

Last Things

By Bob Vincent

Bible Text: Revelation 8:1-7; 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16
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Our Scripture lesson is taken from Revelation 8 on page 1,921. Revelation 8, beginning at verse 1.

1 When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. 2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. 3 Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. 4 The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand. 5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake. 6 Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them. 7 The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

This is the word of the Lord. [“Praise be to God.”]

May we pray.

Lord, help me to be very clear, very concise, very compelling, very practical, Lord, that everyone sitting here today and everyone listening to this message

will understand what I'm saying and will be convinced from the Scriptures of its truth. In Jesus' mighty name. Amen.

Now you'll notice in your bulletin we have a quote, and that quote is from the book of Enoch. Enoch is not, if you were to open a Roman Catholic Bible or to open the original King James Version of the Bible from 1611, Enoch is not part of what we call the deuterocanonical or second level of canonicity or apocryphal books that are found in the King James Version of 1611 and in the Catholic Bibles.

The book of Enoch is what we call a pseudoepigraphical book; that means that these are writings attributed to somebody who's not necessarily the person to whom they're attributed. However, the book of Enoch is recognized by at least one group of Christians, and that is the Coptic Church, those are the Egyptians who are Christians. They recognize the book of Enoch as Holy Scripture. And so whether Enoch said these things, whether they were revealed to Enoch or not, we do know that the Lord's half-brother, Jude, quoted from the book of Enoch. Whether everything in the book of Enoch is what he believed was true or not, Jude quotes from Enoch.

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men:
“See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”
(Jude 14-15)

So you see here, who are these seven angels? Well, here their names are Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Michael, Saraqael, Gabriel, Remiel, and you can see there in the printed thing what they are over, these seven angels.

And these are the names of the holy angels who watch.
Uriel, one of the holy angels, who is over the world and over Tartarus.
Raphael, one of the holy angels, who is over the spirits of men.
Raguel, one of the holy angels who takes vengeance on the world of the luminaries.
Michael, one of the holy angels, to wit, he that is set over the best part of mankind and over chaos.

Saraqael, one of the holy angels, who is set over the spirits, who sin in the spirit.

Gabriel, one of the holy angels, who is over Paradise and the serpents and the Cherubim.

Remiel, one of the holy angels, whom God set over those who rise; the names of the angels seven. (Enoch 20:1-8)

Now, is this true? I can't say, because I don't believe that the book of Enoch is, in what we have of the fragments that have survived, that it's Scripture, but what's quoted is Scripture. So are these really the names of these seven angels? I don't know. You'll notice one thing. They all begin with the last syllable, el, which means God (ֵל). And so you can see, for example, Michael, "Who is like God?" And you can have Gabriel, "God is my hero." And so I won't go through all the list of these, but you can see there, and you might want to ponder that at home.

Now that illustrates something, doesn't it, and that is that when it comes to this book, people have things we want to know and to know for sure, but we can't always know for sure, and so then what we see here is a parallel just as we saw last Lord's Day.

If we want to understand the book of Revelation appropriately, I read you that quote from the Oxford professor who said that rather than trying to understand the book of Revelation numerically or this way or that way, it's better to be understood as a great musical composition because a great musical composition takes themes from here and themes from there and weaves them in and then has one theme playing against another. And so you can think like for example Pachelbel's thing has been reproduced by many musicians and the same thing with other things.

The unity of John's book, then, is neither chronological nor arithmetical, but artistic, like that of a musical theme with variations, each variation adding something new to the significance of the whole composition. This is the only view which does adequate justice to the double fact that each new series of visions both recapitulates and develops the themes already stated in what has gone before. (G. B. Caird (1966), *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (London: Black), p. 106)

So if we listen to classical music, you get this picture, that's the book of Revelation and what you see here in Revelation 8 is exactly what you find in Revelation 6, which we saw several weeks ago. In Revelation 6 and verse 9, page 1,920.

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.

And then the prayers of the believers in heaven, the martyrs in heaven, results in terrible judgment as you see beginning in verse 12. That's exactly what we have in Revelation 8.

So we have here another vision. This next vision takes the previous theme, builds on it, and adds to it, and what you find if you study the trumpets, these first four trumpets parallel the judgment on Egypt by God on the Egyptians and on their gods.

So they're themes taken out of the Old Testament that are here. and that are repeated and then they're intensified, just as I think about that Maurice Ravel piece called *Bolero*, and so you get this theme that starts out like this and builds and builds and builds and builds and intensifies and that's the book of Revelation. So that theme comes again and again and again and again with greater intensity until finally it experiences a musical climax and that's the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation is the sum and the substance of the whole Bible with themes taken from Genesis and from the teachings of Jesus and especially the prophets.

So how do we understand then this judgment of Revelation 8 that follows the prayers of God's people in verse 3 through verse 5? How do we understand it? And I'm going to give you something that I'd like you to ponder for a moment. I have studied the book of Revelation for many years. In fact, it was the only book of the Bible I was curious about before I became a Christian. So I was curious about it.

Many non-Christians are curious about things. That's why people go to fortune tellers, they want to understand the times in which we live. So they go to fortune tellers, "Tell me what's going to happen. What do I need to do?"

And the thing we've got to say is this, Deuteronomy 29:29, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that have been revealed belong to us and to our children that we may do all the words of this law." In other words, the Bible isn't given to us so that we can throw charts up on the wall and predict that tomorrow, as Israel is at war with Hamas, that the Russians are going to fire nuclear weapons and destroy the city of Jerusalem, and it will spread out and destroy the Middle East, and we're all going to go up in smoke. That Dr. Strangelove in Slim Pickens is going to be riding a nuclear bomb out of a B-52...

My brother used to fly those things with nuclear weapons, and they still have nuclear weapons on them always, mutually assured destruction, acronym MAD, Mutually Assured Destruction, MAD.

So is that going to happen tomorrow? "Well, if you listen carefully, I will tell you that by the end of this week, this is going to happen." **No. That's not the purpose of the book of Revelation.**

In fact, the purpose of the book of Revelation fundamentally, though not exclusively, was for the people who were living in the days of Jesus and that's really, really, really, really, really important to understand.

Now that particular viewpoint is called preterism. Preterism, meaning it's all been fulfilled.

But there's another view, and that is futurism, meaning it's all going to be fulfilled.

And then there's historicism, which was the traditional Protestant understanding of this book until the 20th century, which says the book of Revelation is history written beforehand of the whole world.

And so in historicism, if you look at Revelation 9, which we're not going to do today, that is seen as a prophecy of Muhammad and of the first conquest of Islam against Christianity, and in the second part of Revelation 9, it's seen

as a fulfillment of the prophecy. It's fulfilled in 1453 when the giant cannons that were developed by a Polish man broke down the walls of Constantinople. And so it's seen there. Revelation 9 is interpreted as the advance of Islam.

What do I believe? What I believe is there's truth in every single theological system that real Christians, Bible-believing Christians, come up with.

So here's what I'm saying. Revelation is about events that occurred in the lifetime of those who knew Jesus, but it also has a future dimension that if we deny that, we're just going to be blindsided.

So let's think for a moment, first of all, of how this is relevant to people who were living in the days of the Lord Jesus when Jesus prophetically told that all the things he foretold in the Olivet Discourse would be fulfilled in the lifetime of those who heard him speak. And we know for a fact that Jesus, who according to the best dating system, died in 30 AD, AD 30, his words were literally fulfilled in AD 70, exactly a generation later, 40 years later (Matthew 23:36).

So how could we understand Revelation 8 and the judgments that are being poured out in the first century? Turn with me, if you will, to the book of 1 Thessalonians. 1 Thessalonians 2, beginning at verse 13, page 1,838. Now Paul is writing to the Christians in Thessalonica and the Christians in Thessalonica were grievously persecuted and Paul was grievously persecuted. He was driven out of the town. And you see that again and again as you read the missionary journeys, the first missionary journey, the second missionary journey, the third missionary journey. He's always being persecuted, and believers are being persecuted and we're going to see here one of the great persecutors of the Christian church. And so he writes to the Christians in Thessalonica, and this is probably the very first letter that Paul ever wrote, page 1,838, verse 13.

And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe. 14 For you, brothers, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own countrymen.

Now, he's speaking to Gentiles who were from Macedonia, and he's writing to them, and he's telling them that they've been persecuted by their fellow Gentiles, and he says,

You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews. (1 Thessalonians 2:14)

Now who are the churches in Judea? The churches in Judea are Jewish people. And who persecuted the Jewish people? The Jews who rejected Jesus persecuted their fellow Jews. And even today, you will find that in certain countries that the opposition to Christianity, though not as violent as in Saudi Arabia, is still very violent and particularly with Orthodox Jews. And he says you became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus. You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews. Verse 15,

15 who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all men 16 in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last [or in fullest measure].

This is a truth we must not forget: That the persecutors of Christians until the time of Jerusalem's fall were the Jewish people who did not accept Jesus as Messiah. This is important, and it's important particularly as we look at conflicts in the Middle East today. In other words, non-believing Jewish people, people who reject Jesus as their Messiah have no hope, because the only hope anyone has is the Lord Jesus Christ. To die as a Jew or to die as a Gentile without Jesus is to go to hell and that is an important truth that we need to understand. And we also need to understand, as Paul writes these words to the Christians in Thessalonica, the enormous persecution of believing Jews by unbelieving Jews.

And he says here something else, they "killed the Lord Jesus." Now, we don't follow in that they therefore are to be persecuted. None of that nonsense. That's wickedness. But he does say something here in the next sentence, "and the prophets."

Now, when you begin to understand that, if you want to analyze the Old Testament, when you're analyzing the prophets, what you discover is this, the prophets are prosecuting Israel with a lawsuit. In Hebrew, that's a *riv* (רִיב, רִיב). They're prosecuting Israel. They're bringing against the nation of Israel to the north and the nation of Judah to the south, they're bringing against them the sanctions in the Torah, particularly in the book of Leviticus and in Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy 28, these curses.

And if you analyze the history of the Jewish people from well before the time of Christ, over and over and over again the curses of the Torah are visited on the Jewish people. It is incorrect in one way to refer to them as Jewish people because the Jewish people are those who are of the tribe of Judah, whereas the other tribes generally referred to Israel. But what you find over and over again is that the prophets are all about a lawsuit that God has against his own people because they entered into a covenant with God at Mount Sinai and the prophets are carrying out that lawsuit and demonstrating to God's people why they're in danger, and that's why you discover again and again and again that people ended up eating their own children (2 Kings 6:28-29; Jeremiah 19:9; Lamentations 2:20; 4:10; Ezekiel 5:10).

It's one of the curse sanctions that was visited on Israel. At the time of the fall, in 722, when the northern kingdom fell to Assyria, in the time when the southern kingdom fell to Babylon, and again, if you read the historical writings, what happened between AD 66 and AD 70, people killed and ate their own children, and that curse is mentioned in Leviticus 26:29 and Deuteronomy 28:53-57. So the prophets of the Old Testament are about telling people, "You better repent. God is going to deal with you," and the people who are going to be blessed are only a small remnant (Isaiah 10:22, *et al.* shā'ar, שָׂאֵר), and so that's the thing.

So he said they "killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all men in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved."

And if you read the book of Acts, you discover that again and again; with the ministry of St. Paul, you discover on these journeys whenever unbelieving Jews who did not accept the Lord Jesus as their Messiah—because the Bible in the Old Testament is crystal clear, Jesus is the Messiah of Israel, and you can prove it from the Old Testament to any objective

reader. He's prophesied over and over again: Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, all these things. So the result is that those that reject what the Old Testament itself says are doing so because of a bias that is bigotry.

And then also there's this enormous racism. That's a modern word, but there's an enormous racism here. "We've got something special, and we don't want the Gentiles to have it." And you see it over and over again. Acts 13, great jealousy when they saw that Gentiles were turning to Jesus they become incensed, enraged, they're angry when they saw the crowds (Acts 13:34-35). And so you can see that. And so there's this effort. There were fanatics, Jewish fanatics, that followed Paul throughout his missionary journeys wherever he went to stir up crowds of opposition.

That's why Paul got stoned. In one place he comes in Lycaoniam (Actually in Lystra, where they spoke the Lycaonian language), and he performs a great miracle, a man is healed, and then the priests of the pagan gods come out to offer sacrifices, and Paul and Barnabas are saying, "Don't do that, we're just people like you, we're ordinary people," and tell them about the Lord God and about the Lord Jesus. But then arrives a group of people who had been dogging him, who had been trailing him, and they didn't want him to be doing that, and so they stirred up the crowds and Paul gets stoned, but God miraculously raises him back after he's stoned (Acts 14:19-20). So you can see that. There's this opposition. And then he says, "In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them to the uttermost."

And what you have in Revelation 8 is a judgment of God on unbelieving Israel, and that's something to think about. Now, think about it this way, too, if you'll turn back to the left to the book of Galatians. Galatians. But again, I want to say, that doesn't mean that's all there is to it. **There's a future application of this.**

Look at Galatians 4 and listen to what he says. We're going to read two places there. Galatians 4 in verse 24, page 1,814:

These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem. (Galatians 4:24-25)

The city of Jerusalem, when Paul wrote this, still existed. Of course, it exists today. And what's he saying about the current city of Jerusalem? Look at what he says: "She is in slavery with her children." The present Jerusalem, he says, in slavery with her children.

Then he says in verse 26: "The Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother."

If you're a believer, if you trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, you belong to the heavenly Jerusalem that's going to come down to earth when the Lord returns (Revelation 21:2). And notice what he says then.

He reads in verse 27, he quotes, and he says:

"Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband."

Look at verse 28, "Now you brothers."

You brothers, these are Christians in Turkey. These are Christians in Asia Minor, or Turkey. And he says, "you brothers," these are Gentiles, "like Isaac are children of promise. At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit."

Who's the son born in the ordinary way? Well, that's the children, that's Hagar's son, Ishmael, and Ishmael persecuted Isaac. Now notice what he says:

It is the same now. But what does the Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son."
Therefore, brothers, we (Turkish believers in Jesus Christ, along with Jewish believers in Jesus Christ), are not children of the slave woman, but of the free.

This is a very important truth. Flip back to Galatians 3, and he says there in page 1,813:

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:26-29)

This is very important because the children of Hagar are in the middle of a great war right now in Jerusalem and what we call Israel. Those are the children of Hagar, the Ishmaelites, and those who claim to be the children of Abraham, and the Ishmaelites are children of Abraham. In other words, these two groups of people descended from Abraham, the father of the faithful, who don't know the Lord God, are fighting each other in their bitterness and hatred and it's going on now, it's been going on since the time when Ishmael mocked Isaac (Genesis 21:8-14).

They're fighting over a piece of real estate. That's what's going on. What's that piece of real estate? Is it significant? No! (Gesturing up) That piece of real estate is what's significant. That's where my home is. My home isn't in Louisiana or Texas. My home is in heaven, the heavenly Jerusalem, because one day that heavenly Jerusalem is going to come down on this earth, and everybody who has known the Lord Jesus Christ will be a citizen of that heavenly kingdom (Galatians 3:26; Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 21:2).

But worldly folks, worldly folks fight over real estate. It reminds me of relatives on both mama's and daddy's side where people didn't even speak to each other, wouldn't go to each other's funerals. In one case on my father's side, two children of one of my uncles who will go unnamed, they're all dead by the way, wouldn't speak to each other because a lawyer had an old reclining chair in his office that they fought over and couldn't agree over and wouldn't speak to each other over. They wouldn't go to each other's funerals. They hated each other.

I remember when I preached at our mutual aunt's funeral. I'll never forget. I'll never forget. One brother and sister sat down front, and another sister sat about six rows back, and when I began to talk about why my aunt, Inez, had lived such a long life to die at 102 and a half, I said, she had no bitterness against anybody. And you know what my one first cousin started doing? She began to try to get me to stop (gesturing with her hand across her throat). But you know what that does to me? That's like saying to a dog, "Sic 'em!"

So I just bore on down. You've got to forgive other people. Real Christians forgive others the way that Jesus forgives us.

What's going on in Jerusalem right now is a seething hatred that's been there since the time of Isaac and Ishmael, and it's just going to get worse. And someone would say, "Well, is the Lord going to intervene?" I don't know.

You know, in 70 AD, the Romans wiped out the city of Jerusalem, and I think that what's there in Revelation 8 is pointing to that. But that doesn't complete it. There's more to come. You know that, and then in 79 AD, and this to me is the most horrific thing of all, a group of zealots who escaped from Jerusalem finally held out and they captured Herod's fortress that overlooks the Dead Sea, a place called Masada.

I've been to Masada and we know exactly what happened at Masada, and at Masada those anti-Christian, anti-Bible, fanatical zealots held out against the Romans on and on and on, until the Romans, who were great engineers, finally built a dirt ramp to get up there, and by the time they had completed it and were ready to go ahead with their battering rams and go inside, they only found a survivor and that survivor had escaped and hidden because what happened is those people who hated the God of the Bible and did not look to the God of the Bible for their deliverance, deliberately committed mass suicide.

There's no difference in Masada and Jonestown under Jim Jones. It was mass suicide. They killed each other and then the last one surviving killed himself. Do you know what? When I was in Israel in 2000, and we toured Masada, that's where Israeli soldiers go to vow their loyalty to the modern Israeli state.

In other words, in Jesus there's life. Without Jesus there's only death and suicide.

I want you to look with me for a moment at Romans 11 because the times in which we live urge us to pray for the Jewish people. On page 1,763, and you look here at verse 28:

As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are

irrevocable. Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

And he ends with a doxology that we'll look at in a moment.

Here's where we are: Will the Jewish people who overthrew the British government and were engaged in an act of terrorism when the early founders of Israel in 1948 blew up the King David Hotel, murdering all the British Civil Service, their wives and little children, an act of terrorism, and people who were involved were people like Golda Meir and Menachem Begin.

That act of terrorism founded the modern Israeli state. Will the modern Israeli state survive? And I have to tell you, I don't know. The Bible doesn't tell me it will. When Jerusalem was destroyed and the whole Jewish system was destroyed at Masada in 79 AD, they did reestablish a Jewish state in the next century under a man by the name of Simon bar Kokhba. They even minted coins.

In my meager coin collection, I have a coin from the time that Israel was back in the land in the second century after Christ under Simon bar Kokhba and I have that coin.

And so the Jewish state was reestablished in the Holy Land in the second century, and then when the Romans crushed that revolt, they plowed the city under. And so will the state founded in 1948 under the Irgun survive? I don't know. But this we do know, we do know that God is determined to do whatever he has to do to save his own people.

And so what he says in verse 28 is very powerful. Currently, the Jewish people are in opposition to the gospel, and he says, on account of the gospel, they're enemies on your account but as far as election is concerned, they're loved on account of the patriarchs. What does that mean?

I think that modern-day Israel and all of the Jewish people who rejected Jesus, are like what we call covenant children. What is a covenant child in Presbyterian and Reformed thinking? A covenant child is a child born to a

Christian parent who has been dedicated to God usually by the waters of baptism and committed to God.

Does that mean that that child is then and there automatically saved no matter what happens? The answer to that question is no.

There are millions of covenant children who do not know God and who, when they die, go to hell. Millions of covenant children baptized, dedicated to the Lord by a parent or parents, who don't end up being saved.

What do we do when we pray for a child or a grandchild or a great grandchild who's been dedicated to the Lord but is far, far, far away from God? What do we do? We plead the promises of God. Say, "O Lord, Lord, we gave her to you in the waters of baptism. Lord, we dedicated him as we presented him in the church, and we made promises on his behalf, and so did the church that was gathered there that day make promises on his behalf. O Lord, please don't let him go! O Lord, do whatever you've got to do to bring him to Jesus, because our child is lost, because our child needs to be saved, because our child is far, far, far away from God!"

So when we dedicate a child to God, by prayer, by baptism as an infant, what we're doing is laying hold of the promises of God but those promises actually ensure trouble for that child, if that child continues on in a path of disobedience to God. But we plead the promises of God, "Lord, Lord, Lord, please reach out, do whatever you have to do that we may see him, that we may see her at the wedding supper of the Lamb!"

Now that's the position I think that's analogous to what we have here in Romans 11 and verse 28. We plead with God.

Now is a great time to pray for the Jewish people. In the past 50 years, there's never been a time to be more in prayer for the Jewish people. How do you pray for the Jewish people? That they win against the Palestinians who are also children of Abraham?

These descendants of Hagar, according to the flesh, fighting each other over a piece of real estate that really isn't valuable in the eyes of God, because the true Jerusalem is coming down from heaven soon. What do you pray for?

Just as you'd pray for your own child or grandchild. "Lord, please don't let them go! Lord, please, please do whatever it takes for them to cry out to you and turn to you!"

If you've seen the videos, as I've seen, of people kidnapped, it's a strange thing how Israel under Benjamin Netanyahu was totally blindsided, and you know the people that were kidnapped were not Orthodox Jews. The Orthodox Jews correspond to the Pharisees of Jesus' day.

The people that were kidnapped looked like our kinds of kids, going to a big rave, a giant dance, everybody celebrating.

Do you know what a woman looks like to a Muslim man who is not properly attired? Do you understand what proper attire under Islam means? Your hands are visible, your feet are visible, your face is visible. But if you look at those pictures, these are young people who look just like kids in Texarkana celebrating some big rock concert, and the middle of that big rock concert is when this mass uprising, this next intifada happened. And they kidnapped these kids. I mean, it's horrible to see. You can see people caught utterly by surprise with the plastic snips going on as handcuffs thrown into a Jeep. They're holding them hostage.

I tell you that the Middle East is about to explode, and Asia is about to explode. If you push the Russian bear into a corner, never forget this, whatever else may be true, Russia has plenty of nuclear weapons that are targeted on us. What would happen? What would happen if Russia resorts to nuclear weapons?

I'll tell you what would happen. There's going to be retaliation, and then a retaliation, and retaliation. And what would happen is our country would be hit.

I remember during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the only thing that saved us from nuclear war was a Russian commander in the submarine fleet. Two of the men agreed to launch nuclear weapons but because the commander was on board that submarine (Vasily Arkhipov), he countermanded their order and said, "Do not fire those nukes."

What would have happened? I think of the silly things that we did in school, in Myrtle Beach High School, because we were about seven or eight miles

from Myrtle Beach Air Force Base. They had us get under our desks. Ha! What a ridiculous thing to do.

And then one time they had us all leave the classrooms and close the door, and so all we had was semi-darkness, it wasn't totally dark because there were lights on like the exit lights. We were in there and all of a sudden a 10th grader behind me started screaming, a 10th grade girl. And she was right to scream because if that Russian submarine commander had not countermanded the orders of those two guys, it had all been over. And she began to scream, and you know what, and this illustrates the difference between the early '60s and where we are today in school, a female teacher walked over to where she was and slapped her in the face. Why did the teacher slap her in the face? Because she was going hysterical, and hysteria is contagious.

So where are we on October the 8, 2023. Are we near the Lord's return? I think so, but I can't be dogmatic. Is what's happening in Israel going to trigger World War III? I don't know. It sure could.

Is what's happening between Russia and the Ukraine likely to trigger it? It's really likely to trigger it. And remember, never forget MAD, mutually assured destruction.

So pray for the Jewish people to come to know the Lord Jesus Christ because to die without Jesus, whether you're Jewish or Gentile, you have the same fate. And pray for your own children who are lost. Pray for children of this church who've wandered away from the faith and no longer are loyal to Jesus. Pray and plead the promises of God, promises that were made by some of you here for those children. Pray for them and be sure yourself as I address it to those who may be watching.

We're living in perilous times. We're living in times when before the day is over, we could be involved in a nuclear war, and if we are, Mutually Assured Destruction, we'll all be wiped out. I don't know about you, but I want to know for sure that I'm going to have a happy landing in the hereafter. And I know that. How do I know that?

I know that because I've turned from my life of sin and embraced Jesus Christ as he's offered in the gospel. I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, when he died on the cross, died in my place as my substitute and I offer him

to you as he's offered in the gospel. Repent of your sins. Cast yourself on his mercy in Jesus Christ. Come to the Lord Jesus Christ because the prayers of the saints are resulting in the judgment of God in the first century and throughout history until the Lord returns.

May we pray.

Lord, bless this message that it may be used to advance your kingdom in the world. And Lord, we pray that you would not allow us to be people who are full of fear, but full of hope and full of confidence because whatever happens on October 8, 2023, one day the world as we know it will be utterly destroyed in a great conflagration of fire. Lord, grant us to live our lives in light of that truth by coming to you, knowing you, sharing our faith in you with others, and praying for others. And we pray for Israel. We pray for the peace of Jerusalem. May they prosper who love you.

In Jesus' name, amen.