

Challenges and Callings of the End Times

Part 1

The message I have on my heart tonight is about *“The Challenges and Callings of the End Times.”* I would like to begin with a few readings from the Word of God.

“But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.”

1 Peter 4:7

“And he said to me, “Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still.”

Revelation 22:10, 11

If we deeply and seriously study and search the topic of the End Times in the Word of God, we will be surprised to come across things that we have not heard of before. Actually, only the surface of this topic has been touched, despite the many talks, comments and books that speak about the End Times. It must be understood then, that there would indeed be some sort of hindrance or masking of the real depth of this topic because it is one that digs deeply and ultimately into Kingdom matters, whether it be the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Darkness. It is, therefore, quite expected that the Enemy would do his best to mask the real revelatory matters related to the End Times. As a result, we are merely left with many songs and phrases like: *“Maran Atha,” “O come, Lord Jesus,” “we love You Jesus and we are ready for Your Coming,”* and that is all. Of course, this is important, but these are certainly not the real dynamics involved in this great topic that has an impact on all spiritual matters.

I would like to mention some main points to sum up the dynamics involved in matters of the End Times.

There are real challenges related to the End Times and, at the same time, there are real specific callings especially related to the End Times.

It may not surprise us to know that many of the resources of the Redemptive work have not been released yet. The story of Old Israel is repeated with the New Israel.

Let us look at some verses from the book of Joshua to clarify this point:

“Now Joshua was old, advanced in years and the Lord said to him: “You are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet to be possessed.” **Joshua 13:1**

“Then Joshua said to the children of Israel: “How long will you neglect to go and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers has given you?” **Joshua 18:3**

Joshua had led a whole series of battles to allow Israel to enter the land; he was the chief captain of all the battles. This was not an easy matter because every battle had a special strategy and a special plan which differed from one battle to the other. Yet, being a man of God, Joshua was able to lead the people into real and true victory. How? What are the main characteristics of the man of God?

You may give me a long list of characteristics, but you may still miss the most important one. One of the most important characteristics of the man of God which was found in Joshua is that he learned how to know the *mind* of God.

Joshua lived as a man of God in every step. He confronted real, powerful nations yet he was able to conquer them because he possessed another characteristic of the man of God related to the one above. Not only was he able to know the *mind* of God, but he also had an *open eye* that allowed him to see the unseen spiritual realm. Joshua was able to accomplish victories because he was actually working on two levels: namely, the *seen* and *unseen* levels. He was able to work on both the *physical* and *spiritual* realms.

Let us look at some references in this respect:

“Then Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel: “Sun, stand still over Gibeon; and Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.” So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the people had revenge upon their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go down for

about a whole day. And there has been no day like that, before it or after it that the Lord heeded the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel.” Joshua 10:12–14

Joshua was able to make the sun stand still for an entire day in order to accomplish this victory.

What is the benefit of making the sun stand still for one whole day?

The expected logical answer would be: to finish the work and accomplish the victory. This actually happened, yet, do you think that this is the real and full purpose? I do not think so. What then is the full correct purpose behind this?

Is it a usual thing for the sun to stand still for a day? Of course not, this is unusual. Did God want to make a demonstration out of that, or even show off? Certainly not! Therefore, there must be something valuable behind this incident.

If I was in your place and I came across this passage while reading the Bible, I would surely pause before it and say that there must be a revelation here. So I would wait before the Lord for days, or even years, to discover this revelation. And as much as I waited before the Lord, I would begin to receive and understand the treasures and most valuable things stored in the biblical passages. This is one of the things that I learned from the Early Fathers’ teachings and lives. Through this approach, I was able to dig deep in the Word of God to find the treasures.

What then is the important significance behind that special day?

It was nearly sunset time and the day was ending. Both armies knew the day was coming to an end and that night was falling, yet, they were still battling. Then, all of a sudden, Joshua stood and told the sun to stand still and the sunset to stop. And so, the sun began to shine again causing both armies to wonder what was happening!

On one hand, the army of Israel would have probably thought that this obviously meant that God was on their side. Yet, this is not the actual significance of this incident.

On the other hand, the other army was probably deeply perplexed and completely broken in power. Do you know why? Is it because of some change in the physical weather? Of

course not! The change in the physical weather was not an issue to them and did not matter at all. The reason behind their perplexity and loss of power was actually because they worshipped the sun. As a result of this occurrence, they saw that their enemy, Israel, was able to speak to their god and make their god stand still. This incident meant that Israel had authority over their god. In turn, this meant that the God of their enemies was more powerful than their own god and hence, they would definitely lose the battle; all was over.

Not only this, but there is more to discover in this part of the Scripture:

“And it happened, as they fled before Israel and were on the descent of Beth Horon, that the Lord cast down large hailstones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died from the hailstones than the children of Israel killed with the sword.” **Joshua 10:11**

The Bible states that the hailstones actually caused more deaths than the weapons. It is thus clear here that the heavenly hosts were working with Israel.

From where did these stones come? Who threw the hailstones?

The angels of God did this according to the order of God.

Thus, the heavenly hosts were involved in the battle at that point. The heavenly hosts turned to be a heavenly army that worked with the earthly army of Israel under the leadership of Joshua. So, Joshua became a leader who can order even the heavenly hosts to work with him because he was able to know the mind of God.

Do you remember what happened before the beginning of the battles?

Before the battles started, the angel of God came to Joshua. Joshua asked him who he was and whether he was on their side or not. The angel replied saying that he was an archangel of God. (We read this in the last paragraph of chapter 5). In other words, this meant that the archangel of God came to Joshua to say – in the language of the spirit: *“We are going to work together, I am sent by God to help you; whenever there is a problem, call upon me. I will be with you; I will throw stones over your enemies.”*

The man of God can thus work on two levels: the unseen and the seen. If there is a real man of God who has the full anointing on him, the hand of the Lord will be with him and the hosts of the Lord will work with him.

Let us now go back to the main point to connect things together.

Joshua finished all the battles in a very inspired way. Israel was already inside their land. However, at a certain point, Joshua told the people of Israel: *“Why are you too lazy to possess what was given to you? There is a lot of land that is already yours, but you are not controlling and possessing them, you are not taking them. Why are you stopping? There are no more battles; all battles are finished, yet you still have to take what was granted to you.”*

In the Hebrew language, as we all know, *“Joshua”* means *“Jesus”* and both names mean *“God Saves.”* Because all of the Word of God is inspired, all of the Word of God is prophetic. Thus, every chapter speaks prophetically to us if we are ready and prepared to receive the prophetic dimension within it.

There is a parallel here. Like Joshua, Jesus is also telling us that He has finished all the battles for us and that we are already in the land. Yet we are still not possessing the land that was given to us.

Joshua was already old and he was telling Israel: *“I am old and I still have not seen the fruits of the battles that can please my heart, the battles that have taken all my years, because you have not yet taken and received what was given to you.”*

We mentioned that there is a parallel between Jesus and Joshua. Does this mean that Jesus is old like Joshua?! Could Jesus be old?! Of course Jesus can not be old, but the prophetic word here signifies that 2000 years have gone by since Christ’s act of salvation on the cross. This is a long time; it is a long time for us and we have yet to take full possession of the land.

Here is the important point: Because Israel, in the old times, failed to take full possession of the land, their enemies were able to be like thorns and trouble them greatly as the Bible states.

I think we are all familiar with the history of the Church of God all over the world. Some scholars maintain that the Parable of the Ten Virgins mentioned in Matthew 25 signifies that the time came when all the virgins were asleep. All scholars agree that the Church began with great power, but then the Church fell asleep. Now, the Church is beginning to wake up because the Bridegroom is coming. Yet due to the centuries of sleep, there is a lot of mess and confusion. There are various and diverse thoughts, schools, ideas, spiritual organizations and spiritual activities in the Church all over the world. Each one is asking and wondering which direction to go and what is the proper and perfect way.

Joshua, our Savior, Jesus, is saying: *“Many years have passed and you still have not entered the full possession of what I have given you. Because of this, your enemies are able to put you down, hurt you, and bring many bad things into the Church of God.”* They bring shame to Christ’s name and they bring a stumbling question to the believers. The stumbling question that many believers ask is: *“Is it really possible to live a holy, victorious, Christian life in this Age?”*

Believers complain saying that they hear about bad things and bad sins in the lives of Christian leaders and hence wonder how it could be possible for them, being younger and weaker in the spirit, to be victorious. As a result, we give ourselves an excuse and this breaks Christ’s heart. Try to come close to His heart. He has much agony in His heart!

In my spiritual walk, I have learned that when one tries to get closer to the Lord by praying a lot, reading the Word of God a lot, and waiting patiently before God, this person receives more light and is spiritually encouraged and hence finds himself longing to come closer to the Lord more and more. This person is not after understanding more about the mind of God, but rather desires to come closer to His heart. This is actually the guidance of the Holy Spirit for those who are sincerely led into deeper fellowship with the Lord. In this instance, we may think that when one is led in such a way to come closer to the heart of the Lord, that person will be filled with love and peace. This indeed must still happen, yet because of what we referred to earlier, the Lord’s heart is broken. Thus, when one comes closer to His heart, the first thing that person encounters is His agony. The Lord still seeks those who desire and are interested to come closer to His heart and for those ready for the cost.

There is no other way than to enter into the full possession of what has been granted to us through the redemptive work of Christ and His Cross. When we begin to partake in the spiritual possession of the redemptive work of Christ, everything will change.

Our eyes will be opened to see the hidden strategies of the Enemy because the Enemy has no power to cover or hide these strategies from the open eyes. In other words, if we are not yet partaking in our spiritual possession, the measure at which we are standing in the spirit will not help us understand or see the hidden strategies of the Enemy. This happens because the Devil is able to look and see the measure of grace of the believers in the Church of God. Thus, he will know that the measure they have at that particular instance enables them to see only up to a certain level. As a result, he can mask his strategies at that level. Then, the believer tries to see in the spirit, but because he does not have an open eye, he fails to see. Because we have learned to use our minds to work out things and because we have received a lot of preaching and teaching about these matters, we compensate the lack of spiritual vision by using what we know to interpret things. So, we say: *“Oh, the strategy of the enemy is so and so.”* This interpretation comes from the mind and not from a direct spiritual vision. Yet, if we receive our spiritual possession, our spiritual eyes will be open and we will have a higher measure of grace. Hence, we will be able to look and see clearly and the enemy will not be able to mask his strategies at that higher level. One can, therefore, expose all his strategies.

Try to imagine two armies battling against each other, where one army is able to know the whole battling strategy of the other side. What would the result be? There will surely be victory on one side and definite defeat on the other.

Let us be truthful with ourselves. If we were to evaluate the spiritual situation at the moment, would we be able to say that the Church of God is in full victory – practically speaking, and not theologically – and that the army of the Devil is being defeated on a practical level? Is this the current situation? The truth is that we are fighting together, the Church alongside the evil powers; sometimes we are losers and at other times we are winners. Our Joshua, who from of old, is saying: *“Why are you not taking your possession? 2000 years have passed and you are lazy and still not able to enter to possess all that I have granted you.”*

What then is the decision that we need to make now? [Important to take decision OR abortion occurs [loss of the grace and the charge of the talk]???[It is important to identify and make this decision now, or we are in danger of losing the grace and charge of tonight's teaching.]

Sometimes we fail to discern the necessary and required decision; this is the story of the Body of Christ everywhere in every meeting. We attend meetings. We hear teachings and enjoy them, and then we pray a short prayer thanking God for the message and promising to do such and such a thing. But we do not make a decision, not because we do not want to make a decision, but because we are unable to discern the required decision.

The Body of Christ needs to learn to see and understand what is happening so that we may get nearer to His mind and His heart.

Every time we hear teachings, we are touched, we pray, and we take some steps that are blessed and that help us grow in the spirit. But we do not make the decision.

The decision we need to make is simply that we need to take and receive the *possession* that was granted to us. This is the focus and the heart of the talk and message of today. “*Possession*” is the key word. Hence, we must move and find out how to enter into our spiritual possession. Our eyes will then be opened and we will be able to see the strategies of the Enemy to walk against them, and also learn how to obey God and know His mind.

To conclude, I would like to highlight a very important point regarding the End Times.

In the End Times, the Devil is actually preparing many diverse plans in order to take the Body of Christ by surprise so that he can deceive and damage as much of the Body as he can.

“For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.” **Mathew 24:24**

These are Jesus' words to His disciples and they are also His words to us as His disciples. Jesus highlights here that the Devil is planning to win the battle even against "the elect"; he dreams of taking "the elect" into his net, into his trap.

Who does "the elect" refer to?

[Of course, I am not referring here to any theological significance of the word "*elect*" which is controversial among different denominations, but am only referring to the general spiritual meaning.]

"The elect" simply refers to those who are supposed to be deeply rooted in Christ.

It seems as though the Devil is ignoring most of the ordinary Christians here and there and is focusing mostly on "the elect". If this was not the case, Jesus would have never highlighted it in such a way. The reason behind this is that the Enemy knows quite well that those who are wavering in their spiritual walk are more or less in his net. Even if they are not practically in his net, they have no effect nor impact on the dynamics of the End Times.

There will be a real and actual battle at the End Times; a great battle that will have an impact on *everything* during the End Times. In this scene, many people will merely be on the sidelines while others will be actively involved in the battle inside the battlefield.

Those watching what is going on from the sidelines will be of no value to the Enemy. What will they be doing on the side? They will be praying and singing. They will be participating in many battles, saying: "Devil, we break your power in the name of Jesus." In the council of the Enemy, when the arch devil comes to gather with his troops, he will tell them:

"I want to tell you something very confidential. Do not confront these people; do not hinder what they are doing; they are actually helping us and serving our purpose; leave them to do such battles and try to make them see some manifestations that would make them think that they are victorious. So, for example, if you are harming or hurting certain people, stop doing this for some time so that they would think that they have won the battle and have pushed us away; this will be very helpful to us because this will keep

them on the shore busy with this job. Let us focus all our energy on the elect who are standing in front of us confronting us all the time; we have a serious job with the elect.”

I do not know how much you are in touch with what happens in the Body of Christ, especially pastors and leaders, all over the world. Every now and then we hear a story about one of the great men of God who has succumbed to sin or moral issues. How does this happen? This happens because the Devil is now intensely and deeply involved with the elect. He knows that if he succeeds in breaking the power of the elect, he will easily confuse all the other believers. Everyone will be terrified and say: “My leader has fallen, how can I stand?”

Let us now go back to our main title and theme regarding the *challenges and callings of the end times*:

There are real challenges in the End Times, among which are the confrontations that aim to deceive and trap “the elect.” Because of this the Holy Spirit will not stand with arms folded, simply watching and smiling, telling us: “Try to walk in the spirit; pray a lot and fast and I am waiting to help you when you need.” The Holy Spirit will not do this, of course!

The plan of the enemy is to entrap the elect through hidden plans that will take them by surprise. How can the Devil achieve this? He will actually confront them with weapons that they have never heard of before, never came in touch with, and were never trained how to push away or win a battle of such nature and such weapons.

The Church of God has already gone through a lot of training in how to resist the different weapons of the Enemy. The Church has learned how to walk in faith, how to use the Word of God as a weapon, and how to use all the other spiritual weapons mentioned in Ephesians 6. Yet, there are still some other hidden weapons in the stores of the Enemy. Do you think that the leaders of whom we have heard who have fallen to bad sins were not trained in spiritual battling? They were indeed trained in spiritual battling. How then were they taken in the trap? They were actually confronted with something that they were not familiar with and hence were taken in.

Therefore, the Holy Spirit, on the other side, is also preparing new weapons that have not been released before to take the Enemy by surprise.

What are these weapons of the Holy Spirit?

They are new callings, anointings, and gifts especially related to and prepared for the era of the End Times. This is part of our possession in the redemptive work of Christ. The cry of the Spirit now is:

“Church of God, go, enter, take your possession so that you can be victorious; there are many things waiting for you, very high, very blessed, very powerful, and so wonderful, take them!”

The question now is: Are we ready? Do we understand? Have we decided to remain on the side or enter into the battlefield?

This is the point; this is the decision we must make. The Lord is waiting for us to say the word and make our decision.

It is important, if you so wish, to spend some time in prayer before going for the break in order to allow what we have heard to sink in and settle deep in our spirits and not fade away.

AMEN