



Pastor Jason's Column

These are troubling times that we live in. We've faced evil and uncertainty before but in my lifetime evil seems to be increasing. I was seven years old when President Reagan delivered his famous speech calling the "evil empire's" President Gorbachev to "tear down this wall." I was fifteen when an American bombed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. I was twenty one when Islamic terrorists crashed four planes, killing thousands, and forever changing the way we looked at the world. Now, as a husband and pastor, I see the news stories about a war mongering Russian President, Christians and ethnic minorities being wholesale slaughtered by ISIS/ISIL, journalists killed by the same group, even a murder carried out in Oklahoma last week by a man who was fired for trying to convert coworkers to Islam, and I wonder how we as believers should feel and think about all that we see.

There are many books and videos put out by men and women claiming to understand exactly what Biblical prophecies are coming to pass and how we can know what is to come; though most of what they say isn't true. I get questions all the time about the tribulation and rapture. I wanted to use this month's article to address some of these concerns and what we should be doing right now to prepare for the return of Jesus.

One of the things we need to do as Christians is to be informed about world events. All over the world Christians are being persecuted and even killed because they refuse to renounce the name of Jesus. The writer of Hebrews reminds us in 13:3

"Remember those who are in prison as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you are also in the body."

The murder of Christian men, women, and children is not some disconnected far off event from us. These people are our brothers and sisters. We are one body and we should be burdened to pray for them, to help with aid to ease their pain. How are we supposed to

find out about what's happening? The persecuted church is rarely covered by major news services, but here are two really good places to find out what is happening to the church around the world. The first is called Voice of the Martyrs found at www.persecution.com. This group is dedicated to informing the church of how they can help other believers. They offer a free email update and offer many books which contain a lot of good knowledge about things like Islam. Another great resource is from Jay and Jordan Sekulow at the American Center for Law and Justice at www.aclj.org. Their mission statement is that they were "Founded in 1990 with the mandate to protect religious and constitutional freedoms, the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) engages legal, legislative, and cultural issues by implementing an effective strategy of advocacy, education, and litigation that includes representing clients before the Supreme Court of the United States and international tribunals around the globe." At their website you can find not only how to pray for fellow believers, but also sign petitions and legal funds that help as well.

If you don't have access to the internet we will be making some paper resources available to you soon, but let me give some information about what is happening to the church that you can pray about. An evil, murderous, Islamic terrorist group called ISIL/ISIS is currently killing Christians in Syria and Iraq and calling for Muslims all over the world, especially in the U.S. to kill non-Muslims. Their name is confusing because some say ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), while international media and our President say ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq, and the Levant). So which is right? ISIL is the most correct. Though the majority of the violence and skirmishes are taking place in Iraq and Syria their goal is the Levant. The Levant is a name for the land including the countries of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, parts of Turkey, and the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt. ISIL's desire it to set up a Islamic nation in this area, ruling with Sharia Law, and eradicating anyone who would oppose them, either by forced conversion or execution. We should be lifting up our brothers and sisters in prayer daily to be faithful to Jesus and that God's peace and strength would be given to them. We should also pray that like Stephen in acts, these

Christian's faith in death would be convicting to their tormentors. That they would confess Jesus and be saved.

Another thing we need to do is to know what Scripture says about this time we live in. In Matthew 24:1-14, the disciples ask Jesus when He would return, and what sign would signal His return. Jesus responded in verses 6-8,

"And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains."

With the warlike actions of Russia, and the kingdoms of the Middle East in upheaval, it really looks as if the time of Jesus' return is near. In verse 14 Jesus gives a definitively clear sign that will bring the return of Christ.

"And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."

The word for nations here is speaking not of geopolitical nations, but of ethnic groups. There are thousands of people groups with no churches, no missionaries, and no Bible translated into their heart language. The signs Jesus gave that His return was near were not intended to only bring comfort to us, but to place in us a sense of urgency. An urgency to see many more people brought into the kingdom of God. An urgency that results in lives lived sold out to Jesus, funding overseas missions, and even going ourselves. An urgency that breaks through the fear and awkwardness we feel communicating the gospel to our family, friends, and neighbors.

In Christ,
Pastor Jason

Please call Stacie Spurgeon (276-5047) or the church office if you or someone you know would like to ride the church van to services on Sunday mornings.

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Office Hours:

Tues.-Fri.—8:30am-2:30pm

Pastor's Open Door Hours:

Tues. 9:00am-2:00pm

FSBC NEWSLETTER



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