

**Wars and Rumors of War**

Matthew 24:6, 7

**Natural Catastrophes and the End**

Luke 21:11

**Abounding Lawlessness**

Matthew 24:12, 13

**The End of All Fear: He Is Risen**

Matthew 28:5, 6

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*Reformed Witness Hour*

(www.reformedwitnesshour.org)

**Station Listings**

<b>Station</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Time/day</b>
KARI	Blaine, WA.....	550AM.....	8:00 P.M./Sunday
KCWN	Pella, IA.....	99.9FM.....	3:30 P.M./Sunday
KDCR	Sioux Center, IA.....	88.5FM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KGDN	Tri-Cities Walla Walla, OR.....	101.3FM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KLOH	Pipestone, MN.....	1050AM.....	8:00 A.M./Sunday
KLTT	Denver, CO.....	670AM.....	1:30 P.M./Sunday
KPRO	Riverside, CA.....	1570AM.....	11:30 A.M./Sunday
KSPO	Spokane, WA.....	106.5FM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KTAC	Moses Lake, WA.....	93.9FM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KTBI	Wenatchee/Moses Lake, WA.....	810AM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KTRW	Spokane, WA.....	630AM.....	9:30 A.M./Sunday
KYAK	Yakima, WA.....	930AM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
WFDL	Fond Du Lac, WI.....	1170AM.....	8:00 A.M./Sunday
WFUR	Grand Rapids, MI.....	102.9FM.....	8:00 A.M./Sunday
WFUR	Grand Rapids, MI.....	1570AM, 92.9FM ...	4:00 P.M./Sunday
	NYC-Long Island, NY.....	101.5FM, 94.9FM, 104.5FM, 96.5FM ...	8:30 A.M./Sunday
WORD	Pittsburgh, PA.....	101.5FM.....	10:00 A.M./Sunday
WPGF	Carlisle, PA.....	91.3FM.....	8:00 A.M./Sunday
<b>UK</b>			
GOSPEL	Northern Ireland.....	846AM.....	8:30 A.M./Sunday
<b>Canada</b>			
CKNX	Wingham, ON.....	920 AM.....	7:00 A.M./Sunday

**THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR***March 6, 2016*  
*No. 3818**Wars and Rumors of Wars*  
*Rev. Rodney Kley*

Dear radio friends,

Jesus is coming again. As Christians we know this, not only because He has promised to return, but also because He has given to us signs of His coming. We read about these in Matthew 24. The disciples asked Jesus a question: “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”

In this chapter Jesus gives them signs of His coming. One of those is war. We read about it in verses 6 and 7: “And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.” Every one of us, though we may not be personally involved in war, is aware of the reality of war. Libya, Syria, Sudan, Kosovo, Iraq, Egypt, Serbia, Yemen, Iran, Afghanistan, Somalia, Russia, the Ukraine, Vietnam, Korea, Germany, Great Britain, France—as I list those countries, you may not be able to show on a map where they are, but there is one thing you know

they all have in common: war. War is constant, a constant part of man’s history in this world. If we have not lived in a war zone, we have lived through periods of time when our own country has been at war. We have witnessed on the news and read about it in the papers—attacks on our own land. We have read or we have seen documentaries about the history of war in the last century. We have known people deployed to war—maybe some who have never come home. We know something of the technology of war—the guns, the planes, the tanks, and the bombs. We are aware of the results of war—the famine, the wasted land, the burned cities, the refugees, the widows, the orphans, the massive cemeteries.

Mistakenly we sometimes think of war as something glamorous and glorious. We read about it and we catch the excitement of the heroism and the tactical maneuvers of the military. We learn about the weapons and the technology and we are amazed at it. A recruiter comes with his pitch and we think of it as glamor-

ous and glorious—all without experiencing war firsthand.

War is horrible and devastating. It brings grief and destruction. Just ask anyone who has been involved in war. This is true for the soldiers on the battlefield who have to watch as their comrades around them are eaten up with the weapons of the enemy. This is horrible for those who are taken prisoner and put into concentration camps and tortured and burned. This is horrible for the citizens of a country at war in which all that is normal comes to a halt—there is no food, education, or recreation, and all the resources are poured into the war effort. This is horrible for those attached and occupied. There is death, there is rape, there is burning, there is bombing, there is destruction, and there are the ever-present enemy forces.

Then there is the horrible aftermath. Immediate results—displaced refugees by the thousands fleeing through the mountains with bare feet and with no food—to where? They do not know. Orphans and widows returning after war—to what? Then the long-term effects—the post-traumatic stress disorder. Men have to live with this for years. It affects their whole life and all their relationships. These are some of the horrors of war.

It is this horrible reality

that Jesus has in mind when He says in the text, Matthew 24:6, “Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars.” Jesus speaks of this as a reality. He does this by repeating ideas. He speaks of wars. Then He speaks of rumors of wars. Wars are actual conflicts; rumors of wars are the conflicts that are brewing in political affairs. There is a cycle of war—nation rising against nation. And it goes on and on. One conflict will finish; another will take its place. An army will pull out of one theater and then engage in a war elsewhere. One war will end with a treaty that is supposed to end all wars and a few decades later there will be another great war. Jesus says, not “you might hear of war,” but “ye shall, ye shall hear. All these things,” He says, “must come to pass.” This is because God has decreed it to be so.

Jesus has in mind here also that war is horrible. He indicates that when He says, “Be not troubled.” We are tempted to be troubled. What does war do? It creates fear. It troubles us. The very thought is horrifying. Imagine sending off your husband or your teenage boys not knowing if you will ever see them again. You hear the planes going overhead, the bombs and bullets whizzing by, the tanks rattling down the streets. You cannot go outside after dark. Soldiers come. What will they do with your children, with your

the breaking apart of body and soul. Perhaps, in your sickness, you imagine your own death and you tremble at the thought. “Fear not,”

that is the message of the angel, “Jesus is risen.” We do not need to be afraid of death. Jesus entered into the grave, and all the suffering of death, to transform it, to make it a place of rest, to make death a servant that will bring us into the glory of the presence of God. Death is described in Scripture as sleeping, sleeping in Jesus with hope. We fall asleep in Jesus in the hope of the bodily resurrection, seeing death as a transition into the very presence of God.

So, this is the victory note of the resurrection of Jesus Christ: “Fear not ye, He is risen!” That is the end of all our fears. You can take any fear that you have and look at it through faith in Jesus Christ and be able to overcome that fear.

So today, as we confess that Jesus is risen from the dead (and remember this on this Resurrection Sunday, the first day of the week), let us stand, by faith,

at the tomb of Jesus and hear the voice of the angel: “Fear not ye, He is not here; for He is risen.” Let us tour the tomb, by faith, and see

it empty and see the empty grave clothes and see Jesus risen victorious. He has overcome the grave, He has overcome sin, He has overcome Satan. He is Lord of all. He will overcome every obstacle. He is able to save to the uttermost. He will bring us, in the end, to glory.

Do not be afraid.

Let us pray.

Father, we thank Thee for the wonder and the victory of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Fill us with an assurance that, because He is Lord over all, we do not need to be afraid. But all things are in His hand, for our sake. So we pray that we may have this confidence as we look forward, and even as we face the prospect of death ourselves, to know the victory that is ours in Jesus Christ. We ask it for His sake, Amen.

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and perseverance. Just as Jesus Himself has entered into the permanent glorious state of His resurrection, so He will do for us, and the good work that He has begun in us He will perform till the day of Jesus Christ. Fear not, He is risen.

Or there are other fears that we have—the fears of the unknown future, fears because of health or financial struggles or politics or the affairs of the nations, fears because we have children and we worry about their future in the end times, fears because we know that the church of God will face persecution in the future. Perhaps there is even this fear, that you have something that is good and you love it and you hold to it very tightly and you fear that you will lose it. Jesus knew that. He said to His disciples: “Take no thought for the morrow.” He is saying in that that the Father has sovereign rule over all the affairs of your life in the future. We know that now, because Jesus is risen from the dead. As the one who is risen from the dead, He has been given this dominion and this power over all things. Everything in the present is in His hands. Everything in the future is in His hands. And the hands of Jesus are good hands and loving hands and strong hands. Ephesians 1:20ff. is talking about the power of God and the demonstration of that power, and then it says this:

“which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principalities and power and might and dominion; and every name that is named not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under his feet and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.” That means, for the advantage of the church. Jesus rules over all things as the resurrected, ascended Lord, in His glory, for the sake of His church. Fear not.

I think of the words that Jesus says to His disciples in Luke 12:32. He is speaking to them, as they are representative of the church. He says, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” He describes the church in the world as defenseless, a little flock, sheep, small. “Fear not,” He says. The Father’s good pleasure is to give you the kingdom. How does the Father give you the kingdom? He does it through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Or, perhaps, there is for you the real fear of death and the grave, the prospect of death. As believers, we do not necessarily have a fear of the judgment, but the experience of death itself is fearful. Disease, old age, and there is nothing so painful as the tearing apart of our existence—

daughters? Fear. Of course war makes us fearful. Jesus speaks here of the horror of war.

But now, as we think of the horror of war, we must understand that it is more than just these experiences that are the result of warfare. There is a deeper, darker horror involved in war. In James, chapter 4, James asks this question: “From whence come wars among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your heart?” This is the cause of war—man’s lust, man’s greed, man’s desire for revenge. There is in the heart of man and in the body of believers (James 4) a microcosm of what goes on in the world. The same sinful nature that motivates any war is in our heart. We have to be reminded of that today, to be rebuked of our greed, our hatred, that motivates us, maybe not to kill with weapons, but certainly with words.

War reveals the dark hatred also in the heart of man for God. In Psalm 2: “Wherefore do the nations rage? The kings and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed saying, Let us cast his authority from us.” Every war is motivated by a rebellion and a lust for power, not only to throw off authority but to throw off *God’s* authority. So the horror of war reveals to us the horrible reality of the depravity of the

heart of man. This began immediately after the fall into sin. Cain rose up in hatred against his own brother, Abel. So long as there is sin in the world, there will be war.

That is why we are exhorted in I Timothy 2 to pray for kings and those in authority, so that they will not be governed by hearts of unbelief and hatred and selfish pride, but by faith. We pray that the God who saves from every class of humanity will work repentance and faith in the hearts of rulers so that they may rule with peace.

But now, even though the cause of the horror of war is man’s sin, still God is on the throne. He sends war and He has a purpose with war. Think, for example, of Isaiah 45:6, 7: “I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil.” The word for evil here is literally war. “I the LORD do all these things.” God makes peace and God creates war.

We might ask, “When did God do this?” We go all the way back to early history in the book of Genesis to the tower of Babel. The nations united together as one to build a tower up to heaven in defiance of the authority of God. They wanted to stay together. They saw power in numbers. They wanted to establish a kingdom of man.

And God looked down and He said, “If this happens, nothing will be withheld from men.” So God confused the languages and He scattered man across the earth. Those who were scattered formed nations and governments. They became suspicious of one another. They claimed territory for themselves. The result is, in the history of man, struggle and warfare. “I the LORD do all these things.” When we say that God did this, we mean that Jesus Christ does this. Jesus is the One who tells us here that there will be wars and rumors of wars. In Psalm 2 we read that “He that sits in heaven shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision. Yet have I set my king on my holy hill of Zion.” This is the One who sits on the throne. He is the One who says, “There must be war. I send war.” Then you think of Revelation 6 and the opening of the seals and the riding of the horses. There is a horse who brings war, who carries a sword.

We might ask, “Why? Why does God send war? Why does Jesus send war?” Jesus explains it in the text this way: “The end is not yet.” These things *must* take place, but the end is not yet. It is with the end in view that there must be war in the history of the world. The end that is in view here is not just the cessation of time as we know it, but the purpose and the goal that Jesus has for all of history.

The purpose is the second coming of Jesus Christ, in which He will gather together all things in one. Jesus is answering the question of His disciples, “When shall the end be?” As a king, He is going away, and He will send these things as signs, precursors, of His coming and of the end of the world. He sends war throughout history in preparation for His coming. War is one of the things that brings Jesus Christ and that makes all things ready for His return.

How does this prepare for the return of Jesus Christ? It does this in at least four ways.

First, it keeps the rise of the kingdom of Antichrist and the union of all the nations of the earth together as one, under one government, it keeps this at bay. The Antichrist cannot arise. War creates a distraction. War creates division. The world wants peace between the nations. And peace is what will happen at the very end of time, when Satan is released from his pit and he will go out and deceive the nations and bring them together and gather them from the four corners of the earth to compass about the city of God. That is a reference to the time of great tribulation. God, in the present, throughout New Testament history, will not allow this. War is God’s way of stopping the rise of the kingdom of Antichrist and the great persecution of

clothes lying wrapped together as they had been around the body of Jesus, and then the linen cloth folded separately, showing the care and personal touch of the Savior. Perhaps these women, who knew Jesus so well, knew His habits and would see this personal touch. This was not a pile of clothes that someone had hurriedly gotten out of but, carefully the Savior had folded this napkin and laid it aside. This is what they saw.

He is risen. He is risen indeed! And they hurried back to the disciples with the message of the resurrection of the Savior, with joy in their hearts. You see, that message that the angel gave was the end of their confusion and the end of their fears and their anxiety.

So it is for us today. In all our fears, in all our confusion, in all our anxiety, in all our questions—this is the hopeful message that the angel brings: “Fear not ye; He is not here, He is risen.” Think about your fears. What are they? Is one of them your sin? If you have a true sense of your sin and a true sense of the majesty and the holiness of God and even a real understanding of the reason that Jesus had to die and the price that He had to

pay for sin—well, of course, then you will fear before God. There is the fear of what sin deserves. But the resurrection answers these fears. It tells us that Jesus Christ paid the full price for our sins. Because He is risen, we are forgiven. His resurrection is the testimony to us today that all of our sins are gone. In the resurrection, God Himself put the “Amen” on all of Jesus’ work. He said in His suffering at the very end, “It is finished.” Now, in the resurrection, God says, as it were, “It is finished, indeed!” I Corinthians 15 puts it this way in the negative: “If Christ be not risen...your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins....But now is Christ risen.” You are not in your sins yet. Your faith is not vain. The point is that the price has been paid for sins and the victory has been won. We do not need to hide from the wrath of God, for Jesus Christ has paid the price.

Or perhaps it is your sins from this point of view: the fear of being overwhelmed by the power of remaining sin in your life or the temptations of Satan and the world around you. The resurrection means we do not have to be afraid. Jesus is risen from the dead. He has given us new life, life in which there is victory and strength

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said.” This is a reminder to them of what Jesus had promised before His death. We might have expected the angel to rebuke them. Instead, this is a message of comfort

and encouragement to these women who are so confused and afraid. There is a mildness. Their unbelief is rebuked but forgiven. Luke tells us in Luke 24:8 that, at the angel’s word, these women remembered what Jesus had said.

Then the angel, having spoken this beautiful message, invites these women to come. “Come,” he says, “see the place where the Lord lay.” Matthew does not give us any more detail than this. He wants the emphasis to fall on this: that the tomb was open and empty. “Come, see the place where the Lord lay. He is not here, he is risen.” The empty tomb is the proof to these women that Jesus is risen from the dead. Notice one thing here in what the angel says: “Come, see the place where the *Lord* lay.” “Lord” is a name that refers to sovereignty and to rule. It refers to Jesus as the one who has the victory, who has overcome, who exercises dominion. The one who is our Savior, the one who is our Christ, is also our Lord. This is especially His

resurrection title. The angel’s calling Him Lord means He has overcome the grave and He rules over sin and death. Later in this day the disciples will exclaim to each other:

“The Lord is risen; He is risen indeed.” When Thomas, a week later, sees Jesus, he will say, “My Lord and my God!” You see, this name emphasizes that Jesus has the victory. And what a victory it was.

Perhaps you stood at a cemetery before. It is a somber place. I have stood in cemeteries, at gravesides, with beloved believers, and we have wept together. It is a quiet place. But here the angel speaks with a thundering voice. He says, “Come, come on a grand tour of this cemetery, of this grave. I will show you something marvelous. He is not here. He is risen.”

Luke indicates that there was more than one angel, that, in fact, when the women came into the tomb they saw a second angel. John tells us that these angels sat one at the head and one at the foot of the place where Jesus was laid. John also gives us the details of the place where He had lain—the eyewitness account of Peter and John and what they saw in the tomb, the

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His church. This is so that the church can be busy in the work of the preaching of the gospel. War distracts the nations from destroying the witness of the church and so God’s people may continue in this great important work.

Not only does it keep the Antichrist at bay, but, in the second place, it prepares the world itself for the rise of Antichrist. Who today does not cry out for peace? War creates a longing in the earth for one kingdom. Because of man’s greed, that peace is impossible. Even when it comes, in the end it will only be for a brief time. But, when the time is ripe for Antichrist, the world will say, “We want peace, and we want it at all costs. Give us food and give us peace. And you can rule over us.” And that will be the promise that Antichrist will give.

Third, at the same time, war prepares the world and makes it ripe for the final judgment of God. War in itself is an expression of the wrath of God against the depravity and the greed of the heart of man. In sending war, God gives man over to his sin. Man brings destruction to himself. By this warring, man makes himself ready for that time in the end when all the powers of the world and all the powers of warfare will be turned against the church, and God will come and say, “It’s enough.” He

will come to save His own. Jesus will come to destroy the wicked and the devil and the Antichrist, and to bring His people into eternal salvation and glory.

Then, in the fourth place, wars prepare us, as God’s people, for the coming of Jesus Christ. That is the purpose of the signs as Jesus gives them to us, so that we can know that He is coming, so that we can watch for His coming, and so that we can be ready for the day when He comes.

We need to recognize the reality of war. The world is always saying, “We can overcome war. We can bring peace. Just a few more diplomats, a few more policies, a wiser president, a wiser world-ruler.” The church and Christians can sometimes buy into that mentality as well. This does not mean that as Christians we should be war-mongers, but we have to realize that so long as there is sin, true peace is impossible. Apart from the gospel, there can be no peace. Apart from faith in God and obedience to His way, there will always be war. This war is in the heart of man. It is the cross alone that, first, brings peace between God and man and, then, overcomes the sinful heart of man so that there can be a true peace and love between believers.

The purpose of the gospel, though, is not earthly peace. It is the peace between God and man,

the abolishing of sin in the final day when Jesus returns. While we should long for peace on the earth so that we can freely do our work, we should expect that there will be, continually, war in the earth. We have to be aware of this that part of the deception of Antichrist is also his promise of world peace. Do we not see this promise of peace working out today in the cry that there is for tolerance, tolerance of every religious idea and tolerance of every immoral behavior? Is that not part of the deception of Antichrist? So Jesus tells us that there will be war and that this war will continue throughout history till the day He returns.

How do we respond? The natural response of man is to find this troubling. We want to put it out of our mind. We do not want to talk about it. Yes, war is a reality, but let it be far away from us, somewhere else, on the other side of the planet. We respond this way to others of the signs of the coming of Jesus Christ as well. We hear, for example, Jesus saying that there will be a great tribulation, and we say, "There will be persecution, but let it be somewhere else. Let's live in the now. We have peace, we have freedom." While it is true that we should certainly take advantage of our freedom, especially in the work of preaching the gospel, in worshiping with God's people in the church, and in witnessing and

bringing the gospel to others, we should not ignore the things that Jesus speaks of here. We have to be prepared and we have to prepare our children. So we need to talk about these things, in the context of God's great purpose in all things. Then we do not talk about them with fear. Jesus teaches this so that we will not be afraid. He says, "Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, see that ye be not troubled."

To not have fear in the face of war we need to have these two central and important truths fixed in our minds. These are truths, promises, that we need to repeat to our children and that we need to talk about with one another as believers. The first is this: that Jesus is always on the throne, that He is the Lord, that He is the sovereign, and that as the One on the throne He rules over all things and, indeed, sends these things into time and history in preparation for His return. We should not think when war comes into our country and into our neighborhood and affects us that something strange has happened to us, as though Satan now has gained the ascendancy and the wicked are at the helm. No, Jesus is on the throne; God is the sovereign; the heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord and He turns it whithersoever He wills. So, "do not be troubled," Jesus says, "I am on the throne."

their faith, their zeal, their fears, their anxieties, their confusion. He is touched with the feeling of their infirmities. He says, "I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified." How those words must have jarred these women. After someone has been through a painful experience, we want to be very careful in the way that we speak to them. If someone is going through cancer, we do not want to talk about the disease of cancer and how difficult it can be. Or, someone has been in a car accident. We want to be careful. How jarring these words must have been to the fresh wounds that these women had. "Ye seek Jesus, which was crucified." This calls to their mind the awful experience that they had witnessed—the horrific death of Jesus Christ. But the angel can do that because he has a message that is the answer to exactly this fear and this experience. "I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here." Luke adds that the angel explains those words this way: "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" "He is not here: he is risen." Why seek the living here in the place of the dead?

He is risen. That verb form has the idea of someone who has entered into a permanent state of being. He is risen—a constant change has taken place. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is that. He entered

into His glorious state and He continues in that state. It was the power of God triune that raised Him from the dead. He was raised with power. The Bible explains the resurrection from three points of view—that the Father raised His Son from the dead; that Jesus Himself arose from the dead; and that He was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. What an immense miracle was the resurrection of Jesus Christ! All the resources of the divine Being are involved in this great work. There are only a few other miracles in the Scriptures that are described this way. The creation: in the beginning the Father created; the Son was the Word by whom He created; and the Spirit moved on the face of the waters. Or the virgin birth of Jesus: the Holy Ghost would come upon the virgin Mary and she would conceive and bring forth one Who would be called the Son of God. Or the work of salvation in a similar way. That is the importance of this event. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is as important as creation, as important as the incarnation, as important as the work of salvation. This is central in the gospel. This is the gospel that the New Testament church preaches. "He is not here, for He is risen."

Then the angel says one more thing to the women: "He is not here: for he is risen, as he

because of which they became as dead men. Yet, this added to their confusion and their fear. What a mixture of emotions they must have had this morning. Then we see them come to the tomb and we see the grace of God come to them.

About the miracles—first, why does God send miracles? Why does He send these miracles at the time of Jesus' resurrection? It is to confirm the truth of the resurrection. An earthquake—how appropriate that an earthquake should come to shake the place where Jesus had been buried. He was declared by the resurrection to be the Son of God with power, we read in Romans 1. That is what the earthquake signified. And the open tomb—the open tomb was not so that Jesus could get out of the tomb after He was raised from the dead. No, He was able in His glorious body to pass through walls. The open tomb was to show that the tomb was empty.

Then, grace in the heavenly messenger and what he says as well. There was an angel when they came. He came with a message of grace to these women. Look at his words: "Fear not ye." That is personal. That is addressed to these women. He knows that they are fearful and that they are afraid and that they are confused. So God sends this messenger: "Don't be

afraid." Yes, the Jews and the leaders of the Jews should be afraid. Yes, the soldiers should tremble and become as dead men. But "you, don't be afraid." He continues, "Don't be afraid: for I know that ye seek Jesus." He knows why they have come. How does the angel know this? It is because God has told him. God knows why they have come. God knows their fears.

What a messenger. Sometimes angels would come in the form of a man, disguised, as it were. But this one, verse 3 tells us, had a face that was like lightning. It was like the face of Moses, who had seen God. His raiment was white like snow, holy because he had come from the presence of God. There was no mistaking—this was a heavenly messenger. They spoke with him; they had conversation with him. The keepers trembled. How remarkable! These women talked to him. This was a part of their courage. It was because they *wanted* to see Jesus.

So the messenger continues: "I know that ye seek Jesus." What sympathy in those words. Sympathy is to enter into the experience of another. God knows, the Son knows, the angel knows what these women feel. God uses all the resources of heaven that are at His disposal to come and to minister to these needy women. He knows their love,

Think of Psalm 46 as talking about war and the nations raging and the earth being moved. God says this: "Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted in the earth." God is on the throne.

Then the second important truth for us to remember so that we are not fearful in response to wars is this. That Jesus sends wars is a part of His coming; that the sound of war is the sound of the coming of Jesus Christ; that the raging of the nations against one another is the raging that brings Jesus Christ into this world. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, Jesus says, then know that the end is not yet. Yes, there is an end. That end is the glorious coming of Jesus Christ. These wars and rumors of wars are the signs that the end is coming but not yet. They are all a part of it.

Verse 8 speaks of this in a beautiful way. We talked about this in an earlier message. Right after the sign, Jesus says, "All these things are the beginning of sorrows." Sorrows there are birth-pangs. Wars and rumors of war, the sound of war and the experience of war and war between the nations—these are the early signs of labor and of birth-pangs that will bring, finally, Jesus Christ the Son of God into this world in His glorious second coming. When a woman experiences the pain

of labor, that is not a strange pain. There is something right. For every other pain that we have and that we experience, something is wrong, so we try to fix it. We cut ourselves, we have an injury or some kind of internal pain, and we try to take care of it. But this is a pain that is right. A woman says, "I can do this." She hopes in the end for that child that will be born.

That is how Jesus tells us we should think of the horror and the reality of war. There is something right. Jesus is coming, so do not be afraid.

Let us pray.

Father, we thank Thee for the wonderful comfort that we have in this that Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords, that He rules over all things, that in His wisdom He knows why things are as they are in this world and that He works all things together towards that final day when He will come again. Today there is war in the earth, and we experience it, and we will experience it, but that is because Jesus the King is causing His gospel to go forth victoriously and using all things to serve the final day when His church will be gathered as one in His presence to eternity. Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly. Amen.



**THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR**

March 13, 2016  
No. 3819

*Natural Catastrophes and the End*  
*Rev. Rodney Kleyn*

Dear Radio Friends,

Today we come to another sign of the coming of Jesus Christ; this one, natural catastrophes. In Luke 21:11, Jesus says this: “And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.” In the gospel of Matthew, chapter 24, in the second part of verse 7, Jesus says something similar: “and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.” These are signs of the coming of Jesus Christ.

The signs of Jesus’ coming do not tell us the day or the hour, or precisely how close the coming of Jesus is. Instead, they tell us that He *is* coming. The disciples had asked Jesus for the “sign of His coming and the end of the world.” But Jesus does not give them just one sign but a whole host of them. The reason is that they do not need to know the day or the hour of His coming. But, instead, they need to be reminded by these signs that He is coming, to always be ready and always be watching. These signs serve the great sign of the preaching of the gospel. So, while Jesus

delays His coming, not only must we be spiritually alert to the fact that He is coming, so that we are kept from the deception of Satan and the antichristian spirit and the materialism of our age, but we must also be busy in the great work of the preaching of the gospel. This gospel must be preached in all the world, and then shall the end come. This is what we must be busy with until Jesus returns again.

So, we have to be warned as we think about the signs. False teachers will come, Jesus says, in the last days and say, “I am Christ.” They shall deceive many. They shall say, “Lo, here, lo, there.” The time draws nigh and they will predict the day and the hour of the return of Jesus Christ. Man is curious. He wants to know. So, we must not be swept away by false teachers.

Instead, so long as there is war among the nations, which we talked about last time, and so long as there are famines and earthquakes and pestilences and signs in the heavens, the end is not yet. The end is coming. It is getting closer, but it is not yet.

Just a few days earlier, these women had witnessed the trial of their beloved Savior and Friend. They heard Him condemned to death. When He was led away to be crucified, they followed at a distance, and they stood afar off listening while the hammers pounded the nails through their Master’s hands and feet. They listened to the voice of the mocking crowds. They heard the cries of Jesus from the cross. Through the three hours of darkness, they lingered. Then they watched as the soldiers came to break the legs of those who had been crucified. Shortly after this, they witnessed Nicodemus and Joseph taking down the body of Jesus and they followed to see where Jesus was laid. That was Friday afternoon.

Saturday was the Sabbath, so they stayed home.

Now it is early Sunday morning, dawn, as the day is breaking. They come to finish the work of burying their Savior, and they bring with them spices that they will use to anoint the body of their beloved Lord.

What is it that moves them to come, and to come so soon? Certainly it is love; they loved this One. You saw this in the anointing of Jesus’ feet just a week prior to this by one of these women. Simon the prophet had said to Jesus’ mother: “A sword will pierce through your own

soul also.” This is the experience of the love of these women. So they could not sit around. They were moved with love to take this initiative and to go out and to complete the burial of the Lord.

Yet, what courage they had. That is explained by their faith. A Roman guard was at the tomb. A stone was in front of the mouth of the tomb. Yet, here they go with courage and commitment. That is because of their faith in the One who had died. Yes, they were confused and their faith was weak, but how they loved and trusted in this One!

We can understand a little bit of how they felt and what they experienced at this time, how sad they must have been. The One who had died was not just a close friend, but this was their leader, this was the One in whom they had put their hopes. How confused they must have felt. Later in this day, the two travelers on the road to Emmaus would express their confusion to Jesus Himself, and these women must have had the same confusion. How fearful they must have been about some things. What now will happen to the followers of Jesus? They put Him to death, what will they do to us?

And now the earth trembled and there was an angel present. This was not the same kind of fear that the keepers had and

**THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR**

March 27, 2016

*The End of All Fear: He Is Risen*

No. 3821

*Rev. Rodney Kleyn*

Dear Radio Friends,

In Matthew 28:5 and 6, we read this: “And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

What are your fears today? Fear is debilitating. When we are afraid we freeze and we shrink back from what we are called to do in life. Sometimes fear comes because we are suddenly confronted with something that seems threatening. Other times fear comes because of a memory or an imagination that we have that makes us afraid.

Are you fearful because of your sin? Does your sin make you want to hide from God, from the judgment of God? Are you fearful because of the power of sin and are you afraid that it may overcome you? Or is it, perhaps, the future that makes you afraid. Tomorrow is unknown, the future is unpredictable, there are dark roads ahead—will you be able to have the strength to persevere? Or maybe it is the fear of something

in your past, something terrible that has happened to you, and the thought of it or the memory of it or the thought of it happening again makes you shudder. Or, there may be relational fears—the fear of being alone or the fear of losing a loved one that you have. Perhaps it is your responsibilities that make you afraid. Will you ever have the strength to go on and to get through what lies before you in life?

Fear not ye, Jesus is risen. That is the word of the angel in our text today.

On the morning of Jesus’ resurrection, a group of five or so women came to Jesus’ tomb. And the message that the angel met them with was, “Fear not.”

Who were these women, and what were their fears? Throughout His ministry, these were the women who had been very close to Jesus and followed Him and His disciples and ministered to His daily needs. Among them was Mary Magdalene, out of whom Jesus had cast demons, and also Jesus’ mother, and His aunt, and other close relatives.

Today we are going to talk about natural catastrophes and their relation to the end of the world.

A natural catastrophe is a disaster in the realm of the physical creation that produces widespread human suffering. In the text in Luke 21:11, Jesus refers to these natural catastrophes in four different spheres of the creation, four different realms of nature.

First, He mentions great earthquakes in divers places. That means all over the place. An earthquake is a geological catastrophe or disaster. So, included under earthquakes, we can think of volcanoes, tsunamis, avalanches, landslides, flooding, and so on. These are catastrophic. They usually come unannounced, and they bring death and destruction in large measure. We can name these places: Nepal, Chile, Haiti, Sumatra, Japan, China, California; and we immediately think of great natural disasters as a result of these geological catastrophes. Powerful changes came to the landscapes. Mountains have been lowered, islands have been moved by these earthquakes.

Then Jesus mentions famines. We can think here of all weather-related, meteorological disasters. So we think of heat and drought and food shortage and starvation and fire. Or we

think of cold and winter blizzards and death and destruction. Or we can think of wind and tornadoes and tropical storms and hurricanes and, again, great floods. The most deadly disaster on record is weather-related. In 1931 floods in China killed up to 4 million people. These disasters not only bring death, but they also bring diseases, and they have a massive effect on the food supply.

The food supply in our world is very tenuous. Think, for example, of these two things. You have a frost in one state in the USA in the springtime when the buds are on the trees in the orchards and it wipes out an entire apple crop. For the rest of that summer, or that year, throughout the country and, indeed, throughout the world, the price of apples is almost doubled. Or this: there is a 2% increase in the production of milk and suddenly there is too much milk on the market and prices of milk drop and farmers have to throw away their milk. They cannot sell it. Then you think of the problem of global hunger and that 20% of the world’s population, for example, is undernourished and that more than 3 million children every year under age 5 die of malnutrition. Then you see the effects of these disasters that are weather-related.

Then Jesus mentions, in the

text, pestilence. A pestilence is a fast-spreading, usually contagious, disease. This can happen through food or water or something like that, and you can think of diseases like polio or typhoid or the black death or malaria or the flu or tuberculosis or, in more recent years, AIDS, which in the last three decades has killed as many as 25 million people. Perhaps sometimes we think that because of medicine we do not have to worry about this. We have immunities, we take injections, and so on, so who has to worry about this today. But we do live in great fear of this. There can be incurable diseases like Ebola that spread rapidly across the world.

Then Jesus also mentions signs from heaven and wonders. Now we think of meteor showers or the movement of the planets and stars. Even though the reports of meteor showers, for example, hitting the earth are very few and far between and that there are only about 20 deaths per hundred years that are accounted for because of these kinds of disasters, this is one of the greatest fears of man. It is not unlikely some meteor showers that have come on the earth, if they had

hit a populated area could have killed thousands of people at once. Of course, the world of science is terribly afraid of this kind of disaster coming on the earth.

These are the natural catastrophes that Jesus speaks of as signs of His coming.

There are two important things for us to remember about these. The first is that they are sent of God. God is sovereign over them. Jesus mentions these different areas in the created world to show us that

*...the whole universe  
is under the sovereign control  
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the whole universe is under the sovereign control of God—from the minute microbe that brings a disease to the movement of the planets and the galaxies.

ies. All these things that take place in the area of creation are, properly speaking, acts of God. That means that when we speak of things in the natural world or natural catastrophes, we do not mean that nature is a law to itself. We should not speak of “Mother Nature.” Instead, God is in the heavens, and God is in absolute control. Think, for example, of Isaiah 45:7, where God says: “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace,

stem the tide of evil. But more this: that there is a spiritual resistance to the world and its influences. That spiritual resistance expresses itself in a spiritual separation from the world—not participating in the way of life in the world. In this way we are spiritually prepared and watching for the day of Jesus Christ. Then we are ready for the day when He will come. There will be an open conflict in this world between Christians and the godless and lawless society in which we live. We prepare ourselves for that day by separating ourselves from the evils of the world and training our minds by the Word of God and not the entertainment and education and acceptance that is purported in our society.

That means that we have to oppose sin in our own hearts. That is the aim of Jesus’ warning here. There is lawlessness and there is pride and there is resistance in our hearts to the Word and the law of God and we need to repent of that and cherish instead in our hearts a love for God and feed that love, not damage it. This is really what ought to terrify us about the lawlessness of the last days—not that it is all around us, but that, because of it, our love could grow cold.

So, just as a man who loves his wife would never do anything to jeopardize that love and that

relationship, so we fix our love on God and on Jesus Christ our Husband who is to come. Then we depend on the preserving grace of God and His promises.

In the next verse (v. 13) Jesus says, “He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” That is a wonderful promise. We depend on the means of grace, we depend on God Himself to feed our souls to life eternal and to keep the flame of our love for Him alive. Then, when we see the wickedness around us and when we become aware of sin and its influences in our hearts and in our lives, we cry out the more earnestly, “Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly.”

Let us pray.

Father, keep us, keep us from the evil of our day, keep us alert to the evil in our own hearts and the attractiveness of sin. Help us to be repentant. Keep us pure, separate spiritually from the world around us, and keep us fixed on Jesus Christ in faith, looking for the day when He will come. May our souls be like the souls of Lot, righteous souls that are vexed day by day as we wait for Jesus’ return. Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly. Amen.

because they have become lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, the worship of God and the preaching and the hearing of the Word of God has lost its attraction. So, because iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold.

Now we see the warning and the danger here. We should not think of lawlessness merely in terms of murder and burglary and riots and adulteries and scandals and homosexual marriage and the kingdom of Antichrist to come, but this lawlessness is a self-love. Rather than loving God, man loves himself. I love myself and I use this world for myself, for my pleasures. Then my love for God waxes cold. That is the warning that Jesus gives. That is the warning of the days of Noah and the days of Lot also. They were eating and drinking and marrying. There is nothing wrong with eating, there is nothing wrong with drinking, there is nothing wrong with marrying. But these things became their gods. They loved good food; they loved the glass of wine; they loved marrying—they put those things first and their love for God waxed cold and wickedness abounded.

So we have to watch and be careful and be on our guard. We have to understand the importance here of personal obedience to the law of God and that it is closely connected to our love

for God, not only in this way, that our love shows itself by obedience, but also in this way, that when we disobey, our love for God will deteriorate. It will grow cold.

We often get the idea that we can have a fervent love for God and then go out and indulge in some sin. We are wrong. It is impossible. You cannot sit and watch the world's entertainment and take in the filth of the world and then, when the credits are done on the movie, go and pick up the Bible and read and pray with your wife and family with a clear conscience. No, our love for God will grow cold if we deliberately walk in sin and open the windows of our soul to sin.

So, do you have your first love? Are you watching, and are you aware of the danger of abounding lawlessness to your love for God?

How do we respond? What is our calling in a world where lawlessness abounds? We should not be surprised by this. Jesus tells us these things as things that will really happen in the last days. So Peter says in I Peter 4 that we should not think it strange when these things begin to happen. At the same time, though, we should be opposed to the wickedness of the world. That opposition does not have this hope that we are going to change the world and

and create evil: I the LORD do all these things." He claims full responsibility for natural disasters. We may not understand why God sends these things. We may not understand why they come to one city or one nation and not another. We may not understand why the righteous suffer and the wicked do not. But we must see that God's hand is in all these things. Just as God sends rain on the just and the unjust, so He sends these storms and these catastrophes in all the world. Indeed, as the book of Revelation, chapter 6, points out, it is Jesus who sends these things. He is the One who sends out the pale horse that brings death among man through catastrophes.

As God's people, in the end, that is our comfort. It is by God's providence that He controls all things so that nothing can happen—not rain or sunshine, fruitful or barren years—apart from His will and purpose.

The other thing to remember about these signs is that, even though they have been always taking place in creation and will always be a part of the history of man, there is, and there will be, an increase of them more and more towards the end of the world. We do not say this only by, or primarily by, observation and science, but by listening to what the Scriptures say about these signs. The Bible

shows this in two ways. First, it speaks of the signs of the coming of Jesus Christ as birth pangs (Matt. 24:8). Jesus says that these are part of the beginning of sorrows. With time, they will increase in frequency and in intensity, till finally they bring Jesus into the world.

Then, also, we see in the Scriptures a comparison between these natural disasters as they take place throughout the history of the world and then these natural disasters as they will come at the very end. So in Luke 21:11, Jesus speaks of these great earthquakes in divers places and famines and pestilence and fearful signs and so on, as something that is ongoing throughout history. But then, when we get to verses 25 and 26, He speaks of signs again in the created realm in connection with His final coming. He says, "there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." What this tells us is that all these signs, as they increase in frequency and intensity throughout history, will result finally, in one day, in one great massive, cataclysmic upheaval in which, the Bible says in II Peter 3, all these things



shall melt with a fervent heat.

Now, it is important for us to see the relation between these natural catastrophes that take place in history and the end of the world. There is an important passage in the book of Romans, chapter 8, that helps us to understand this relation. In Romans 8:19-23, we read about the creation groaning and travailing in pain, waiting for not only itself to be delivered from the bondage of corruption,

but waiting  
also for the  
liberty of  
the children

of God. You see here a relation between what takes place in the creation, which is called here groaning and travailing, and the end, the final end when Jesus will come again and bring redemption to His people and also to the creation.

To understand that relation properly, we have to see the history of these natural disasters. By history, I mean not scientific observation, but biblical history, redemption history. We have to look at these in light of the creation and then man's fall into sin, and then redemption that will come in the end.

First, we look at these catastrophes in light of creation. Then we see that God created a world in the beginning without sin, which was perfect. He appointed Adam as head of that

world. Whatever Adam would do would affect the environment in which God placed him. God called Adam to obedience and God called him to multiply and replenish and subdue the earth. He warned him that his sin would bring death not only to himself, but the whole creation. The world of disasters, natural catastrophes that we know today, is not the world that God made in the beginning.

Natural disasters  
*are not natural at all.*

there was a perfect unity between God and the creation. All the components of this creation served in perfect harmony with God their Creator to bring glory to Him. There was no death. There was no violent imbalance in the creation. Everything that God had made was very good. That is where we begin—in understanding the history of natural disasters.

But then we must also see these catastrophes in light of the fall into sin. The fall was the result of the disobedience of man. In sin, man violated his covenant life with God—the harmony that existed not only between him and God, but also between God and the entire created universe, which was under the headship of Adam. So Adam subjected the creation to death and the curse, and the beautiful

ments of death. When Jesus comes, not only will He destroy in judgment all that is opposed to Him, but in deliverance He will save His people and bring them to life and glory. So we have to see that Jesus is coming, also in this wickedness.

But now, let us understand that there is a danger that this abounding lawlessness poses to the church and to the people of God. You see that in the text in Matthew 24:12 when Jesus says, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." The love that Jesus is speaking of here is the love of His church, the love of the people of God for God and for His law.

There is no love for God in the world. They never loved God. They never cared about the law of God. The natural man despises God and His Word. But God's people love Him. God's church is His bride in this world and she loves her Husband. What Jesus is talking about here is the love that believers have for Himself and for the gospel and for the Word and for the church of Christ and the cause of Christ in this world. Jesus is warning that because iniquity shall abound, that love may well wax cold in the church.

Jesus does not say that, because of cold hearts, iniquity shall abound. But He says that, because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

What is cold has the idea of a flame being blown out and of tapering away. The cold winds that come and blow on that are the abounding wickedness and lawlessness of society. The open adultery of the world, the permissiveness of the world, the tolerance of the world—these things blow into the lives of the people of God and into the church of God. The people of God will sometimes let these things come into their homes and into their lives through movies and entertainment and the Internet and literature. As they do this, it does not fuel their love for God but it blows cold their love for God.

Perhaps the most outstanding evidence of this in the church world today is what has happened to the fourth commandment of the law of God, where God says, "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy." Today we see that the Lord's Day is treated like any other day, not just in the world but in the church. It is a day for recreation, for family, for a football game, for camping. Attendance at worship services goes down on long weekends and in summer months. Second services have fallen away. This is not a problem in society. They never loved God and His Word and the Sabbath. But the winds of pleasure and of money have blown into the church and fanned out the love of God's people. Now,



that purports and puts forth as normal in our society.

So, when we see evil endorsed, what we are really seeing is a society that wants this, a mystery of iniquity working. Proverbs 28:2 says this: “For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof.” It means this: that a wicked land will multiply wicked rulers. This, in the end, is the judgment of God Himself of man. Romans 1 says that God gives them over to their reprobate minds and that sin develops into greater sin and comes as the judgment of God on man’s sin. We can again think of the examples. A society legalizes a sin and then, in order to deal with that sin, it legalizes a greater sin. Just think of this: the legalizing of abortion follows on the permissiveness of a society with regard to sexuality.

So, sin develops and we should look at this not only as something we see developing around us in society, but we should look to the source of this development as well. Where does it come from? It comes from pride in the heart of man. It comes from man’s desire for pleasure. It comes from man’s pride, standing up against the law of God. That is a pride and that is a selfishness that we have in our hearts, too. So, our calling as a people of God is to preach the gospel. This gospel of

the kingdom must be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations. Jesus says that in a couple of verses. And that gospel not only points out what God’s law requires, but it gives an answer to the sinfulness of the heart of man and calls man to repentance and faith and forgiveness in the blood of Jesus Christ.

Then, the other thing we should understand about this abounding wickedness as a sign of the coming Jesus Christ is that it is a necessary part of His coming, that it prepares for the final coming of Jesus Christ. It is something that must take place before He comes. Through this wickedness in society, Jesus Himself is coming. Now we think again of the Old Testament pictures of the flood and the days of Sodom. Just as the world before the flood, by its wickedness, was preparing itself for final judgment and destruction that came through the flood so that God could save His church; and just as Sodom, by its wickedness, was preparing itself for the day of fire and brimstone so that God could deliver just Lot out of Sodom; so today the world is being prepared for the day of final judgment. It is filling up its cup of iniquity. As Psalm 7 says, God is angry with the wicked every day, and He has whet His sword and bent His bow and made it ready and prepared for Him the instru-

world that God had created was cursed by God Himself.

You see, that explains natural catastrophes. They are, we might say, repercussions of man’s fall into sin. God, in a very small way, spoke of this when He said to Adam that the ground would bring forth thorns and briars, that the earth would be against Adam. In these natural catastrophes, you see this in a bigger scale—the ripple effect of man’s fall into sin. All of that, as we pointed out already, worked toward the final, violent judgment that will come on man and his world. Hebrews 12:26 and 27 says that God has shaken the earth once and that He will shake it yet once more. That refers not just to the destruction of this physical world, but the world as it stands in relation to God. All that stands opposed to God, all that is disconnected from God in rebellion as a result of sin, will be shaken free. There will be a violent judgment, an eternal fire, and a burning up of everything that is against God.

Then the only thing that will be left standing will be God and His Word and His people who are bound by His Word in faith to Him. So you must see these catastrophes in light of man’s fall into sin.

And then you must also see

them in light of redemption. These catastrophes that take place in this universe and in this creation tell us that man and the universe need redemption. They need deliverance from the curse of sin. This is what we see in the gospel. Even though God’s curse fell on man and creation, God did not and God does not abandon all of this to death and destruction. Just as the curse on Adam affected the creation, so the blessing and salvation and promise that came to Adam in Jesus Christ would come on the whole creation. That is part of what is meant in John 3, where it says that God so loved the *world*, the cosmos. Jesus, by His death, removed the curse that had come on this creation, not only from man but also from the creation. So, again, Romans 8: the creation itself groans and travails waiting to be delivered. It awaits the redemption of the sons of God but also its own deliverance from the curse. So, just as the curse of sin has effects on us and we grow old, so this

world under the curse of death is growing older and older. The groans of creation are the groans of old age under the curse.

That is the way to understand this earth, too. Evolution says that we live on an old earth that is millions and billions of

*The groans of creation  
are the groans of old age  
under the curse.*

years old. The Bible teaches us instead that we are living on a young earth that is under the curse and has become old. You see, if you believe in evolution, it is no wonder that you are fearful. You look at this world and you look at what is going on in this world and you think that there is going to come some great natural catastrophe that will destroy man's possibility of existence. But then you look at it in light of its history—creation, the fall, and redemption—and you see that we are not supposed to live in this world forever and that this world is not supposed to last forever—for millions or billions of years. Instead, it is readying itself not only for destruction, but also for redemption and for re-creation in the new heavens and the new earth.

So we must see these catastrophes in relation to that end, to the coming of Jesus Christ. Then remember, when we speak of the end, we speak not just of the termination of time but of God's goal and purpose. That goal and purpose is the coming of Jesus Christ and the re-creation of the heavens and the earth.

What is the relation, then, of these catastrophes to that end and that goal?

First, they prevent the day of the coming of Jesus Christ. Just as wars and rumors of wars and political tensions and language barriers are used by God

to prevent the world from coming together as one, to rise up in its forces against the church and against the people of God; just as God distracts the powers of the world by those things, so by these natural disasters He prevents the rise of the kingdom of Antichrist. That means that these natural disasters serve God's people. They serve the church and they serve the gospel and they serve the preaching of the gospel as that goes on throughout history. So these signs should remind us that God is King over all. That, when the nations rage and the kingdoms are moved, when the mountains are cast into the depths of the sea and the seas roar, God is on the throne, and we should be still and know that He is God.

But not only do these natural disasters *prevent* the end, they also prepare for the end and the day when Jesus will come again. The world in which we live cannot last forever. In a sense, scientists are right to be fearful about the long-term viability of the planet on which we live. But you see, there is a rising storm, and the natural disasters are all a part of this rising storm that will culminate in the return of Jesus Christ in judgment. That is the point of the increase of the signs directly connected to the coming of Jesus Christ at the end. Christ is coming, and this world will melt with a fervent

This is one of the greatest evils of our modern society. There is no question that this is murder. A doctor cuts limbs and organs from a living baby in the mother's womb. This has gone on now for more than forty years, sanctioned by the law. Evil has been called good. You see in abortion a sophistication of this. This is a gruesome behavior, but so long as it is done inside the womb where it cannot be seen and where the cries of the baby cannot be heard; as long as it is done under the cover of choice and the banner of women's rights and citizens' freedoms, then it is presented as something that is good. It is justified in the conscience by committing a worse evil: using the aborted fetuses and embryos for research. And this is excused as medical research that will preserve other lives.

Those are just two outstanding examples, but they are not the only evils endorsed in a lawless society. What it points to is a deeper resistance to all of God's commandments and law. In the text Jesus says "iniquity shall abound," or there will be abounding iniquity. That means that this iniquity, this lawlessness, this resistance to God's Word and law will come in every segment of society, at every level, in every kind of evil. There will be a tidal-wave of evil, as it were, that sweeps across the world in the days

before Jesus comes because the spirit of the age will be a spirit of lawlessness, a spirit of setting aside the authority of God's law and setting up man as God.

As we think about this, it is important for us to remember that this abounding lawlessness is a sign of the coming of Jesus Christ. That means two things. First, it means this: this is nothing new. As II Thessalonians 2 says, there is a spirit of lawlessness and a mystery of lawlessness that already works. So, though there is an increasing frequency and intensity in this sign, it has always been present in this world against God. You see, the world that we live in is not going to become a better place. There is not a future "golden age" that we as Christians can expect. That just is not true. If we think that, we will be deceived and we will be disappointed. You see, the examples to which I just referred are not new. The Supreme Court's recent decision in our land to approve homosexual marriage, for example, does not start with homosexuality. It goes back in our society to some things that have happened decades earlier—the approval of sexual immorality. You think, for example, of the sexual revolution of the '60s, teenage sex, sex in high schools, taking the Ten Commandments down out of the institutions, and the entertainment industry and what

and sophisticated form of rejection of the law of God—not just anarchism in society, or just an increase in the crime that you read about in the papers. He is talking about a time when the things that were once done in secret because of their sin, once punished because of their wickedness, will be done openly and flagrantly, in opposition to, deliberate opposition to, the law of God and to God Himself. Evil will be called good and good will be called evil. These things will be sanctioned by the government and the rulers of the land. Orderly and peaceful society will reject God and will reject His laws, and evildoers will no longer be called evildoers or be punished, and those who hold to God's law will be persecuted.

This is the kind of lawlessness that characterized Sodom. Here was just Lot, his righteous soul vexed day by day by the wickedness of Sodom. That night, when he took into his home those visitors, the men of the city, that is the rulers and people from every walk of life in the city, came and surrounded the house to sodomize and to rape the men who had come to see Lot. This was sanctioned by the rulers of the land.

This is the kind of wickedness that Jesus has in mind. Certainly we see evidences of this in the day and age in which we live. There is God's law on human sexuality and marriage. It is the law not only written on the pages of Scripture very clearly, but written in the very creation of man as male and female and written on the conscience of man. What we see is not just disobedience to this law, a moral lapse, a failure to keep the law, but we see this: here is the law, and society is not only going to do exactly the opposite of what the law of God demands, but is going to overturn the law; society is going to condone the breaking of the law, and is going to persecute those who insist on the keeping of the law of God with regard to marriage as a lifelong bond between one man and one woman. All of this is done under the guise of equal rights for humans, anti-discrimination, and peace for society. And Christian retailers, Christian churches, and , in the end, all Christians will pay the price for their obedience and love for the law of God.

That, of course, is not the only example. Another outstanding example is abortion.

...evildoers will no longer be called evildoers or be punished, and those who hold to God's law will be persecuted.

heat. Then Christ will make all things new.

Now, as with the other signs, as believers we must

respond not with fear but with trust. We have this knowledge, this knowledge comes from God, and we believe the

Word of God that gives us this knowledge and these wonderful promises. It teaches us not to set our heart on the things of this earth but, by faith, to lift our eyes heavenward. This is where we are going. Then you think of the words of Jesus in Luke 21:28, where He says that when we see all these things taking place, we should look up and lift up our heads, for our redemption draws nigh.

So we are reminded of the words of Peter: Seeing all these things shall be melted with a fervent heat, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all godliness? In the catastrophes, Christ says, "I'm coming." He says to His people: "Fear not, I am on the throne." And He says to them, "Your redemption

is coming closer and closer, so don't be afraid." These are the birth-pangs, the groaning and travailing of the creation. It is

...there is a rising storm, and the natural disasters are all a part of this rising storm that will culminate in the return of Jesus Christ in judgment.

the waiting of the creation to bring forth Jesus Christ Himself and the new heavens and the new earth. So, in confidence,

we say as we hear these things and see these things, "Come, Lord Jesus. Amen."

Let us pray.

Father, we thank Thee for Thy control over the heavens and the earth and the way in which Thou dost work throughout history to bring Jesus again. We pray that we may have ready hearts for His return and that we may be those who are kept from, not only the anxieties and the troubles of this earthly life, but also the possessions and the treasures that we might be inclined to set our heart on. Keep us, Lord, heaven-minded and looking for the day when Jesus will come. We pray it, for His sake, Amen.

**THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR**

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*Abounding Lawlessness  
Rev. Rodney Kley*

Dear Radio Friends,

Today we consider another one of the signs that Jesus gives in Matthew 24 of His coming and of the end of the world. In Matthew 24:12, Jesus says: “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.”

In connection with that, I want to read a couple other passages in Scripture. First, Luke 17:26-29.

And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

This passage is telling us that those Old Testament events of the destruction of the world during the time of Noah in the flood and the destruction of Sodom by fire and brimstone

were God-ordained, Old Testament pictures of the coming end of the world. They were types of what will come at the end of the world.

There are two points of comparison. The first point of comparison is this: that the wickedness of those days will characterize the wickedness of the last days. The second point of comparison is this: as the world was suddenly destroyed in the days of Noah and Lot, so it will be suddenly destroyed at the time of the coming of Jesus Christ.

To help us understand what Jesus means here by “abounding iniquity” in the last days, we want to turn back to those Old Testament passages in the book of Genesis. I want to read a few verses from both Genesis 6 and Genesis 19. Beginning in Genesis 6 we have a description of the abounding iniquity of the days in which Noah lived. In Genesis 6:5:

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Then, in verses 11-13:

The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

Similarly, we read in Genesis 19 of what was going on in Sodom in the days of Lot, just before God rained fire and brimstone on Sodom. Two men come into the city of Sodom and Lot invites them into his home, and before they lay down, we read in Genesis 19:4, 5,

...the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: and they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them.

There are two other Old Testament passages that I have in mind as I think about abounding iniquities. One is Judges 21:25. This describes the situation in Israel in the days of the judges. “There was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” The other passage is Isaiah 5:20, where

Isaiah says, “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”

Back in Matthew 24:12, this is what Jesus has in mind. The word “iniquity” there (“because iniquity shall abound”) is, literally, “no law,” or “without law,” or “against the law.” The law here, of course, is God’s law, and Jesus speaks of a day when God’s law will be thrown out. This is the same word that is used in reference to the last days in II Thessalonians 2 when it speaks of the rise of Antichrist. It calls him “the man of sin,” who opposes and exalts himself against God and then, in verse 8, calls him that “wicked,” or “lawless one,” the same root word. And verse 7 says that the “mystery of iniquity,” this mystery of lawlessness, is already working. A standing up in opposition to the law of God that will culminate in the kingdom of the Antichrist.

That helps us to understand the kind of wickedness that Jesus has in mind here that will characterize the last days. It will not be simply a disobedience to the law of God or a failure to keep the law of God, but it will be a deliberate despising of and overturning of God’s law and a rejection, then, of God Himself, the Law-giver. Jesus has in mind here a very developed