

# MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

ISRAEL, HAMAS AND JESUS |

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Alright. Well, good to be with you today. I want to welcome all of our locations and those of you who are a part of our online family. We're glad to have you.

If you have a Bible, go ahead and find Genesis, chapter 12. Genesis, chapter 12 is where we're going to be. And we are going to end our time in Revelation, so buckle up. That's where we are starting, Genesis 12.

When I was in college I had somebody hand me a book by a British theologian and pastor by the name of John Stott. The title of the book was *Between Two Worlds*. It was the first preaching book that I ever read and it made a deep, deep impact on me. In fact, I re-read it often.

He provides this picture analogy of what biblical preaching is. He says, "Imagine that you've got a canyon and on one side of the canyon is the Word of God and on the other side of the canyon is the world in which we live." And he said, "The job of a biblical sermon isn't just to stand on one side or the other of that canyon."

So, it's not just to stand on the Word side and yell across at the world side. And it's not going over to the world side and just kind of making some observations and get a cool little Ted talk. But the job of a biblical sermon is to start with the text and build a bridge into the context. It's to start with the Word and build a bridge into the world. It's to start with the sacred and build a bridge into the world of the secular and then walk back and forth across the canyon showing people the promises of God and the sovereignty of God in the world in which we live.

So every time I stand up to preach, regardless of the passage, this question is on my mind.

**How are we to make sense of what is happening in the world in which we live by way of what has been recorded in the Word?**

1 Chronicles, chapter 12, verse 32 says there were these men of Issachar who understood the times in which they lived. And because they understood the times they were able to discern what their next steps should be.

And our disposition should be the same today. As we discern the times in which we live, as we watch the news, as we read commentaries, as we look at social media, we are not rocked by what we see. We're not knocked off balance emotionally by what we see because we are confident in what God's Word says, what His promises are, and in His very nature.



Now, that doesn't mean that we aren't grieved. That doesn't mean that we are not heart broken. It doesn't mean that we don't drop to our knees in prayer asking God to intervene and to change some things. It just means we're not knocked off balance emotionally because we're grounded firmly in what God's Word says.

And I think in this day and age of biblical illiteracy we have a tendency to know more of what is going on on the world side of the canyon than we do on the Word side of the canyon. As a result, it's knocked us off balance emotionally, even those of us who call ourselves Christian.

So, in 2 Timothy, chapter 1, verse 7 it says:

*"For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline."* 2 Timothy 1:7 (NLT)

That's a verse that you might commit to memory, especially as we head into another contentious election this next year.

We might have a tendency to watch the news and look at everything that is going on around the world and just be like, "Man, it feels like the rails have just come off," and we might be tempted in an emotional state to question God and say, "God, why? God, where are You? Why are You allowing this?"

Have you ever done this? "Man, if I was God things would be totally different." Well, maybe. But I love the words of J. Vernon McGee. He said this one time, in only the way that he can say, "This is God's universe, and God does things his way. You may have a better way, but you don't have a universe." You know, it's just kind of case closed. And so it's kind of with that sort of sober humility that we need to approach this.

Today, I just want you to know that we were supposed to have been—months in the planning—we were supposed to kick off a new series of messages today called *At the Movies* and we were going to run through Christmas. And I just kind of felt like with the world events, the conflict in Israel, things that are going on, all of the questions I've been getting from you, I just felt nudged by the Spirit—actually more than a nudge—the Spirit of God was like, "You need to address the Word and the world. There is so much confusion and so many emotions and so much division." So, I just decided to punt that series by one week so that we can address this.

Now, I want you to know that this is really not a message on Israel, necessarily, or the conflict that you see in the news, or Hamas. We're going to talk about those things. But this is primarily a message about Jesus. I want to be very, very clear about that. Our view is on Him and Him alone.

In fact, let me tell you where we are going with this. I'm going to offer you a chance, an invitation, to receive Jesus and be baptized today if you have never done so or if you're confused about where you stand with Him, or if you've drifted away from Him in these times in which we live.



First hour, at the eight o'clock service we had zero baptisms planned, we had 10 spontaneous. So, I'm just praying that there will be many more. And that was just at this location alone. So, I'm not sure what happened in the other locations.

Here's what prompted the sermon and you will all likely know this because you've seen it all over the news. On Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>... There is a known terrorist organization by the name of Hamas—a known terrorist organization. Within their charter they have that their intent is to exterminate all Jews beginning in Israel and then around the world.

And they went and attacked men, women, and children and they took the lives of over 1,400 Jewish people. They took hundreds of hostages. They sent videos of executions to family members. It was the largest single day killing of Jews since the Holocaust. Many have described it as Israel's 911. Actually, if you take in the population comparison, it was magnified many times more.

Since that time, as we've continued to see the media churn this thing, and as we've seen different perspectives and opinions and protests that have happened, likely there have been a few conversations around your dinner table. This week is Thanksgiving, so there are probably a few more coming.

And there are probably all kinds of questions that you've been fielding and you've been asking. You're trying to figure this out, as Christians. And when I say that, I'm not talking about Christians in name only, I'm talking filled with the Spirit of God, Jesus is Lord, our allegiance is to Him, awakened by His Spirit—there is a difference. It's like, "So, as a Christ follower, how should we think about this conflict, what should our response be, what should our disposition be?"

Here are some questions:

**Where did this conflict come from?**

**How far back does it go?**

**What is it about?**

**How should we see this?**

**What about the innocent civilians who are being wounded and killed, both in Israel and in Palestine?**

By the way, there are Christians in Palestine. How are we to think about all of that?

Now, what I want you to... We've got to start here with just two things. The first thing that I want you to know is that what happened October 7<sup>th</sup> and what is ongoing right now is a continuation of a 4,000 year old problem. Just let that rest on you for a minute. How old are your problems? Some of you are like, "Eighteen." I'm not talking about that. That just came to me. That wasn't even in my notes. Alright?

My problems are mostly a couple of weeks, couple of months old. I might have a problem or two that are going on into a year. But most of my problems aren't 4,000 years old.

So that, in and of itself, should remind us... I love what theologian N. T. Wright says about this as he was talking about this conflict. He lived over there for a while. He said, "We need to understand this is a 4,000 year old conflict. It's on the other side of the world. It is multi-layered. It is complex, therefore there have been generations trying to fix this problem and can't. Therefore, we should approach it with a great amount of intellectual and emotional humility."

I actually don't see much of that in the news. Usually it's people throwing knowledge grenades across the other side, like, "Well, if we just do this, this would fix it." And we've got to realize that this is a really multi-faceted problem.

Here's the second thing that we've got to remember, what is happening in physical realms and physical nations is spilling out of the spiritual realms. Ephesians 6 talks about the principalities and powers of darkness in the evil realm.

I'm going to talk about this here in just a minute, but the real enemy is not the people of other political persuasions, lifestyles, or religions. It's not Muslim people. It's not necessarily even specifically Hamas. It's the spirit behind them. The principalities and powers of darkness in the evil realm.

So, I'm going to start in Genesis 12. I do want to give some recognition here. Pastors Chris Hodges, Greg Laurie, Josh Howardson—all of these individuals have just really helped me take a large amount of Old Testament history and summarize it where I can screen through this in about 30 minutes. So, I want to give recognition to them.

I want to start in Genesis, chapter 12. It all starts—October 7<sup>th</sup>—it all goes back to the calling of a man by the name of Abram. Now, the book of Joshua tells us that he was called out of a pagan family. Look at what it says in Genesis 12:1:

*"The Lord had said to Abram, 'Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you.'" Genesis 12:1 (NLT)*

Now, 4,000 years later we know that the land that God was referring to is the land of Israel, the Promise Land. And Abram believed God's promise and it says that it was credited to him as righteousness. That's what happens when you believe God's promise. He credits righteousness into your account.

So, Abram leaves his family and his nation and he travels to this land to where God has called him. And we pick it up in Genesis 15. God, seeing Abram's faith, changes his name to Abraham. And if any of you grew up in church, maybe you remember singing the song *Father Abraham*. This is the guy.

He establishes a covenant with him. Now, there is a difference between a contract and a covenant. A contract is very, very common in writing, in cultures that could read and

write. But they lived in a very verbal, visual culture. So a contract says this, And this is likely what you have with your bank, with your mortgage:

**“I will be what I should be for you, if you are what you should be to me.”**

In other words, you make your payments on time, we’ll let you keep your house. You are upholding your end of the contract.

But they lived in a very visual, verbal culture so they had a covenant. And a covenant says this. And this is what God made with Abraham:

**“I will be what I should be to you even if you are not what you should be to me”**

Now here’s how they would seal this covenant. The greater party and the lessor party would show up. They would take a slaughtered lamb, cut up the pieces, lay them in a line, and the lessor party would walk the pieces of the lamb reciting the terms of the covenant, “I will be what I should be for you. And if not, then may I become like the pieces of this slain lamb.” Aren’t you thankful you don’t have that with your bank?

Now, in Genesis 15, when God establishes this covenant with Abraham, He does something unprecedented. At the exact time that Abraham was getting ready to walk the pieces of this slain lamb, God puts him into a deep sleep and then it says that He shows up as a flaming fire pot; that is the exact term that is used to describe God on Mount Sinai when He gives Moses the Ten Commandments. And while Abraham is snoring away, God, Himself walks the pieces of the slain lamb reciting the terms of the covenant.

And He was saying to Abraham as well as to all of his offspring and to those of us today who have responded by faith, we’ve been grafted into the family tree, “If you break the covenant, I will become like the pieces of this slain lamb,” foreshadowing the Lamb of God who would give His life for us on a cross. And because God walked the pieces of this lamb, that is what is called an unbreakable covenant, or Bible scholars call it an unconditional covenant, where God both makes and meets the demands and the terms of the covenant.

So, as He does this there are three parts to this promise. One is the land:

**He promises Abraham the promised land (Israel)**

That’s referring to Israel.

**Lineage: Even though you’re in the twilight of life, you’re going to have a son, and from that son would come a nation (Jews)**

Two is the lineage. He goes, “Hey, Abraham. I know that you and Sarah don’t have any kids right now, but you’re going to have a son by faith and actually, out of that son is going to come a descendant who will become the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. The lineage. The third is the Lord.

**LORD: A descendant from your son will come a Messiah (Jesus)**

A descendant will become the Messiah.

So, when God gave this promise what happened is a spiritual war got waged and has been raging ever since.

Now, I've talked to you about this way back in our series on Romans. And periodically I feel like I need to remind you of it, God is a Holy Spirit and we have an enemy who is an unholy spirit. Every time there was an action of the Holy Spirit, there was an opposite reaction of unholy spirits.

Satan is not an innovator. Satan doesn't create. He recreates. He is a deceiver. So what he does is he takes the good things that God has created for His glory and our joy and he distorts them for the purpose of deception.

So here's what that looks like:

**Whatever God creates, Satan counterfeits**

**Whatever God builds, Satan breaks**

**Whatever God does, Satan seeks to undo and oppose**

God sparks awakening within us. Satan lolls us to sleep.

I've given this visual before, I'll give it to you again because it's the only bit of humor that I've got in this message and that is: God gives us the original, Satan gives us the copy. So if God gave us Fruit Loops, Satan gives us Fruit Spins. God gave us Pringles, Satan gives Prongles. God gives us Dr. Pepper and Mountain Dew, Satan gives us Dr. Bob and Mountain Shouten. Alright?

That's an easier way to remember it. And every time you go to the grocery store now you'll remember it. It's probably the part of the sermon that you will remember. Alright?

That's the point. Whatever God creates, Satan counterfeits. And that should stop all of us in our tracks whenever we're beginning to question God. There is a deceiver behind the scenes trying to counterfeit and trying to deceive us.

And Ephesians 6 says that our battle is not against flesh and blood. It's not against people who have different political views than you, it's not against people who have other lifestyles or other religions or other nations, it's the principalities and powers of darkness behind the scenes.

So, we just came through a series where I said that we need to be awakened to the voice, power, and presence of God. We need to be equally awakened to what Satan is doing. The Bible says that they are schemes. And through the rest of the Bible and into today, Satan is seeking to oppose God in a spiritual war being waged over three questions:

**Who gets the land?**

**Whose lineage prevails?**

## **Who will be Lord?**

That brings us to Genesis 16. So, Abraham is married to Sarah. God promises them, in their old age, that they will have a son. Out of that son, one of his descendants will be the true Lord, the Messiah. But, they are getting up there in years, they haven't had any kids, they've got fertility issues and Sarah gets impatient with the promises of God and she decides to take things into her own hands and create a shortcut.

Any of you ever do that? You just get impatient with God, "I feel like God told me that He's going to come through, but He hasn't yet." So we kind of take the wheel and we kind of control the scenario, that's what Sarah does.

So, she is unable to get pregnant and takes her servant Hagar who is a pagan, Egyptian woman, by the way, and she says to Abraham, "Why don't you sleep with her. Maybe she'll get pregnant. And through her we can have a son.

I would just say, "Fellas, if you have not been in the habit of listening to your wives, don't let this be the first time you do." It usually doesn't end very well. What happens is Abraham sleeps with Hagar and she has a son and they name that son Ishmael.

Now, listen to what it says in chapter 16, verse 12 about Ishmael:

*"He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers."* Genesis 16:12 (NIV)

So, this is a prophecy. And this prophecy about Ishmael is that he would be in constant conflict with his brother, specifically the stepbrother that he would have in Isaac when Abraham and Sarah would give birth to him. This prophecy is 4,000 years old. And it means that their descendants would constantly be at war and they still are today.

Ishmael grows up and has 12 sons. While that is going on, God fulfills His promise to Abraham and Sarah. In their old age they get pregnant. That is a complete miracle. They are 90 and 100 years old at the time. They have a son and they named him Isaac.

Isaac grows up. He has 12 sons, which eventually become the 12 tribes of Israel. Ishmael grows up and he has 12 sons. Whatever God creates, Satan counterfeits.

Here's what you have. You have Abraham, two wives, two sons, two sets of 12 grandchildren, one covenant. All fighting over these questions:

### **Who gets the land?**

### **Whose lineage will be blessed?**

And:

### **From which son will come the one true Lord?**

Now because Isaac was born out of faith for Abraham and Sarah, God chooses Isaac over Ishmael. So, Isaac receives that blessing.

Now, skip ahead to Genesis 22. God tells Abraham to do the unthinkable. And many of you know the story. They finally have this miracle child. And God says to him in verse 2:

*"Take your son, your only son,"*

That is a foreshadowing of Jesus, that term right there because Jesus is God's only Son. And he says, this son:

*"whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you."* Genesis 22:2 (NIV)

Now, here's what we need to stop and consider. They already lived in a place surrounded by mountains. So why would God lead them a three day's journey away to the Mount of Moriah? Ever wonder that? Well the location believed to be where God led Abraham and Isaac up on this mountain is currently where the Dome of the Rock resides today in Jerusalem. Maybe you've seen it. You've seen pictures, maybe you've been there. I was just there a few months ago. That is the former location of the Holy of Holies.

This sort of epic battle between Muslims and Christians is over this sacred space. Here's the reason why. Muslims claim that it wasn't Isaac that was offered on the mountain as a sacrifice, it was Ishmael. Scripture tells us it was Isaac and God stopped that from happening, provided a substitute sacrifice that died in the place of Isaac.

Now, 2,000 years later, Isaac would have a descendant named Jesus who goes to the same mountain, Golgotha, the same place, to die as a sacrifice for you and me. Isaiah, chapter 53, verse 5 says:

*"...he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."* Isaiah 53:5 (NIV)

Jesus fulfills that promise and becomes a sacrifice in our place. Aren't you glad? Aren't you glad?

So, 2,400 years later, 2,400 years from when Abraham takes Isaac to that place, a guy by the name of Mohammed is born. By the way, he is a descendant of Ishmael. And Mohammed goes into a cave, he says that there was an angel, he calls it an angel, that appears to him, gives him the gospel contrary to the one handed down by the apostles, and he establishes a new religion. Whatever God creates Satan counterfeits.

So, here's what Islam contends, the Hebrew Scriptures are wrong. God chose Hagar, not Sarah, God chose Ishmael, not Isaac, and Ishmael was the one who went up on the mountain. Here's the result. From their perspective they say all of the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant belong, not to Isaac, the Jewish people, but to the descendants of Ishmael, modern day Arabs. And Mohammed was a descendant of Ishmael.

Paul actually kind of foreshadows this in Galatians 1:7&8. He says:



*“Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or,” notice this, “an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God’s curse!” Galatians 1:7b-8 (NIV)*

So Islam says, and this is why there is conflict even today, “No. That is our land. That is our lineage. That is our lord, Allah. Not Jesus.” And the result has been 2,000 years of constant war between the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael.

So, here’s what happened on October the 7<sup>th</sup>. Hamas, descendants of Ishmael, attacked the lineage of Isaac in a fight over the land, shouting Allahu Akbar as they shot people, “Our god is greater, opposing the Lord.”

And behind nations and kings there are principalities and powers at work. Let me read Ephesians 6 to you. It says:

*“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s,” what? “schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood,” other people, not even people of other religions, “but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Ephesians 6:10-12 (NIV)*

*“With this in mind be alert,” another word for that is awakened, “and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.” Ephesians 6:18b (NIV)*

Now, I want to lay out just two principles that come out of that passage. Here’s what I think it means to be strong in the Lord.

Number one. Jot this down if you’re taking notes or take a picture of it:

**Being STRONG IN THE LORD means we won’t allow ever changing headlines to make us emotionally unstable**

The headlines are always changing, sparking either fear or anger and you are usually not at your best when you’re in fear of anger. And it actually shows that you’re not trusting in the sovereignty and promises of God. It means that when we see the ever changing headlines, we are very sober minded and we’re not going to draw dramatic conclusions from what we see in the news, social media, or Tic Tok.

Winston Churchill once said it this way. He goes, “The story gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to put on its pants.” And that was pre-internet.

Here’s the second principle:

**Being STRONG IN THE LORD means we simultaneously (we can hold two things in tension, guys) pray for conflict to end, while also praying for God’s justice to be done and evil to be stopped**

And I know right now people are screaming, “You’ve got to pick a side.” And we can hold a couple of things in tension here. We can be grieved over the loss of life in Israel and in

Palestine. And standing with Israel, biblically, doesn't necessarily mean that we are taking a stand on foreign policy decisions. We're recognizing the God who has given His promise.

And the real issue behind all of this is both the group and the word:

### **HAMAS:**

What I mean by that is Hamas is a known terrorist organization but when you look at the meaning of the word, it is the Arabic word for *zeal* and the Hebrew word for *violent evil*. It's found in the Bible. It's used some 60 times in the Bible identifying physical violence. It is sometimes translated as possessed. We actually see it in Genesis 6:11. Genesis 6:11 says this:

*"Now God saw that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence..."* Genesis 6:11 (NLT)

And the original word in the original language there is *hamas*. So, if you read it this way it says:

### **Now God saw that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with *hamas***

It's used again in Genesis 16 to describe the conflict between Sarah and Hagar. It is the same spirit that is alive behind the scenes today. And in every generation there is a world power that rises up to try to exterminate the Jewish people, starting with:

### **Egypt**

Then the:

### **Philistines**

Then:

### **Babylon;**

### **Persia;**

### **Rome;**

The:

### **Nazis**

And now:

### **Hamas**

Why do the same things keep happening? It's because the same spirit behind the heavenly realms is still at work: to take the land, to eradicate the lineage, and to redefine the Lord.

So, here's the question. What does all of this mean? And that's likely what you've been asking. When October 7<sup>th</sup> happened there were a lot of people who were like, "Man, is this Bible prophecy? Are we in the last days?"

The Bible does say... Israel has been at war for centuries. The Bible does say that there is a war to end all wars. Is this it? Well, we don't know. It could be. Maybe not. Israel has been at war for a long, long time. Really the main point is that we are not alarmed, we are alert and awakened, and that actually the attacks of October 7<sup>th</sup>, if anything, should draw our eyes upward toward Jesus.

In Ezekial 38 and 39 it actually describes the war to end all wars. And it talks about how there are these nations that are surrounding Israel and the names have changed, but in the passage it talks about a place called Gog and Magog. And we know that as modern day Russia. It talks about Persia. That corresponds to modern day Iran. It talks about Gomer and Togarmah, that refers to modern day Turkey and it mentions some nations in the south like Libya, Ethiopia, and the Sudan.

The Bible says that there will be an invasion, the war to end all wars, will be an invasion from the north and the south around Israel for three things: the land, the lineage, and to oppose the Lord.

Revelation 16 calls this the Battle of Armageddon. Maybe you've heard about that. And it has nothing to do with Arnold Schwarzenegger or *Terminator*. See, what happens in the Battle of Armageddon is when all of the world powers attack Israel from the north and the south and that could be the war to end all wars.

And that is a little scary because that looks like, "Man, that could happen." But there is a lot of hope in Ezekial 38 and 39. What it says is, "If nobody intervenes and Israel was attacked from the north and the south, resulting in the loss of the land, the eradication of the lineage, and the opposition of the Lord, it says that's the moment when hope will be restored because there will be a warrior emerge from the heavens sitting on a war horse with a sword coming out of His mouth and a sweet tattoo on His thigh that says: King of kings and Lord of lords. That's when Jesus shows up to win the war.

Now look at what it says in Zachariah, chapter 14:

*"A day of the Lord is coming, Jerusalem, when your possessions will be plundered and divided up within your very walls. I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it... Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights on a day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives,"* I actually got a chance to visit that just a few months ago when I was in Israel, east of Jerusalem.

*"...and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west..."* Zechariah 14:1-4 (NIV)

The Mount of Olives is where Jesus ascended into heaven when He resurrected. It says this is where He will descend upon His return. And Revelation says that He will come in glory.

The two most important events in human history are the first and second coming of Jesus. And they are very, very different. The first coming of Jesus, He came in humility. The next time He comes will be in glory. The first time He came was on the colt of a donkey. The next time He comes will be on a war horse. The first time He came was to save sinners. The next time He comes will be to judge sin. The first time He came is to die for the world. The next time He comes is to win the war.

And when He returns, He eradicates evil, He undoes death and injustice, and He wipes away every tear that we have shed in this world. In fact, Revelation tells us that He's keeping track of every tear you shed because of the pain and brokenness in this world. And He's going to reconcile all of those tears.

So, He's going to undo all of the evil that we see taking place every day in the news.

Now, here's the focus of today. Man, if you are still breathing, like if you have a pulse, if you are hearing this message, then God is trying to get your attention. Because, right now the invitation that God gave to Abram and the invitation that He's given to callous men and women through the centuries is the invitation that He is giving to you right now. And the door of salvation is wide open.

If you would trust God and believe in the promises of God it will be credited to you as righteousness. When you recognize your sin, you recognize that Jesus is the Son of God, that He paid the price that you could never pay, that door to being reconciled with God is wide open. But the Bible tells us that one day it will close shut.

And when will that happen? When will Jesus return? We don't really know. And the point isn't to know. In fact, Jesus, Himself said, "I don't know. I'm the One who is returning. I don't even know the day or the hour." Because the point is that you just need to always be ready.

It's kind of like if your parents... If you're a teenager and your parents leave and you don't know when they are going to return, you're just kind of like, "Well, I guess we've got to always be ready." But if they tell you, "We're going to be back Saturday night at 8 p.m. you make sure that the party is done and the house is cleaned up by 8 p.m. But this is just kind of opened like, "Hey, we don't know when they are going to come back," so you're just always ready. That is the point.

Jesus says, "Just always be ready." We can't know the exact day and hour, but we can know the season. Actually, the Scriptures equate it to a woman who is about to give birth. And if you're scheduled to give birth naturally, not a c-section, you don't know the exact day and hour you're going to deliver that baby. But by looking at the pregnant woman you can tell if she is getting close. You can tell by the pains and the contractions

that she's about to give birth. And the same thing is true as we look at the world. That's what October 7<sup>th</sup> is. That is a birth pain.

And there are a couple of things that we know in the Scriptures, prophecies about the return of Jesus, that could not have been true until the last 50 to 75 years or so. I'll just give you a couple.

Revelation tells us that there will come a day, right before Jesus returns when there will be an event that will happen on the other side of the world and everybody will instantly see it. And for years everybody has been, "How can that happen?" Well, Steve Jobs gave us a little thing called a smart phone. And now, when something happens on the other side of the world, all of us instantly see it.

There is another thing in the book of Daniel that says that right before Jesus returns there will be an increase in travel, which, in the First Century it took you forever to get somewhere. Now you can get on the other side just on a flight.

And there will be an increase in knowledge. Guys, we live in what is called the information age, so we just google it or Chat GPT it. And all of a sudden we've got all of the information that we need. Both of those things have happened just in the last 50 or 60 years or sooner.

Jesus answered the question as to His return in Matthew 24:

*"They said, 'When will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?'"*

And:

*"Jesus answered: 'Watch out,'" be alert, be awakened, "that no one deceives you." Lots of deception out there, "For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars," man, every time you turn on the news, "but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains."*

*"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith" deconstruction, "and will betray and hate each other," racism and division. "...and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved."*

Be strong in the Lord. Put on the full armor of God.

*"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." Matthew 24:3b-14 (NIV)*

Guys, if this unsettles you in any way, if this concerns you, if it causes fear, God doesn't want you to be alarmed. God wants you to be alert. He wants you to be awakened. He wants you to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Some of us are looking around... Have you ever heard somebody say this or have you felt this way? You turn on the news. Your soul is so weary. You're looking at everything going, "God, how much longer? How much more can we take? Why are You waiting? When will You come back?"

That's a good question. And 2 Peter, chapter 3 gives us a pretty good answer:

*"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is,"* now I need you to look at me right now because this word may not be for everybody, but it's for somebody. Somebody in one of our locations, somebody watching online, God is *"patient with you..."*

And as soon as I say that you know who I'm talking to. You know that I'm talking to you. The Spirit of God is convicting you because He's being patient with you right now. You've been wrestling with Him for weeks and months and maybe even years. And right now He is patient with you because He wants you to come to a saving knowledge of the truth and to have a relationship with Him. He doesn't want *"anyone to perish, but everyone,"* regardless of political preference, regardless of religion, regardless of lifestyle, He wants everyone *"to come to repentance."* Peter 3:9 (NIV)

And the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. That's why He's waiting. Why is God waiting when it seems like the world's wheels are coming off? He's waiting for you.

I can't help but think on October 7<sup>th</sup>... It says that Jesus is at the right hand of God, mediating on our behalf. That's where He is right now. October 7<sup>th</sup> happened. I don't know what news channel Jesus watches. None, I think. So He sees what happened on October 7<sup>th</sup> and He kind of turns to God like, "Hey, wow. Is this it?" And God is like, "This might be it." And He's getting the war horse out and He's polishing up the tattoo, and He's getting His sword out. And God says, "Wait a second. Just one more. Just one more. Let's wait."

There's one more who needs to receive Jesus. There is one more to be saved. And it could be that the reason why God is waiting is you. The reason why He is waiting is your lost neighbor or your wayward child or that person who you're going to have a Thanksgiving meal with this Thursday. They are going to want to pick a fight with you about politics. Maybe it's them. And actually, by your sober response, your Spirit filled response; it will bring them to or remind them of the saving truth of Jesus Christ.

Maybe right now there is somebody, you're pegged to your seat right now because you're like, "I don't really know where I stand with God and I didn't know any of that Old Testament history stuff. What do I do with this?"



Here's what you do with it. You recognize that there is a God, that you are not Him, that this world is fallen, that you're a sinner, you need to believe God so that it can be credited to you as righteousness. You receive Jesus by that. The Holy Spirit enters into you and you obey by being dunked in the water, which will represent your spiritual death and you're resurrected as a new creation in Christ.

And today we want to give you the opportunity to do that at all of our locations. So, right now, I'm going to pray, then I'm going to kick it over to our campus pastors to provide some instructions for their specific location and I'll give you some instructions here at Northwest.

Let's pray.

Father, we're so grateful that You are sovereign and in control. Forgive us when we become fearful or angry over the headlines and the chaos that we see in this world. And may we bring our eyes back and fix them upon You.

Thank You for the promise that You've given us. Thank You for giving us a covenant and not a contract, because we could never fulfill our end of the deal. But You make and meet the terms of that covenant.

So, God, today I just pray that even if there is just one person, those who recognize the need to step forward and give their life to you, I pray that they would step out of darkness and into the light. They would cease the voice of deception, they would choose to believe the truth, and they would stand up to their feet, and in obedience they would walk out into that hallway and that they would receive You and be baptized today, so that way it could be settled in their mind where they will spend eternity when You return.

So, Father, we celebrate that today. You get the glory and lives will be changed for ever and ever. We ask this in Jesus' name: Amen.

