**Developing a mind-set for the End Times**

**Session 3 - The great falling away”**

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**Introduction**

1)The global pandemic caused the world and the body of Christ to live through a whole new dynamic. God wants to use this experience to prepare us different and more difficult times ahead. If God hadn’t allowed the lion and the bear to attack David’s flock, he would never have been able to defeat Goliath (1 Sam 17, 34).

**Recap**

2a) In **session one** we saw how 3 great forces would reach their fulfillment and so combine to create the unique characteristics of the end times;

i) The groan of creation (“The earth is defiled by its people “(Isaiah 24, 4-6)

ii) The rage of Satan (“The Devil is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.” (Rev. 12, 12).

iii) The warfare of God, as we move out of the season called “The year of the Lord’s favour” into the season that he called “the day of vengeance of our God”

(Isaiah 61, 2)

2b) in **session two** we took a very brief overview of what will come upon the world in the end times. There are over 150 chapters of the Bible whose main theme is the end times. The last season before Jesus comes back will include World war, severe shortages of water, food and power, devastation in nature and disturbances with the sun & moon & stars, including meteorites striking the earth. Politcally, the earth will comes under the influence of the antichrist.

**The Great Falling Away**

3a) The Theme of the third session is **The Great Falling Away**

3b) During the Covid pandemic, nationally **church congregations declined by 40%.**

For those churches that centred around activities and meetings people declined.

Those churches that were focused around relationship and prayer and discipleship and sharing their faith continued and many even grew stronger.

3c) Multiply those pressures by 1000% and that’s how it will be for the church in the end times.

3d) In the end times, the **majority of the church** will fall away.

i) “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 and will betray and hate each other**, 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.” (Matt. 24, 9-13).

ii) “The day of the Lord will not come, unless **the apostasy comes first**, and the man of lawlessness is revealed …” (2 Thessalonians 3).

**Some of the pressures that cause the great falling away**

**4) Persecution**

“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me” (Matt. 24, 9). Session 4 will focus on Persecution.

**5) The troubles of the tribulation**

5a) **FEAR** is going to become one of the predominant characteristics of the end times.

“There will be troubling signs with the sun, the moon and stars. The raging of the sea will bring **anguish and turmoil to many nations. People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world …** When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.’ (Luke 21, 25-27 The NIV & Passion translations).

**6) Offense at God**

6a) Many will fall away through doubt. Their image of a “Santa-Claus God” will be incompatible with the troubles coming upon the world.

6b) Many will become offended at God. They want him to show good things upon the earth not judgments. They will turn away from a God who brings such pain and terro into the lives of their families.

Session 6 will expand this point.

**7) The Increase of wickedness**

The increase of wickedness in all its different forms will cause many to fall away;

There will be a growth in Selfishness, the lure of worldly pleasures, Unholy slander, Breakdown of respect, Sexual immorality, Sexual perversion, Violence, Aggression, Thefts and murders, Witchcraft and the Occult.

**8) Jesus’ solution. “Do not let your heart be troubled. Believe in God…”**

8a) In the middle of his prophesy about the end times, in the same paragraph as he prophesies that “people will faint from terror”, Jesus tells his believers to “Stand up. Lift up your heads” (Luke 21, 28). The Passion translation goes further. “Jump for Joy for the time of your full transformation has arrived.”

8b) The time of the great tribulation should not be a time of fear and anguish and defeat for the church. Instead it will be the Church’s greatest hour. A time of revival, victory and glory.

**“See, Darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you.” (Isaiah 60, 2)**

8c) The last supper discourse(John 14-17) were the last words that Jesus would say to his disciples before he was taken away from them to be crucified. This teaching opens with the **words “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; Believe also in me.”** (John 14, 1).

8d) The world of the disciples was about to be shattered. These men who had given up everything to follow Jesus still thought that he was going to deliver Israel from the Roman occupation. None of them understood that he was going to die.

Jesus knew that they would face unprecedented pressures within the next 24 hrs.

i) One of their close knit community is going to betray Jesus and hand him over to his enemies

ii) Jesus will be arrested, taken away and given a mockery of a trial

iii) then he’ll be flogged and finally crucified.

iv) The disciples themselves will abandon Jesus, run away and hide

v) Some of them, like Peter, will deny that they have ever known him.

8e) These pressures parallel with the pressures that will come upon the church in the end times.

i) Family and friends will betray believers

ii) Believers will be arrested and denied justice

iii) They will be tortured and killed

iv) Many believers will be living on the run in hiding

v) Some will abandon their faith and deny Jesus.

There are **TWO Parts to Jesus command.**

**9) Do Not Let your hearts be troubled**

9a) We can control our children “Don’t let your kids play near the road”.

We need to control our hearts. “Don’t let your heart be troubled”.

“Above all else, **GUARD** your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” (Proverbs 4, 24)

**DO NOT** be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. **7**And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

(Phil. 4, 6 & 7)

9b) We need to control what we allow our heart to be exposed to.

“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matt. 6, 22-23).

**Fill** your mind and thoughts and your emotions with God’s word, with worship and prayer. **Limit** the input of the world’s media.

**10) “Believe in God, Believe also in Me”**

10a) God is still on the throne.

Even on the worst day, you are still a child of God. (Romans 8, 16)

Even on the worst day, God still has a plan for your life (Eph. 2, 10)

Even on the worst day, the promises of God are still true for you. (Num. 23, 19)

Even on the worst day, all things still work together for the good of those who love Him. (Rom. 8, 28)

Even on the worst day, nothing will be able to snatch you out of His hand or separate you from His love (John 10, 28 & Romans 8, 35).

Even on the worst day, Jesus is still Lord. (Phil. 2, 9-11)

Even on the worst day, your name is still written in the book of life. (Rev. 3, 5)

Even on the worst day, the devil is still defeated. (Luke 10, 18-19, Col. 2, 15)

10b) When you live like that, Jesus promises; “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14, 27).