

Ethnic Conflicts and the End Times

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[Mark 13:4-8] "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?"⁵ And Jesus, answering them, began to say: "Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁶ For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many. ⁷ But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet. ⁸ For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows.

The war in Ukraine is into its third week. The world's opinions on this conflict are divided into two factions and the economic impact, particularly from the rising oil prices, has caused serious economic troubles to many peoples. In the episode above, the disciples of Jesus were curious to know when the end times will be. Lord Jesus gave some hints to the events preceding the beginning of the end times as above. In our devotional today we wish to look into the increasing frequency of ethnic conflicts, which are described as "nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom," and link this trend to when the end times might begin. The word 'nation' in the bible refers to ethnic groups, including racial groups but more along with geographical and racial groupings inclusive. The inter-ethnic conflicts have been increasing since the early 20th century and this is a fulfillment of the Lord's prophecy about the signs that will precede the end times.

The prophecy of verse 6 has been fulfilled through fake messiahs including Sun-Myung Moon of South Korea who deceived many people in numerous countries. Concerning the prophecy of 'wars and rumors of wars' of verse 7, there was a total of 29 wars during the 20th century and 8 wars including the Ukraine War have occurred already during the 21st century. Thus, we must admit that this prophecy also is being fulfilled. Next, let us look into the prophecy of verse 8, "nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom."

Inter-ethnic conflicts have occurred in multiple forms throughout the ages. However, this inter-ethnic conflicts' intensity has come to the front of global attention and its scope has certainly been expanding. One of the prominent forms of inter-ethnic conflicts is inter-racial conflicts. In the U.S. the conflicts between the white majority and the black minority have changed the forms and nature. The civil rights movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King resulted in the improved socio-economic status of the black minority people in this country through the adoption of anti-discrimination measures and affirmative action policies, which have been legislated at both federal and state levels.

Such measures, however, have not been fully effective in resolving the deep-seated grievance of the black minority, as evidenced by the sudden explosive popularization of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) since the unfortunate death of George Floyd during his arrest process in 2020. The founding leaders of the BLM movement are revolutionary communists, who were trained in communist tactics decades ago and they seek to overthrow the American society and cause a communist takeover of the country. The radical leftist political groups have joined the ranks of this dangerous group and been using the BLM as a tool for achieving their political objectives.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is another major actor of the global inter-ethnic conflict, where this powerful group has brought to the global front the conflict between the Chinese aspiration of wanting to become the global hegemon and the historical western nations group. Instead of working in harmony with the western nations and growing into a contributing global leader group, the CCP has resorted to irrational, China-centered, inhumane, and violent means in their pursuit of the purported supremacy of the Chinese people, thus causing troubles in the global order and harmony through conflicts in the military, economic, environmental, and political spheres.

Iran and the anti-semitic countries and nations, who insist that Israel must be wiped away from the earth, form another power group that is intensifying the inter-ethnic conflict between Israel and the antisemitic Islamic group. This group will play an important role in the global events leading to the end times.

Finally, we need to understand that the bias and misunderstanding that the western nations have against Russia and the Slavic people is an important underlying factor behind the current Ukraine War. Ukraine is inherently a corrupt country whose major wealth is owned by a handful of powerful oligarchs. Ukraine has had a very crooked history of having collaborated with Nazi Germany during World War II and committed a genocide against the Jewish people. Past Ukrainian governments have been committing terrible crimes of genocide against the Russian-speaking fellow Slavic people in the Donbas area and eastern Ukraine over many years.

This is one of the reasons cited by the Russian president Putin for his reason for invading Ukraine – to stop and root out the ethnic genocide against the Russian-speaking Slavs in Ukraine. Most all western media, however, has been ignoring this issue and demonizing Putin for his ‘unjustified invasion.’ This lopsided attitude of the western media is in sharp contrast to the ‘righteous’ international military punitive action against the former Yugoslavia for their egregious genocide of the Serbian Muslim people during the Kosovo War of 1998-1999. This bias of the western media and the general public is largely due to the bias they have against the Slavic people, in particular, Russia.

Sadly, such conflicts occur between the Christian peoples of different ethnic groups. Such conflicts must cause those people groups to consider carefully whether their actions and policies are in line with the teaching of Jesus Christ, who taught us to love even our enemies. If a bias or misunderstanding in us is causing a politico-military conflict with a fellow Christian group, there is something wrong with our spiritual health. Leaders of the nations must be careful not to jump into policies of hate when they have been entrusted with the responsibility of carrying out the maxims of love and mercy, particularly, toward our fellow brethren.

Next, Lord Jesus foretold there will be famines, earthquakes, and disasters. The frequency of such disasters has been accelerating over the past decades. Thus, we know this portion of His prophecy is also being fulfilled. Therefore, it is biblically rational to believe that we are nearing the beginning of the end times.

In verse 7, Lord Jesus said, “Do not be troubled” when you hear of wars and rumors of wars. Some cause people to be troubled by the possibility of a nuclear war between the U.S. and Russia. But, God’s people need not be troubled because we will be raptured to heaven before the end times and will be freed from the awful calamities and disasters, which are prophesied to occur during the end times. That is the salvation of the New Testament church of Christ from the coming wrath of God, which is reserved for the evil and the unbelieving. His terrible acts of wrath will be unleashed without restraint during the final three and half years of the Tribulation Period.

So, let us examine where we stand, hold fast onto the hope of our coming rapture, and speak the gospel message to unbelieving relatives and friends so that they also may join the ranks of the saved people. Our hope is not on the earth but is in heaven. This viewpoint is so very relevant as we approach the end times. Let us hold our peace and calm in the living faith and hope of the Lord’s glorious coming. Amen.

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