you have time. But let me remind you of something. Do you not grasp that God never says to the Laodiceans that they are lazy? They were not lazy. They just had their minds on the wrong activities and they were busy doing those things *in the world*, and at the same time, being in the church. Do you get the point? They were in the church! They were attending the services, but Jesus had to knock on the door to get in! That is pretty telling. We can drift into that kind of a circumstance by doing what they did there in the parable that Jesus gave in Matthew 25.

Matthew 25:8-9 "And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and for you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.'"

Matthew 25:13 [Another warning] "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."

The things that I want to pick up here is this. It is very clear from the parable that the quantities of oil from one virgin to another is not transferable. Oil is the symbol of the Holy Spirit. And though the church is going to be resurrected all at the same time, each member of the body is *individually* responsible for securing his own oil. Then, there is quite a sense of urgency conveyed in verse 10, if you read it right, correctly, by the statement that, if one is not ready, the door is shut to him. That is, the door that permits entrance into the Kingdom.

There is only so much time. That is what the parable is teaching us. There is only so much time and each person is responsible for his own oil. Therefore, we have to be careful that we do not allow ourselves to go to sleep and get

caught up in the attitudes and activities that the world is involved with. That is going to be very difficult for us to do.

I will finish on this. Did you ever notice that in a movie, when intruders are shown trying to break into some facility, that they are almost always, invariably shown taking advantage of a guard or a watchman whose attention is less than it should be because he is distracted by doing something else or only sleepily performing his duty?

Here is one more. Do you know I con men succeed? Because those who are conned by scam are so intent and absorbed on greedily making a killing that they are distracted, they are not watchful of the character of the person conning them by usually obvious deception of the scam. And so they are caught off guard.

Now, what I am concerned about is that we get caught in such a situation where we are caught off guard because we are not really paying attention to what we *should* be paying attention to. That is going to take more discipline, perhaps, than we have at this present time. To make ourselves do what needs to be done and believe what needs to be believed.

So, do not go to sleep at the switch, like the Israelites of old did, where they were so self-righteous regarding themselves they were actually looking forward to the return of Jesus Christ in that painful period of time before He actually shows up. Let us make sure we are rightly doing our responsibilities.