**Spiritual Protection in the last days.**

*Introduction*

Last week, we looked at Globalisation and the Antichrist and how events that were occurring in the world over the past few weeks and still are ongoing mean that we are right on the doorstep of final things.

In fact the next prophetic event in Gods calendar according to the Scriptures is that of the rapture of the Saints of God – Born again believers.

So with that in mind, the subject that I believe God would have us consider this morning is that of Spiritual protection.

In these last of the last days, Satan is and will do his utmost to attack the Christian.

In Matthew 24, Jesus tells his disciples about the end times , and in verses 7-8 Jesus says ***“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.”***

We know from experience or observation that after the labour pains comes the birth.

During his discourse in Matt 24, Jesus gives 5 feature of the sorrows that will happen at the end of time, they are:

1. Wars, famines, earthquakes and pestilences.
2. Worldwide persecution of Christians
3. Apostasy and betrayal among Christians
4. False prophets with cults
5. Love growing cold.

We have been seeing over the past few years a steady increase in all these things.

Persecution of Christians has really started to grow in many countries, the growth of ecumenicalism has meant many, in the name of unity of faith, given up their stand on the Word of God. False prophets, cults and the like are on the increase. I found out on Friday that my new line manager is a self defined witch.

There is also the last feature that Jesus mentions, that is love growing cold.

This is where I want us to spend our time this morning, because it is vitally important.

***12 Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold,***

Jesus tells us in this discourse that the result of turning away from the faith is an increase in wickedness.

Who is Jesus referring to? After all we can see lawlessness and wickedness abounding on our streets today, life has become cheap.

The context of these words clearly shows us that Jesus is referring to Christians! Yes, US!

The love he is talking about is not the world’s brand of love, but the Greek word *‘Agape’* love – Christian love.

Friends, I do not believe that we will go through the Tribulation, because we will be raptured, but I believe we face some hard days ahead.

When we were born into the Kingdom of God, when we became Christians, we discover that we are caught up in a war with an opposing spiritual kingdom, the kingdom of Satan.

Because our Kingdom is at war, we are at war, and we have many enemies.

Because of these very powerful enemies we need Spiritual protection. In order to avail ourselves of this protection we need to understand that there are 3 uncompromising demands of God that apply to us all.

The first demand is this:

1. We all need to come under Scriptural authority.

What do we mean by that?

In Luke 7 we read the story of the Roman Centurion.

***LK 7:1-10 When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." So Jesus went with them.***

 ***He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, `Go,' and he goes; and that one,`Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, `Do this,' and he does it."***

***When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.***

Notice that the Centurion said ***For I myself am a man under authority*** and not “I have authority”. The centurion recognised the authority of Jesus in the spiritual realm and he uses the analogy of his own situation to show it.

The Centurion actually affirmed a bsic principle of Scripture in that – to have authority one must be under authority. Authority flows downward.

After his resurrection Jesus said

***Matt 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.***

There are chains of authority that descend from God the Father through Jesus the son into every situation in the universe.

Paul explains this

***1CO 11:3 Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.***

In the case of a married couple, for example, authority descends from God the Father through Jesus the Son to the Husband and through the husband to the wife.

This principle applies to all Christians, every Christian needs to be under an appropriate authority.

A Christian who is not under authority is an unprotected Christian.

Therefore as Christians we need to respect Christ’s authority. That authority operates through the local church

***Eph 1:22-23 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.***

This also means that for a Christian to be under protection, they must be rightly related to His Church.

As Christians we should operate as a body, not as individuals. This is shown most completely in the book of Epesians. Throughout the whole book, with the exception of the last 6 verses where Paul asks for special prayer for himself, it is written in the plural.

An example of this is in Ch 1 v 3 – 12 where Paul says God has blessed US, He chose US, He predestined US etc.

In Chapter 6 when speaking of the armour of God he says “for WE wrestle against principalities, powers, rulers etc.

Therefore the warfare depicted here is not a conflict between individuals but a vast war between opposing armies. There is no room for “Lone rangers” here.

Now, going back to Jesus’ words in Matthew 24. He stated that many Christians would be affected by ‘wickedness’ or ‘lawlessness’.

In essence this is a rejection of authority. Our culture shows a contempt for the rules and regulations that interfere with our individual liberties.

People are forceful at asserting their ‘rights’ but very reluctant to acknowledge their corresponding responsibilities.

As Christians we need to guard ourselves against this kind of attitude and cultivate and maintain an attitude of respect and obedience toward God our father and toward Jesus our Saviour.

This will be expressed in our attitude and respect and obedience toward God’s Word, the Bible.

***JN 14:23-24 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.***

We may make claims to love God and we may even pray long and eloquent prayers, and preach long and eloquent sermons, but we do not honour and obey God more than we honour and obey His Word.

In the midst of the prevailing wickedness and lawlessness in which we live it would be appropriate for each of us to make a fresh affirmation of our unreserved and total submission to the authority of Scripture. (2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is God breathed)

The second and third demands of God that help ensure our protection involve our personal relationships: They are forgiveness and submission.

These are two main areas in which our submission to God and His Word will be tested, and Jesus has laid down some very strict rules.

Concerning forgiving others Jesus said:

***MT 6:14-15 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.***

To forgive another person is not an expression of emotion but an act of self-discipline. For this we can depend upon the Holy Spirit

***2 Tim 1:7 For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.***

It is this same discipline that is required for us to submit to others. Mutual submission is the key to right relationships both in the home and in the Church.

*Conclusion*

We are confronted, then, with three areas in which Scripture reveals clear, uncompromising demands of God that apply to all Christians.

The first is respect for Christ’s authority operating in and through each local church. The second is unqualified forgiveness for all who have harmed us or wronged us and the third is an attitude of submissiveness towards all our fellow Christians.

Obedience in these three key areas provides the Christian with a covering of Scriptural authority that protects them from the attacks of satan in the heavenly places.

Disobedience, has the opposite effect, it makes us vulnerable to such attacks.

In these last days, with satan on the rampage more than ever and with the subsequent lawlessness prevailing, it is imperitve that we respect the authority of Christ vested in His Church and that He may renew in each one of us an attitude of

Unqualified forgiveness and submissiveness.

Let us spend time in prayer now doing just that.

Let us reaffirm our total submission to the authority of scripture, and be obedient to it. Let us submit to the authority of Christ in His Church and let us ask God, through His Holy Spirit to enable us to fully forgive and be submissive to our fellow brothers and sisters.

Let us pray.