

A Truly Threatening Time

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I do not know whether you realize it, but for 17 years in a row, I believe it is, I have begun each Feast of Tabernacles with what I call my "handwriting is on the wall" message; and each year it is different, a little bit different subject, and I hope that I have something that is meaningful to you because you are involved in it.

This sermon this evening is going to be my annual "handwriting is on the wall" sermon that I began somewhere in the 90s. I am not really sure exactly what year it was, but I think it was in 2007. Each handwriting sermon is a forecast comparing what we are hearing in news reports with forecasts of biblical prophecy. I want you to turn to Daniel the fifth chapter where the handwriting message begins.

Daniel 5:1-5 Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which had been in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone. In the same hour the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.

I am sure it was a shock to Belshazzar, and especially those who were close to him, to see a hand suddenly appear and inscribe a message on the wall. Had anybody ever seen anything like that before? I think not. And it was

enough to get their attention. They still did not understand what it meant. And I do not think that they understood what it meant even when Daniel eventually described what it meant.

Now, we are going to go to verse 25 as Daniel is explaining what the message said.

Daniel 5:25-28 And this is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it [that is all she wrote, buddy.]; TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balance and found wanting [My judgment is against you]; PERES: Your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and the Persians. [That was a total loss for Belshazzar who was riding pretty high until that time that God decided to exercise His judgment.]

The handwriting on the wall has come to mean we have been witness to events that would have warned us, appraised us, made us much more aware of how these events that we were watching would end in a disaster, and yet we did nothing. That is the warning for this little sermon tonight. (I say little because it is going to be short.) We did nothing to prevent the disaster.

Surely what Belshazzar heard was a disastrous sentence written out for this man who thought he was riding pretty high and he had enough *oomph* in him to challenge the great God in the use of God's utensils. The handwriting on the wall is a wail of the doomed that no last effort is going to do any good. That is all she wrote.

So these sermons have been a projection of what is already impacting on our lives so that we can be better prepared to meet the challenges of living in these tumultuous times and hopefully be better prepared to glorify God.

This message coordinates with my Trumpet's message if you heard any of that. My title this year is, "A Truly Threatening Time." That is what we are living in. In this case, threatening's closest synonym might very well be the term "menacing," a truly menacing time.

Now, I am looking into a circumstance containing portents of considerable danger of impending painful persecutions closing in on us, And they are, brethren. I am no prophet, but I know what is going on in the world, at least a little bit. And I know what God's Word says. The Christian church is going to be persecuted very *harshly*.

To us, we have to look at it as preparation to live in God's Kingdom, preparing to be more like God. But at the time we are going through with this persecution, it can very easily trip us up. And so the purpose of this sermon is to make sure that we are aware of what is happening, and in a way, how close it is. How close it is I do not know exactly. I do not know how much time we have, but we are seeing things occur that give us a pretty good indication that we are not all that far away from things to become more and more pressure packed.

The ongoing presidential election is the centerpiece news event impacting on us greatly and its impact, brethren, cannot be escaped. I do not know about you, but it affects me emotionally because I do not like what is going on. It is not my idea of the way life should be in the United States of America. So it cannot be escaped and so its stresses are going to continue to build. However, the seriousness of what is already proceeding from governments took a serious major step to the left on October the 1st.

This is exactly the way the news bulletin that I read announced what occurred. "So it begins, this state forces LGBT accommodation rules on its churches." Not bars, not parks, not dance halls—churches. The state is Massachusetts. Now, what did that state do? It very simply enacted a law that accommodates the wishes of LGBT voters that the laws of the American Constitution that have existed since the founding of this nation giving the Christian citizens of Massachusetts rights of freedom of religion, have taken a severe first hit in this war. Not a shot across the bow, but a direct hit.

Now, I am going to read you the announcement made by the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination. And in case you did not know, this is not a pro-Christian equality group. "This effectively means churches must acknowledge transgender ideology, or practice their doctrine on human sexuality in secret, putting Christianity in the closet." That is their words, not the state's words. It is this discrimination group's words, "putting Christianity

in the closet." The homosexuals come out and they are free. The Christians go in and they have to practice in secret, is what they are implying.

The quote continues. It is a fairly long quote.

The guidance specifically mentions churches as falling under the public accommodation restrictions against discrimination on the basis of gender identity. Even a church could be seen as a place of public accommodation if it holds a secular event such as a spaghetti dinner that is open to the general public. The restrictions are massive, and public accommodation must allow patrons to use men's or women's restrooms and locker rooms and changing rooms consistent with their gender identity. Such places must also use names, pronouns, and gender related terms appropriate to employee's stated gender identity in the communications with employees and others. These are not small asks for churches, Christian schools, and other organizations which operate on Christian principles. They are lawful demands.

Think the government is not getting stronger in its demands?

This battle over the accommodation of LGBT, transgender rights, has been underway for quite a while now. North Carolina has taken quite a hit business-wise. They have not repealed their law which prohibits what Massachusetts is going forward with. But the state (this is really interesting) of North Carolina lost at least eight or ten big time football games. I mean, big ones, where 70,000 to 80,000 people would be coming to the game and all of those people there would be spending money in the city, in the hotels and the motels, and the restaurants, and so forth and it is still going on.

I said it was interesting because just about a week or so ago, the governor said we are better off financially than we were before the law because other businesses are moving in where there is a bit of identity that they are more accustomed to. It is not stopping them from moving in, but the sports and other athletic things, they are afraid of it.

Now, up to this point, the battles have been fought primarily in courtrooms and the freedom of Americans to effectively defend their constitutional right

to practice their religious beliefs have been defeated by liberal judges in almost every case. However, this is the first case in which a state has enacted a law with this "in your face" strength, virtually daring anyone with Christian convictions to defy it and therefore the state in the process.

Here is another quote. It is from a different source, but on the same general subject. The subject was not transgender things. The subject was something else. This took place in the state of Colorado. I am going to quote to you a comment by one Diane Rice, a commissioner on the Colorado Civil Rights Commission following a hearing regarding the accusing of one Jack Phillips (you have probably heard his name on the news reports) who was on trial in Colorado because he refused to decorate a cake for the marriage of two gays. Now I will read you her comments because it exposes one reason why there is such a wide divergence of opinion between the unbelieving state worker, Diane Rice, and a Bible believing person. She said,

I would also like to reiterate what we said in the hearing of the last meeting. Freedom of religion and religion [listen to this carefully] and religion has been used to justify all kinds of discrimination throughout history, whether it be slavery, whether it be the Holocaust, whether it be [And then she caught herself, I mean, caught herself again.], we [meaning the members of the commission] can list hundreds of situations where freedom of religion has been used to justify discrimination. And to me, it is one of the most despicable pieces of rhetoric that people can use to [and then she hesitated again] to use their religion to hurt others.

Some people give Christianity a bad name. In fact, I would say it is highly likely that the overwhelming majority of people who claim Christianity give Christianity, Jesus Christ, and our Father in heaven a bad name.

Now here, the topic is discrimination. So you and I know full well this mistreatment of others using Christian principles as their justification has not been done by real Christians. Rather, in most cases, it might have been done by sincere people who did not truly grasp God's will in this present age since the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the history of the true Christian church. No true follower of Jesus Christ would be doing such things as Diane Rice mentioned in any circumstance, because he or she

would know full well because they would know the truth and they would be living it. They would be following in Jesus' steps and He never did such a thing as a man. Therefore, neither would they if they were really Christian.

There is one more aspect to this issue that you need to understand because Satan is really clever in his use of the English language. And therefore, so are the liberals working so diligently under him. Know this and mark it well in your mind. What I am going to tell you is a legal technicality, but it is accepted throughout the world. Not just in the United States, throughout the world. And it is true: The first amendment of the Constitution of the United States does not guarantee American citizens freedom of worship. Rather what it guarantees is freedom of *religion*. This is the technicality that is accepted throughout the world. And even our founders understood that and that is why they worded it the way they did.

Freedom of religion. As a legality in a courtroom there is a Grand Canyon of difference between freedom of religion and freedom of worship. And thus, the leftists are promising people freedom of worship *deceitfully* because the terms may sound the same to the uninformed. This is one reason why Christians lose their court cases all the time. Now, this difference is understood by legally well-informed people. Virtually every nation in the world, even God-hating Communist nations, give their citizens freedom of worship. For example, Cuba under Castro permitted people freedom of worship. As a legality, freedom of worship gives one the liberty to go to a place of worship. It could even be a church. Go to a place of worship, sing some songs, listen to a spiritual message of some kind, fellowship, perhaps eat a bit of food, and even pray. But that is all the freedom the worshipper has.

You see, what I am drifting toward here, the worship or the religion has to stay *inside* the building.

But as a legality, freedom of *religion* means one is free to believe and practice the tenets of the religion of his choice of worship.

So here is a clear difference between the two terms. The one who has freedom of religion is also free to practice his beliefs in the public square as a part of the conduct of his lifestyle. And that is of course what these people

who are being taken to court are doing. The leftists believe freedom of religion infringes on civil rights. It is, because they are illegal before God, those people doing those things. Civil rights are those rights granted by the government. But God may be completely excluded from the civil government and that government still gives its people freedom of worship. OK?

It is this freedom of practice of our beliefs in the public square that is gradually, progressively being denied of Christians. Thus, if you practice your beliefs by not decorating a cake or baking a cake or allowing your building to be used for a gay wedding, or if you are a pharmacist who does not want your potion to be used to abort a baby, you may be sued, tried, and convicted, fined, and go to jail. There is not much defense there because that is not what the Constitution says.

Now, this is the new *uncivil* war. LGBT members are insisting and putting pressure on civil leadership insisting that America's religious right must be subservient to their rights to alternative sexual lifestyles. Human civil rights have greater authority in America now than God's Word.

Turn with me just ever-so-briefly to the book of Revelation, something that you know is there in the 11th chapter, verses 7 and 8.

Revelation 11:7-8 When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street [these are the Two Witnesses] of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt [the capital city of the Israelite people *God Himself* names Sodom], where also our Lord was crucified.

Now, several states have outlined plans to protect religious rights, and the homosexual community and its corporate sponsors have erupted in rage. So welcome, brethren, to Sodom and Gomorrah.

Suppose you are a pharmacist in the state of Washington and you, for conscience sake, do not want to be the cause of abortion by prescribing a pill. That state provides no exception for religious beliefs and refuses to

allow an accommodation that would simply allow pharmacists with abortion objections due to their religious beliefs, simply to refer customers to another location. "The Washington State Supreme Court [I am reading this to you because I want you to see how civil government is knuckling under to these peoples' demands] refused to even review the case of a pharmacist who was sued because of being denied this right. [this was a woman] The attorney for the pharmacist stated that the State of Washington allows pharmacists to refer customers for just about any reason except for reason of conscience."

This indicates that those with Christian beliefs are being specifically singled out for persecution. It is not large numbers so far but it is growing. Now, the remaining 49 states all permit the conscience exception but not Washington in relation to pregnancy issues.

Today, politically speaking, liberals have won this war for the most part. The Western world has liberal constitutions, liberal courts, liberal court institutions, liberal economies, and liberal systems of education. But it has seemingly slipped from our memories that the same breach between liberalism and Christianity that shook our civilization a couple of generations ago resulted in World War II. Then it was the fascists and the Christians, etcetera. Different wording, but the same general principle, and it broke out in World War II.

But it is now presenting itself in a challenge in a different form. It is not the brutal face of Nazism and Communism, but in the form of liberal humanism. Do not allow yourself to be misled! This is no less dangerous than what eventually led to World War II. It is indeed slower to act but it is exceedingly more insidious and enslaving. It just grows on you and you do not notice the chipping away of our character while it is doing it.

So it does not wear the brutal face of violence but the alluring smile of culture. With its words, liberal secularism preaches freedom, tolerance, and republicanism, but with its sneaky deeds, it attacks precisely the religion that has upheld the general morality to a great extent and keeps the social arena from sliding into absolute license. The Destroyer is aiming his fire powers at our destructions simply because he hates us with a vengeance because of whom we are. We are weak, but we are the sons of God and our side has more power in His toenail than all of the Destroyer's forces combined.

But wait just a moment because maybe you have not heard everything or anything yet. Who is going to win the election? It looks right now as though Hillary is going to win. I would really be so shocked if she did not because it seems as though they have everything going for them, especially the media constantly beating the drums into people's ears. Wait until you hear, if you have not, candidate Hillary Clinton openly telling Christians (she made this statement in a speech delivered at the Women's World Summit): "Deep seated cultural codes, religious beliefs, and structural biases have to be changed. Laws have to be backed up with resources and political will, and deep seated religious beliefs have to be changed." Or else. She did not say the "or else."

I will translate that into plain language. She is saying Christians need to change their religious beliefs to agree with gay marriage and abortion on demand. And she even threatens, saying laws (meaning especially federal laws), have to be backed up with the resources and political will. That is an open threat against those who subscribe to Christian moral beliefs.

Turn with me to back to Daniel once again, this time in chapter 7, as we begin to draw this to a close

Daniel 7:21-25 "I was watching [Daniel says that]; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them [This is the beast making war. And it is my own personal belief that it is the beast that is backing the administration that is in office in the United States of America at this time.], until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.

Thus he said: 'The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, trample it and break it in pieces. The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; he shall be different from the first ones, and he shall subdue three kings. He shall speak pompous words [that is really interesting] against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the

Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time [that is 3 1/2 years or 42 months].

Now, we have not reached this point in the prophecy yet, but I do perceive that we are near the edge of its beginning because the persecution of those holding some Christian beliefs are being persecuted in Israelitish countries. And this takes us more toward the literal appearance of the fourth beast.

Verse 25 tells us that the literal beast will persecute the saints. I think that the King James Version has an interesting translation. Rather than persecute, it says he shall "wear out the saints." I almost think that translation, the way things are going now, was inspired because that is what is happening. We are being worn down by the constant stress of what is going on. Now, wearing down or wearing out indicates to me a long, drawn-out, incessant, agonizingly slow putting on the pressures of fear until we break and become disloyal to our Savior because we cannot stand it anymore. I think that is a possibility. Which do you prefer?

The handwriting is clearly on the wall as God spells out the doom of the forces of evil aligning themselves against us. But those who know, know because it is written. Our side wins, and also knows that God is going to test us during this time for our eternal good. It is truly going to be exciting to see this awesome operation move to His climax.