

Understanding the Mission

Part 2, Warnings for the Church in the Last Days

I. Intro

- A. People often ask what to make of 2020. My response is often the same
- B. 2020 has been a warning shot, a braxton hick
- C. When you experience warning shot, you don't ignore it and just hope it doesn't happen again - you learn from it
- D. But what do you learn? People are spending hours trying to discern if this is the end, who is the antichrist, if you can accidentally get the mark of the beast (no, you can't), is the world just gonna keep spinning?
- E. Lots of warnings from people, but what warnings can we heed from Scripture, not just from youtube, for these days?

II. James 5

- A. *[1] Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you.* I want you to feel the heaviness of that warning b/c we are among the world's richest (\$3,210 in assets, top 50%; \$68,800 top 10%)
 - 1. Why would James give such a heavy warning? What are the rich doing wrong? This is prophetic language, reminiscent of the OT preachers, specifically as it relates to the "Day of the Lord" - the day the Messiah comes to enforce his kingdom and judge the nations. These aren't the miseries of life - these are the miseries of JUDGEMENT.
 - 2. *[2] Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. [3] Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire.*
 - a) For them, oil, corn, clothes, food, etc. → marks of material wealth
 - b) For us? XYZ
 - c) At the day of judgment, all of these expenses of materialistic living will get rolled out before God (your wardrobe, your bank account, even your hoarded food) and will be evidence in a court of law
 - d) Then, it will be pushed into the fire of judgement and will fuel it, causing the fire to burn all the brighter and hotter as all the excess waste is burnt up and only what is spiritually born remains
 - 3. James indicts: **You have laid up treasure in the last days.**
 - 4. Interesting that he considers THEN 2,000 years ago the last days. How much more are we in the last days now? How much more is this a true condemnation today? How much wealthier? How much more excess?
 - 5. *[4] Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.*

- a) Practically, us as Americans enjoying our lives, paying limited amounts for everything from shoes to phones assembled by the global poor.
 - b) Lord of hosts (Lord of Sabaoth, not sabbath). The general!
6. *[5] You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.*
- a) In other words, instead of seeking to live like a judgment was on the horizon, they did the opposite, ignored the impending doom
 - b) Ex: Three turkeys before thanksgiving. The fool is the glutton
7. *[6] You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.*
- a) All the injustices in our lives - the ones we have taken part in the and the ones we have done nothing about
- 8. WARNING #1 - Don't lay up treasure in the last days!**
9. What should we be doing w/ that money? Sending it on ahead to God's kingdom. I think we have a double play here w/ James' teaching
10. Throughout the Scriptures (OT & NT), laborers in the fields, harvesters, are used as a metaphor for gospel workers. Re-read this passage
- a) In the last days, post the resurrection, you should have been investing in the expansion of God's kingdom by empowering and paying for gospel laborers to go out into the fields
 - b) Instead, you spent the money on yourself. All your stuff will stand as witnesses against you on the day of judgment!
- B. In light of the impending judgment and the fact that even your own money will testify against you, what are we to do? *[7] Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord.* → And then he gives a metaphor to understand
1. *See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.*
- a) Practically → The farmer waits for the crop. He knows it's coming. He doesn't grow impatient and stop working. He knows it will come so he waits and puts his hand to the plow.
 - b) Spiritually → God is the farmer, the Lord of the Harvest. People are plants. He is waiting for the final harvest of people. God waits patiently. We sow seed. He causes it to grow. He causes it to flourish. How? With the rains
 - (1) Early rains → right before the harvest of first fruits
 - (2) Day of Pentecost, festival of the harvest, first fruits, outpouring of the Holy Spirit
 - (3) Latter rains → right before the final harvest of a crop
 - (4) Outpouring of the HS right before the Day of the Lord
 - (5) Yet to come? Once the HS pours out, we will see a revival of people coming to faith. Where? Who knows, but

definitely among Jews and definitely among UPGs! Lord willing here too!

2. *[8] You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.*

- a) So be patient. Set your hearts firm so you don't begin to doubt that the Lord is not soon to return. He is at HAND!

3. WARNING #2 - Be patient! Establish your hearts! The coming of the Lord is at hand. It is near!

C. Now James gives us a third warning. *[9] Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.*

- 1. I have noticed something, and not just me but every pastor (you've noticed too, probably). When the going gets tough, people complain - not just about the circumstances, about everyone else.
 - a) Platt's sermon → standing in circle, point out each other's faults
 - b) Yep. Do not grumble... against one another... Why?
 - (1) B/C you'd hate to be complaining about your pastor, sister, brother in Christ when Jesus shows up w/ a Sword coming out of his mouth!
 - (2) This is the work of the enemy to undermine and divide in the last days. Consider Paul in Philippians 1...
 - c) What then do we do, preacher man?

2. *[10] As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. [11] Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. [12] But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.*

- a) When the going gets tough, endure it like a prophet.
- b) Be steadfast, like an immovable rock in the midst of stormy seas.
- c) How can you find the resoluteness to think that way? Remember that even the difficult times are sovereignly brought out of
 - (1) God's purpose... compassion... mercy...

3. WARNING #3 - Do not grumble against one another. Now is the time for unity.

D. What do we do with our tongues and mouths instead of grumbling *[13] Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. [14] Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. [15] And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has*

committed sins, he will be forgiven. [16] Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

1. Pray! Pray for comfort, for joy, for healing. Pray in faith! Pray for forgiveness.
2. It is so crucial that we confess our sins to God and to accountability partners so that we can pray for one another, encourage one another and be healed. Why? Why is this so important in the LAST DAYS?
3. *The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. [17] Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. [18] Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.*
 - a) Our forgiveness, growth through sin, healing is so important b/c righteous prayers have mighty power
 - b) Elijah prayed. It rained. The earth bore its fruit.
 - c) Now think back to our other sections: harvests, fields, rain...
 - d) Now is the time when instead of grumbling against one another we need to be praying together.
 - e) Praying for what? Rain! We need to plead with the Lord of the Harvest to send the final rain of the Holy Spirit that will bring a fresh power upon the earth leading up to the day of the Lord!
4. This is what matters right now! This is what is crucial. That in the power of the HS we go, praying, proclaiming. Why is it so important??

5. WARNING #4: Get your prayer life in order, and pray for rain.

E. [19] My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, [20] let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

1. Because God wants to use our faithful giving... our faithful perseverance... our faithful encouragement... our faithful praying to bring in the final harvest, which is people.
2. And oh to save a sinner from his sin is to save his soul from death itself!
 - a) Could there be a greater privilege!?

III. Conclusion:

A. What if we were the final generation? What if this was the last lap?

1. Don't mock it - Peter warns of that. *2 Peter 3:3-4 [3] knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. [4] They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."*

B. 2020 is a year of braxton hicks before the true labor pains begin.

1. It is a warning shot above our heads
2. And we do not see the "church" fairing very well... or do we?

3. God is separating sheep and goats. He is refining his bride, purifying her and preparing her. He is showing us what is sincere and true and what is folly and false.
- C. He is warning us through the times, through prophetic preachers, through dreams and visions, through the Word of God.
1. Will we heed his warnings? Will you?
- D. What are James' warnings to us?
1. WARNING #1 - Don't lay up treasure in the last days!
 2. WARNING #2 - Be patient! Establish your hearts! The coming of the Lord is at hand. It is near!
 3. WARNING #3 - Do not grumble in the midst of suffering
 4. WARNING #4: Get your prayer life in order and pray for rain.

TABLE TALK:

- Of James' warnings, which resounds with you the most and why?
 - WARNING #1 - Don't lay up treasure in the last days!
 - WARNING #2 - Be patient! Establish your hearts! The coming of the Lord is at hand. It is near!
 - WARNING #3 - Do not grumble in the midst of suffering
 - WARNING #4: Get your prayer life in order and pray for rain.
- How could you, your family, your Discipleship Group, or the church live a life that is more aware of the return of Christ?