

Dearly Beloved of God,

I'm sure most of you are familiar with the old fable about the boy who cried wolf. It seems that in the small village, made up primarily of shepherds, this mischievous lad liked to yell "Wolf!" when there was no wolf around, just to see everyone scramble to defend the flock. Time and time again, he pulled his prank. Then one day a wolf actually did come sniffing around the sheep pen. The young man spotted the wolf and let loose with his familiar cry; "Wolf!" But this time, no one came. "Wolf! Wolf! Wolf!" Still no one came. Oh, the villagers heard him but they figured it was just another joke and went about their business. Only when the bleating of a dying sheep caught their ears did they come, but by then it was too late.

This fable has many applications, such as placing a proper limit on the freedom of speech. For instance, our freedom to speak doesn't allow us to yell "Fire" in a building crowded building where there is no fire, or any other such danger. I remember when I was in Costa Rica 5 years ago reading about an incident in a second story Chicago night club where some pepper spray was discharged and the crowd panicked. While there was no real danger, the crowd thought so and in the rush to get out, some 24 people were trampled to death.

So, what's the application today? Well, it could just be all the talk about "the end of the world," whether spoken in terms of a biblical apocalypse or in terms of Al Gore's green house gasses. There is so much talk about this phenomenon, often preceded by the question, "What's the world coming to?" It's easy to get lulled into a false sense of security. In fact, the Bible itself speaks of a generation of people who say **2 Peter 3:4 (NIV)** ⁴ ... *"Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."*

Then there is the overwhelmingly popular *Left Behind* book series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. That put the "Pre-tribulation rapture" in the context of an exciting story that was read by tens of millions and probably believed by millions. Much of the church has adopted this theology that the Lord will come again, without any warning, and take all the Christians out of here before things get too bad. I'm sure some of our Christian brethren in Darfur, China and North Korea are wondering, "What happened? Why were we left behind?"

This e-mail is just a little foray into what may well become the cry of my latter years, should the Lord so choose to place me as a watchman on the wall. I pray that I never cry wolf when there is no wolf, but that the warning of the wolf's approach is both timely and clear. I believe sincerely that a time is coming (perhaps in my lifetime) which the Bible describes as Daniel's 70th week. It is a seven year period which occurs at the end of history as we know it. It begins with, what Jesus calls "the beginning of sorrows" and parallels the 4 horsemen of the apocalypse in Revelation 6. This could be described as a time when men's depravity towards men hits an all-time high. Then there is a time when the anti-Christ, empowered by Satan, unleashes his wrath upon mankind, especially those who remain true to Christ. This is the 5th seal of Revelation 6. Then there are the cosmic

disturbances which constitute the 6th seal of Revelation 6, which Jesus said would immediately precede His appearance in the clouds. (Matthew 24:29-31). This is the rapture of the church. It's well inside the 70th week. It is the opening of the 7th seal, which in turn opens the trumpet and bowl judgments that ushers in the wrath of God. And as Paul says, 1 **Thessalonians 5:9 (NIV)**

⁹ For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

But there is no promise that the church does not have to face the wrath of unregenerate man or the wrath of Satan. God promises to be with us through such trials, not to necessarily remove us from them.

That message will preach anywhere on earth. It probably finds the least receptivity in the west, where, for now, things are pretty safe and secure. So, my friends, I'm not crying wolf, but I am saying be prepared. By God's grace, we'll visit this topic again as there are literally hundreds of Scriptures that forewarn us. In the meantime, if your Mom is alive, do something to honor her tomorrow. If she has passed on, do something to honor her memory. Just remember, even when we get nostalgic, we should have an eye on the sky. God bless!

Yours for His Purposes,

Pastor Les