

## CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-NINE

### WORLD WARS AND THE CHURCH

Date: November 9, 1940

Place: Shanghai

Scripture Reading: Matt. 24:4-14; Acts 4:25; Heb. 11:5-6

Many people pay attention to the signs of the end times. Some say that the answer lies in Matthew 24:4-14. It is true that the Lord spoke of the end of this age in this portion of the Word. As a consequence, the focus of many people is on peoples fighting against peoples and nations against nations. But we have to see that no matter what the outcome of these wars and no matter how peoples fight against peoples and nations against nations, there is only one result—the suffering and loss of God's children. In any war there are two sides. Spiritually speaking, there are also two sides. On one side, there are the Christians, that is, the church, and on the other side, there are the opposing nations. They join together to inflict hardship on God's church. The issue is not which nation wins; the focus is the people of God. In the war between Japan and China, the suffering party is neither China nor Japan, but the people of God. In the war between Germany and England, the suffering party is not Germany or England, but the people of God. This is why the Lord said in Matthew 24:9, "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and will kill you, and you will be hated by all the nations because of My name." Man looks at the victory or defeat of the nations. But from God's view, it is His people who are suffering, no matter which nation wins or loses.

### THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF WORLD WARS

Today the world is a mess. Peoples are fighting against peoples and nations against nations. We can see war and famine everywhere. These are the works of Satan. In the eyes of the world, nations fight against one another because of antagonism. But in the eyes of God, they are all banded together. Before the European War [World War I], an English brother wrote, "Once the war starts, I do not know how many Christians will be left behind." A Christian cannot take the same view as others at the time of war.

We have to see the manipulations of Satan behind all wars. Strictly speaking, when one nation fights against another nation, it is not a case of two nations fighting one another; it is a case of two opposing nations rising up to stumble Christians. The end result of the wars is not the downfall of Germany, England, China, or Japan, but the downfall of Christians. Satan's goal is to stumble Christians. A Christian has to realize the spiritual significance of all these things when a war breaks out.

The Lord continued in Matthew 24:13, saying that Christians should endure to the end when they are being hated in wars and tribulations. This will lead to their salvation. He said, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole inhabited earth for a testimony to all the nations" (v. 14). During a war, God's children will be persecuted. This is why there is the need to endure. But at the same time, we have to preach the gospel. We also have to be a testimony among the Gentiles. Even if our testimony cannot spread to other nations or regions, it can spread to our city at least. The gospel of the kingdom must be preached continuously in the whole inhabited earth before the end will come.

## **THE WORLD OPPOSING CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIANS**

The words in Acts 4:25 are quoted from Psalm 2:1-2, which says, "Why are the nations in an uproar,/And why do the peoples contemplate a vain thing?/The kings of the earth take their stand,/And the rulers take counsel together,/Against Jehovah and against His Anointed." Why are the nations in uproar? Why do they contemplate? They roar and contemplate the removal of Christ. When the Lord was on earth, Herod and Pontius Pilate attacked Him, God's anointed Christ. Although the Christ in the flesh is no longer on earth today, He is in all the Christians. Hence, the uproar and con-templation of the nations are aimed at Christians today.

Apparently the world is divided into alliances and nations. But tonight I hope that you do not see Germany, Japan, England, or China. You have to see that you are a Christian. In the eyes of God the nations roar and the peoples contemplate vain things to attack Christ and God's people. Herod and Pilate were enemies of each other, but in the matter of crucifying Christ, they were one. The Jews and the Gentiles thought that they became one at Pentecost. But God said that at the time of Christ's crucifixion, both the Gentiles and the Israelites had gathered together to stand against Christ and to attack His Son.

## **THE NEED OF THE CHURCH'S PRAYER**

I do not know how to say this—it is not something that is easy to speak about. I can only say that the church in Shanghai must continue to pray for the Lord to take control of all the things that are happening and will happen in the world. Once war starts, many people lose their jobs, real estate goes down, gold is in demand, and banks close. Men are anxious to exchange their money for goods and try to horde them. Once war breaks out, the suffering party is the church. Christians will either suffer loss or be stumbled. They will suffer either materially or spiritually. There is bound to be suffering and loss in some areas. In these days we do not have time to enjoy entertainment; we have to pray in a specific way. Hades has only one goal—to afflict Christians. The future of 1940 and thereafter is bleak. Christians must have an enlarged view and see the reason and goal of this world war. Great changes may be coming starting tonight and continuing through next spring. If we have any strength at all, we should direct it to prayer. We must ask the Lord to take control of the situation so that God's children will not stumble and so that the gospel will continue to spread.