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As valuable as current event information is, there's something behind all that's happening that is equally valuable and, in many ways, much more vital to understand.

But first, let's take a few minutes to get a grasp again on what's going on around us.

There's the movement of China and Russia against the U.S., the deep state opposition to the values of the Bible that is unrelenting, the fear factor generated around the pandemic to bring us into what is essentially a police state, Bill Gate's ID2020 designed to provide a response to the virus so the world which is now afraid of dying or being permanently unemployed and losing everything, is ready for any solution that will bring safety and security.

Or the work of Gordon Brown (former Prime Minister of Great Britain), of Henry Kissinger, Mikhail Gorbachev, the Bushes, Obama, the Clintons and others who are calling for a world government, and the religious leaders under the guidance of the pope calling for a world religion, and the rise of those who ignore eschatology and mock those who believe we are in the terminal generation.

Then there are the earthquakes and the locust plagues spreading across the Middle East and moving toward China.

And here are some recent headlines taken from a variety of news sources:

Virus traces found at high levels in waste water

Boston threatens \$100 fine to anyone walking in the wrong direction

Prisoners riot in various states as tensions rise

Record bankruptcies predicted

Awakening volcanic region in Iceland could cause disruption for centuries

New and larger wave of locusts threatens millions in Africa

Mile-long line outside California grocery give-away

Italy warns, Europe could fall

World faces great depression as virus toll mounts

Pandemic risks mental health breakdown

New York burying victims in mass graves

Fear of COVID-19 second wave in summer

My girlfriend is a chatbot (Ok, this last one probably won't cause global panic – but here's what the article was about):

San Francisco startup Woebot Labs Inc. has taken a different approach with its therapy chatbot. The company says the benefit of free rein for AI is the deeper bonds. "What we're seeing is people having two- or three-year long relationships with their AI"

Of course, what this *does* do is continue the technological distancing from actual human relationships.

Dr. Anthony Fauci during a Tuesday Wall Street Journal podcast that once the country begins to loosen lockdown restrictions, Americans should proceed with caution. Here's what he said,

“Americans should avoid shaking hands — “ever” again — in the wake of the coronavirus crisis, according to the top doctor on the White House’s task force battling the deadly bug.

“When you gradually come back, you don’t jump into it with both feet,” the doctor told podcast host Kate Linebaugh. “You say, what are the things you could still do and still approach normal? One of them is absolute compulsive hand-washing. The other is you don’t ever shake anybody’s hands.”

“I don’t think we should ever shake hands ever again, to be honest with you,” he added later. “Not only would it be good to prevent coronavirus disease; it probably would decrease instances of influenza dramatically in this country.”

“As a society, just forget about shaking hands,” he added. “We don’t need to shake hands. We’ve got to break that custom. Because as a matter of fact, that is really one of the major ways that you can transmit a respiratory illness.”

I’m sure this would include hugging also – probably more so. In this new world we’ve entered we’ll probably get fined if we do either one.

This is another thing the virus has allowed people like him to push. He’s the expert, right? If we don’t comply, it just shows how little we care about the health (even death) of our neighbors.

Satan’s main tool is fear – and that fear is driving the personal and social atmosphere of every nation on the planet; the virus is just a catalyst. Listen to this passage in Hebrews 2:

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Heb. 2:15)

Are we going to buy into fear? The world isn’t delivered from the power of Satan in that way, but we are.

Put simply, the world is afraid of death. But for us, “to live is Christ and to die is gain”. The world as we knew it is gone; things are accelerating and we are entering a completely new phase of human history. We need to let the implications of that sink in.

So, as we’ve probably all noticed, there are a thousand conspiracy theories floating around YouTube, many of which are absolutely true. In many cases this is *exactly* what people and governments and leaders are doing.

For example,

This is from an article in the Samford Advocate entitled, “Leaders seize new powers to fight Coronavirus, fears grow for democracy:

“France and Bolivia have postponed elections. Peru handed its president broad new legislative authority. Israel sharply ramped up the reach of its surveillance state. Leaders around the world are amassing sweeping new powers. As legislatures limit or suspend activities in the name of social distancing, many of the norms that define democracy have been put on indefinite hold. The speed and breadth of the (global) transformation is unsettling political scientists, government watchdogs and rights groups. They question how readily leaders will give up the powers they’ve accrued when the coronavirus eventually subsided.”

But why are these things happening? And why now?

The entire world is rushing to something new, something they hope will relieve their suffering and bring a world filled with hope and promise.

What’s driving all this?

On the human side, as I’ve said, it’s a combination of fear and desperation for something better. As interesting and important as it is to examine everything to “fact check” it and know what’s going on in all this, there is a massive de-emphasis on what the Bible would call *reality*.

Listen to these comments from a book called “From Eternity to Eternity” by Eric Sauer.

“There is a mighty unfolding in Scripture of God’s testimony and record. (Those who read the Bible with eternity in view) will find that a wonderful historical prospective will rise before them. He will learn to regard the development of human history from the standpoint of eternal (outcomes). He will perceive in history a uniform, universal plan, guided by God, which in the course of millenniums unfolds itself in living variety, regular order and cosmic universality, moving surely to its (ultimate) goal.”

One of the things that hit me when I read this is that the first coming of Christ made it possible for His coming at the end of this age to establish His universal and eternal kingdom. The enemy had to be defeated at the Cross and the Bride, the co-ruler with Christ, had to be redeemed, called out of the nations and incorporated into Christ.

So, there are vast, eternal, spiritual issues and forces behind all we see around us.

As Paul reminds us - we wrestle “*not*” against flesh and blood.

We tend to look at the spiritual as true because it’s in the Bible, but it doesn’t register in our minds because it also seems ethereal and distant compared to our health or finances or a quarantine.

All these things seem much more real because they’re in our face.

But the Bible says that the spiritual is the ultimate reality – God, Satan, angels, demons – *that* is the reality; everything else is a shadow. Everything else is the Matrix. The spiritual world, called the “heavenlies” in Eph. 1, is where we’re meant to live.

In 2 Cor. 4:17 Paul writes,

So, we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporal, but what is unseen is eternal.

If we can't focus on the ultimate goal of the forces moving behind the scenes, we're going to get bogged down and side-tracked in "flesh and blood" activities and miss what's really behind this.

Satan's goal, and that which is the work of his principalities, powers and demons, is world deception through lies, world domination through fear and the building a one-world government, one-world religion and global economic system. He wants to rule this planet and be worshipped as god.

Look at everything that's happening and run it through *that* grid and things will begin to make sense. Leave that reality out, and not only does nothing seem consistent or coherent with all that's going on, but you're likely to have fear get a hold on you.

Now, as to a direct application to us, keep in mind that the giveaway in terms of the timing of the return of Christ to this planet are all the external signs we are seeing and have been talking about; but the giveaway for the rapture is purely spiritual.

It's not primarily prophecies but world and church conditions that determine the nearness of the rapture. First, I'll read from Eph. 4:

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting (Eph. 4:11-14)

Now, Rom. 11:25:

For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

And finally, 2 Thess. 2:3:

Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first . . .

So, the Holy Spirit is doing these three things:

- 1) Taking those in the Church who genuinely desire to be a part of God's purpose to a place of fullness in Christ
- 2) Drawing in the last of the Gentiles to be saved and incorporated into the body of Christ before the Tribulation begins
- 3) Allowing the apostasy of the Laodicean element within the Church to run its course

God is waking up those in the Church desiring more than status quo. The Church is rapidly dividing between those who are hearing Him and those who are satisfied with not hearing Him, but think they are – who are resistant and sometimes antagonistic to the truth.

I'm hearing reports of both constantly, from all over the country – and reading about these things happening around the world.

At some point, it's going to be crystal clear who is moving forward with their heart and ears open to the Lord at any cost and those who have held onto "Christianity".

So, there are a couple of things we need to look at that can spiritually protect us during this time. I'll begin by reading a few key passages:

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (John 3:6)

But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. (1 Cor. 6:17)

For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. (1 Cor. 2:11-15)

That phrase, "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him", in our generation, it could be paraphrased, "boring to him" – because like Paul told Timothy;

For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires.

Spiritual instruction is something that will not be "endured" by those in our generation – for many it's irrelevant, boring, abstract and difficult to understand. So, instead, they go from church to church until they find something that appeals to their mind and emotions – they are controlled by the soul, not by the spirit. This is pure Laodicea.

Which is why, in our last study, I emphasized the movements in our time that focus on signs, miracles and wonders; these things appeal to the eyes, the flesh and the pride of life – they are self or soul based.

This is the spirit of Antichrist and lays the foundation for his ultimate deception of the world through these same means.

Even our study of the Bible has been redesigned by thousands of pulpits to be either a steady diet of milk or an academic, brain exercise,

but 1 Cor. 2 makes it clear that knowing the Scriptures, knowing what's *really* there, is completely a spiritual revelation issue. In 1 Cor. 3:3 Paul indicts the Corinthian believers by saying,

For you are still carnal (controlled by the flesh) . . . you walk as men (you function just like the natural man). And the "natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are spiritually discerned."

We are not to be instructed by our intellect or people's opinions including our own, but by the Spirit Who was sent to lead us into all truth.

Only a combination of knowing eternal, spiritual reality, coupled with prayer and complete dependence on the Lord, can bring us anything that is genuinely true.

God is not simply educating us or trying get us to become externally obedient servants – He is developing a new humanity. He is forming Christ in us – increasing the measure of Christ in us progressively as we grow. As Sparks puts it in his comments on Heb. 12,

"He has to train us as children in order to develop sonship in us, to bring us there where we can take responsibilities for God. He seeks to bring us to a state of spiritual maturity, to full growth. This cannot be done in some Bible school. The Lord never works on an official side. Oh yes, God does take us into *His* school. (If He desires) He can also take us into His school in some training institute. And it is a blessed thing if He does it.

"But God's school is something very different from mere scholarly activity. His Word says: "My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art reprov'd of Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." Note this word "whom He receives." The exact meaning in the Greek is not 'receives,' but "whom He positions" or places. It is a matter of position. God is seeking to develop a state in us where He can trust us. When God is dealing with us, there is behind it a wonderful assurance that He is going to put His trust in us. He is bringing us into a position of trust. We do not just want to be servants, bits of a machine, but sons who have become one with the Father, and in whose hands He can put spiritual responsibilities. When we truly recognize this, we begin to understand why God is dealing with us as He does. But because God is in it, we know that the end is sure. He will bring His children through."

Because of the increasing level of pressure these present world conditions are bringing to the people of God, our training is accelerated – our time is short; we want to gain as much ground spiritually as possible.

So, you remember in the beginning that I said there are much deeper issues happening, things at stake for the Church that go beyond all the prophetic events we see taking place.

I was listening last week to a pastor expounding the parable of the unjust judge in Luke 18:1-8. I won't go into all the detail because that would be a study in itself, but there was a couple of points he made that I thought were extremely good.

I had never seen this parable in the light of the second coming, but in context it's pretty obvious. Besides the reference in the last verse of the parable, most of Luke 17 is talking about the signs of Christ's return – so, yes, this parable definitely applies to the end of the age.

Here's the parable:

Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.' "Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

Let me begin by reading a portion of a transcript of that message:

"The common interpretation of this parable is that it is a lesson in, or an exhortation to, importunity in prayer, and it has been generally used in that connection. While undoubtedly there is that element in it, that is altogether too limited an interpretation. If you look at the setting of the parable, you will see that it has a much larger connection than that."

So, that got my attention. I'm going to read a large portion of what he developed from there, so bear with me:

"The parable is set right into the coming of the Lord and must be interpreted in the light thereof, not merely and only as a lesson in importunity in personal prayer. It cannot be that, because the elect is in view. "Shall not God avenge his elect, that cry to him day and night?". "The elect" is only the eternal designation of the Church. We are "chosen in him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). It is the Church, therefore, which is in view here, and the Church as related to the coming of the Lord. Again, the avengement of the Church can only take place when the Lord comes. The Church will not be avenged until He appears. We know that, and much Scripture could be cited to support that. He will avenge His Church at His coming."

"Thus, it becomes perfectly clear as to what the Lord was really saying. There is an adversary, and that adversary is here set forth as the adversary of the elect, the adversary of the Church, and that adversary is seen to be engaged in a persistent pressure upon the Church, a persistent and growing pressure, which is bringing the Church more and more to the place of crying to be avenged. Now here we have two things, namely, the growing pressure and the deepening cry, and I do not think it necessary belovéd, to try to prove that the pressure is intensifying. It is another sign that the coming of the Lord is drawing near. All truly spiritual children of God are well aware of the intensification of pressure, spiritual pressure, from the adversary. We see it and we feel it in many directions. Things are closing in on the Church, pressing the Church in.

“We recognize it in a spiritual way, apart from anything outside; spiritual pressure, naked pressure from the enemy upon the spirit and the mind of the child of God. It is indeed intensification. And what shall we say about this which is becoming such an obvious thing, this spreading of physical pressure upon the children of God? We have to take account of these things, and that is the point now. Beloved, a very great deal, an immense amount, of the physical suffering today of the children of God, of the servants of the Lord, is pressure from the enemy. It cannot be, in the last issue, accounted for on merely natural grounds, for so often the assault is related to some spiritual interest, is bound up with something that God is doing or is going to do. There is the crippling and paralyzing attempt of the enemy in the physical, the bodily, realm of the saints. We could almost say you will hardly find one who is a key to spiritual things who is not assailed in that way at some time or other. Pressure in every way is intensifying upon the Church. I am sure you are alive to that, the fact of it, at any rate; and it is going to intensify, and true spiritual work, the thing that is heavenly and that really counts in relation to God's ultimate and full purpose, is going to find itself under increasing pressure from the adversary.”

“There are implications in this parable, and one of them is this, that the coming of the Lord, the avenging of the Church and the destruction of the work of the adversary is bound up with this cry, and the cry must be. The Lord has put the two together. Until there is the cry, there cannot be avengement, and that means there cannot be the coming of the Lord in intervention for the Church, and there cannot be the destruction of the adversary. The cry is essential. It seems to me that the Lord intended that we should take account of this too, that, when the Church really does reach that point and position where it does cry like this, that means that the end is just at hand. If the Lord by the Holy Spirit were to produce that cry in the Church, we can take it as settled that His coming is very near.

“Now, is He working toward that? Is there today an activity of the sovereign government of God to hedge the Church up to this cry? Some of us can say that, for our part, we have no doubt about it. As we look out, we can see movements in that direction. Yes, inability to do a very great many things, inability to be occupied with much of the superficiality that has been occupying the Church; a cutting off, a shutting in, and at the same time the adversary is withstanding, obstructing, hindering, limiting, and all efforts to break through seem to be unavailing, until almost in despair, the cry which is focused upon the enemy, the adversary, breaks out of the heart. Well, that is what the Lord is doing, I am quite sure. We must ask the Lord to keep us very much alive to what lies behind things and to bring us strongly into this cry which is for the Church's deliverance, the Church's emancipation.”

That explains so much of what is happening around us, but also in the deepest part of our being.

And the outcome of all this is amazing beyond our imagination. Listen to Paul's words in Romans 8:18-23 – I hope this passage can take on a whole new meaning for us in the circumstances that fill this world:

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

The whole creation suffers and longs for the manifestation of the sons of God – our glorification following the rapture and our return with Christ is the salvation of creation itself.

When Christ returns with us, He's going to be glorified in His saints – not “by”, “in”.

This is how Paul puts it in 2 Thess. 1:6-10;

. . . since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified *in* His saints.

In Col. 1:27 Paul wrote that Christ “in” us is the hope or confidence of glory.

Before I sign off, I have a prediction (not a “prophesy”, I’m not a prophet, just an observer”).

In China there are basically two churches – the Patriotic Three-Self Church (which is the state-sanctioned and government-controlled church) and the second is the underground, persecuted church.

It’s not hard to guess which one has sold out and which one is standing with Christ.

I believe it’s very possible that this will soon happen in our country. Because of the quarantine, all of our churches are in a sense ‘underground’; but eventually the buildings may open up again and at some point, will have to face a rising totalitarian government who will require all Christians to obey certain policies and restrictions.

In our country Christianity has become a sub-culture; in China it’s a counter-culture.

When that happens, a prophetic message by Chuck Missler years ago will come to pass – he said, “The first church met in houses and the last church will meet in houses.”

We need to prepare for that time and decide what we are willing to give up and to risk to stay true to our calling.