

If a person wants to study prophecy today, they would need to go no further than Matthew 24 to 25 to find the foundation that Jesus has given in the New Testament to look at the “End Times” or “Last Days.”

I would like to just take Matt.24:6-14 as the basis for these few thoughts.

When you read the newspaper, listen to the radio, or watch television it is not unusual to come across wars, famines, pestilences and earthquakes.

WARS

The Middle East and the northern parts of Africa have become hotbeds of violence and destruction. People are being killed every day and lives are being ruined. As these wars rage on so we find it harder to grow crops and countries are pushed into famines. There is a major shortage of food resulting in hunger and poverty. However when we look at the Middle East countries in particular we forget that this is the region from which the world gets its oil.

Conflict in this part of the world results in an increase in the price of the oil we purchase and this converts into fuel increases and the prices of food going up.

FAMINES

In recent times we have been confronted with the fact that the USA as the greatest producer of wheat and maize is now faced with droughts. Some economists have stated that there will be a shortfall of 1 million tons of maize and wheat.

Unfortunately even though we in South Africa boast about our “maize triangle” we are faced with the consequences of an under production of ingredients vitally needed in our staple diets. Prices are going to increase like never before and we as the average persons on the street might not even be able to afford a loaf of bread.

PESTILENCES

Believe it or not, South Africa is in fact experiencing this right now. Our ostrich meat industry has been crippled by Avian Flu and in our provinces there is the constant possibility of an outbreak of foot and mouth disease that could decimate our beef supply. With meat in short supply this forces us to import meat and once again we as people are faced with more price increases.

EARTHQUAKES

It is said that the “Pacific Rim” countries are the most likely places for earthquakes and in this regard in recent times we have had earthquakes that have shattered cities in Japan and New Zealand. Some of these earthquakes have occurred in the ocean and fears were expressed that tsunamis could have reached the eastern coast of our country. Yet in spite of all these natural “warnings” so many people are living in a false sense of security.

CHURCH RELEVANCE

Living in the “Last Days” in a sense is an encouraging thing but from a practical perspective it is and can be very depressing. There are many preachers who today speak about “blessings” and usually stress material things of this world.

They have forgotten that Jesus and the Apostles continually taught that believers would be subject to persecution.

In the portion that we have read we see that the gospel will be preached and this indeed is happening but we need to balance this with helping the poor and needy.

At this point in time I can share with you that one assembly in our church has a feeding scheme where they feed 104,000 people a year. A team of 20 volunteers sacrifice two days a week every week of the year to go to the local hospital and give the out patients a hot meal. From 10:00 in the morning 1,000 meals are served in two designated areas.

A pastor who actually participated in this programme was so inspired that he and his wife have now started the same programme in their local hospital.

As a result of the vision and faithfulness of one local church the ministry of compassion has now ignited another pastor's heart. Just imagine the impact this could have.

So often we are confronted with stories of overcrowded hospitals, patients waiting for hours to receive treatment and medicine. Yet in all this adversity the hand of God can be seen in the lives of His children who have surrendered to Him and making themselves available to be of service.

It is awesome to be in the presence of God when souls are being saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. What a blessing!

It is awesome to be in a place where people are sick and suffering and to be the one who offers a cup of water in the name of Jesus. Yes! It is awesome to just give a slice of bread to that sick and suffering person who is so hungry and maybe that was the first slice of bread in two days.

We pray and ask God for miracles which is not wrong, but we forget that in many instances God wants to use us as His miracle to a world that is confused and helpless.