TITLE: Exciting Times

TEXT: Mt. 24:3-8, 36-44, 25:1-14; Jn.14:6; Acts 4:12

INTRODUCTION: Does everyone know what Eschatology is?

Eschatology is the study of end times events or end times theology.

 I have always been drawn to the study of Eschatology. It all started in the early 1970’s when I read a book by Hal Lindsey called “The Late Great Planet Earth.”

The book was a classic on modern day eschatology at the time.

As Christians eschatology is important in that it is really all about the time that leads to when Jesus comes back and sets up His Kingdom.

The Bible deals a lot with this subject in both the Old and the New Testament.

The books of Isaiah, Daniel and Ezekiel are all full of eschatology. In the book of Matthew Jesus has a lot to say about eschatology. Revelation is an entire book on the subject.

 For those of us who love the study of end times events we find that we are living in very exciting times today because, I believe, we are seeing a lot of the prophetic Scriptures happing right before our eyes.

The early disciples were very interested in eschatology also. Even while Jesus was there living amongst them.

**Mt. 24 Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. 2“Do you see all these things?” he asked. “Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”**

**3As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”**

In fact this may be the first eschatological question ever asked!

The Disciples asking Jesus**--- Tell us,” “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”**

 Then Jesus gives them, and us, some general signs to watch for that would indicate that time of human history..

**4Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. 5For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. 6You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. 7Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8All these are the beginning of birth pains.**

**9“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. 10At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, 11and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. 12Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, 13but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. 14And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.**

I want to look at a few of these signs that Jesus said to watch for that would be an indicator that His return and the end of the age was drawing near..

**4Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you.**  **5For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ, and will deceive many.**

 **6You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.**  **7Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places.**  **8All these are the beginning of birth pains.**

First, **There will be famines and earthquakes in various places.**

The fact is that we have always had famines and earthquakes.

Earthquakes were not very well recorded until the early 1900’s.

 Earthquakes are measured by the Richter Scale.

 The Richter scale was invented in the 1930s by [Dr. Charles Richter](http://tremor.nmt.edu/faq/richter.html), a seismologist at the California Institute of Technology.

The Richter scale goes from 1 to 10 in intensity in measuring earthquakes. One and under being the smallest and 10 and over being the largest.

 Earthquakes under 2.0 are considered to be micro earthquakes and cannot be felt up here on the ground.

Earthquakes are measured in Seismic Energy Yield.

 A 5.0 earthquake produces a Seismic Energy Yield.

Equal to about 476.0 metric tons of TNT.

A 7.0 earthquake produces a Seismic Energy Yield.

Equal to about 476.0 kilotons of TNT.

A 9.0 earthquake such as Japan experienced a few years ago produces a Seismic Energy Yield.

Equal to about 476 megatons of TNT.

 A 7.0 earthquake is 100 times more powerful than a 5.0 earthquake and a 9.0 earthquake is 100 times more powerful than a 7.0 earthquake.

 There has never been a 10.0 earthquake recorded but it would be equal to 15 gigatons of TNT. 15 gigatons is equal to 15,000 megatons.

Annually there are around 500,000 earthquakes each year in which about 100,000 of these can actually be felt.

In 2010 there were 2,107 earthquakes that measured 5.0 or larger.

 Highest death toll in 2010 was the [Haiti](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2010_Haiti_earthquake)an earthquake where there were an estimated 300,000 deaths. It was the sixth strongest earthquake since 1900.

On March 11 2011 there was a Magnitude 9.0 earthquake in Japan.

In 2020 there were 13,634 earthquakes over 6.0 on Richter scale.

 Jesus said one of the signs of the times of His coming and the end of the age would be **famines and earthquakes in various places.**

 I don’t know that we are experiencing all that much more earthquake activity in general, but they do seem to be getting more severe and destructive.

Then Jesus said:

**6You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.
7Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom.**

 Again, we have always had wars and rumors of wars, but nothing in my lifetime on the scale that we have seen this past couple decades.

 A few years ago the entire Middle East seemed to be on fire

There were wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya.

 People were rioting in the streets in Egypt, Turkey, Iran, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, Bahrain, Qatar, Sudan, Algeria and even Saudi Arabia.

 In that part of the world there are wars and rumors of wars and kingdom is rising against kingdom and nation against nation all the time.

I believe that just the geographical location where all this is going on is very significant for end time’s events.

 This is the part of the world where everything began and the Bible says that this is going to be the focal point of the world in the last days.

Today more than any other time in modern history all eyes are on the Middle East!

 Jesus said that when you see these things start to come to pass that they are **the beginning of birth pains.**

What is the significance of this analogy of birth pains?

Number one, when birth pains start, when labor begins it starts the countdown to birth.

 Secondly, once the birth pains begin there is a steady progression of frequency. The process starts to speed up!

And I believe we may very well be seeing that acceleration happening in our world today.

Jesus then goes on in the next verses talking about how things will worsen until the time of His return.

And then He says in:

**mt.24:9“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. 10At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, 11and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.**

**12Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, 13but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. 14And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.**

 Christian persecution is on the rise all around our world.

 In many nations Christians are being persecuted unto death.

 We are even starting to see more persecution of Christians in the western hemisphere.

 Even in this country there seems to be increased hostility toward Christians especially by the media and the left.

**10At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other,**

**12Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold,**

 In our country many, especially young people, have turned from the faith of their parents and grandparents..

 Over the past year we have seen our cities literally erupt in violence.

 Hate groups like BLM and Antifa are destroying business in mostly minority neighborhoods. Hurting the people they say they are standing up for. Many politicians cheering them on!

 Politicians striving to stir up racial division and hatred amounst our people. Intentionally trying to drive a stake of division between its citizens.

 Hatred by many for our police officers and calling for police departments to be defunded and disbanded.

**Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold..**

Tell me we are not seeing this happen all around us today!

 I grew up in the racial division and civil upheaval in the 1960’s and what we are seeing happen today is as bad or worse.

 The difference between now and then is that what we see today seems to be driven more by politics and is an intentional striving to divide us as Americans.

 Mix that with a decreased faith in God within our nation and the result is in many cases is anarchy in our streets and an .. **increase of wickedness where the love of most will grow cold..**

 What we are seeing in our world today seems to line up with what Jesus said would happen as the time of His return and the end of this age draws near.

**Matthew 24:36-44(NIV)**
**36“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.**  **37As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.**  **38For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark;**  **39and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.**  **40Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.**  **41Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.**  **42“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.**  **43But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into.**  **44So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.**

 One day about 8-10 years ago I heard that someone had a theory that the world was going to end on May 21st of that year?

 My first thought was: I hope not as we go on vacation May 31st and I would kind of like to get that in first as I have already paid for our motels….

 Lord, can you wait until around June 10th or so?

 It seems every couple years someone has figured out a date that Jesus is going to return.

 There have been times that people get so convinced that they will sell all they have and move to the place where they think Jesus will return to.

 Some, less than mature Christians, have thought, Hey, if Jesus is coming back I just as well load up all my credit cards as I won’t be here to have to pay them back. This is a good time to buy that 80 inch big screen TV. Maybe I can have friends over to watch Jesus come in the clouds on CNN!

Here is a news flash---If someone sets a specific date that Jesus will return I will almost guarantee you that He will not come on that specific date!

 Jesus may come the day before or the day after but probably not on a much publicized date or time.

 Jesus said:

**36“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.**

 Now if the angels of God don’t know the exact date, if Jesus Himself does not know the exact date, how likely do you suppose it is that God would give that specific information to any man?

 But “when” Jesus comes is not all that important.
Jesus tells us what is important when He says: **42“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.
43But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into.
44So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.**

The question: Will Jesus return is not all that important.

 The Bible says that He will so He will!

The question: When will Jesus return is not really that important either.

 The only thing we can be sure of today is that if Jesus does not return today tomorrow we will be one day closer to His return then we are today.

 The most important question for you and I as we wait for that time is: Will I be ready for Jesus to return whenever it is that He comes!

Jesus said:

**42“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.
43But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into.
44So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.**

One thing that this tells us is that if we don’t really think that Jesus will come back today then it is the perfect time for Him to come back!

 **Because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.**

 Jesus follows up this portion of Scripture about the signs of the end times with three consecutive parables.

 The parable of the faithful and wise servant, the parable of the wise and foolish virgins and the parable of the talents.

 Each parable speaks about, not knowing the exact time, but the importance of our being ready for that time whenever it comes.

I like all three but for reference today I will use the second parable, the parable of the wise and foolish virgins.

**Matthew 25:1-13 (NIV)**
**1“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.**  **2Five of them were foolish and five were wise.
3The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them.
4The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps.
5The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.
6“At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’
7“Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps.
8The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’**  **9“‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’**  **10“But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.**  **11“Later the others also came. ‘Sir! Sir!’ they said. ‘Open the door for us!’**  **12“But he replied, ‘I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.’**  **13“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.**

 In this culture if a man asked a father for his daughters hand in marriage and the father said yes then they were betrothed, engaged if you will.

 But before the father would release his daughter to the groom the groom would have to have a place prepared for his bride to live and be financially secure.

 So many times a groom would be gone for quite a while as he was preparing for his bride, possibly years.

 Only when he had a good job in place and a house built could he go and get his bride.

 All the while his bride would anxiously wait on him to come if she loved her husband to be.

The wise virgins here were the ones that carried extra oil. What that tells us is that they anticipated the Bridegrooms return at any moment, they were ready, they stayed alert and prepared because of their deep love for the bridegroom!

 The foolish virgins were the ones that weren’t really anticipating the return of the bridegroom so it affected their preparedness. They probably didn’t have the degree of love for him that they should have,

 Again, the most important question of this life is not; when the end of the age comes and Jesus returns.

 Life’s most important question for each and every one of us is: Will I be ready for His coming whenever it is that He comes! Am I really anticipating His return?

 Anticipation leads to preparedness!

There is only one way that any of us will truly be ready then and that is to know Jesus now!

 Not just know of Him or about Him but know Him personally as our Lord and Savior.

Jesus said in:**John 14:6(NIV) 6--- “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**

**Acts 4:12(NIV)
12Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”**

 I don’t believe that we can deny the sign of the times we are living in.

 There are headlines in today’s media almost daily that reflect things coming to pass that Scripture predicted thousands of years ago.

 We are living in exciting times because Scripture is literally being fulfilled right before our eyes today!

The question that remains is: are we ready for it?

The most important question we need to ask ourselves is: If Jesus was to return tomorrow would I be ready today?

 Have I truly made Him my Lord so that He has become my Savior?

 Am I really ready for Him to return? Am I truly anticipating His return?

 Of one thing I am 100% certain. If Jesus does not return today we will be one day closer for Him to return tomorrow? And if doesn’t return tomorrow the next day we will be one day closer still…..

 The only question that remains is will I, will you, be ready for Him whenever it is that He comes?