

# QUANTOCK MINISTRIES

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*A Bible teaching and preaching ministry  
for the Christian community*

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## **LIVING IN A WORLD OF FEAR**

Luke 21 v 25 – 31 is an oft-quoted passage where the Lord clearly foretells a time in world history when great fear will be a major international feature. In verse 26 the NIV states that men will faint from terror, while the AV describes men's hearts failing them from fear. This warning comes in the middle of a lengthy answer Jesus gave to the disciples as they sought to know what signs would indicate the end of the age (which we now know as the Church Age). Matthew and Mark, as well as Luke, include excerpts from the Lord's response.

The context shows that the events that will generate such extreme fear will be worldwide, and that suggests this will happen at a time when communications will be much as they have become today – instant and universal. Verse 28 would also seem to place the timing in the present day because we, the Lord's people everywhere, are to be fully aware of these signs beginning to take place. Accordingly, we must "stand up and lift up our heads", knowing that the completion of God's redemptive plan for the Church is drawing near. The fulness of that redemption purpose is our bodily resurrection to glory as described in 1 Thessalonians 4 v 13 – 18. Therefore, the development of great worldwide fear is a sign that should produce the totally opposite effect on us. We lift up our heads because we are looking for His glorious appearance (Titus 2 v 13), and also because we should be experiencing a steadily growing confidence and excitement that the Lord's return for us is getting very close. Certainly, we should be looking up from all the traditional circumstances that we have embraced in our Christian lives over the years and rise to the great challenge that we now face, whatever changes that demands of us, as we shall see in this study.

There is much going on that is generating great fear in the world today. Indeed, the depth of fear is sadly leading to many people seeing suicide as the only escape, especially among a younger generation. Fear seems to be a growing cause of mental health problems all over the world. The list below is not exhaustive, but these seven issues indicate the scale of the problems the world is now facing. We also note three issues that are causing a fair degree of anxiety among Christians.

1. Climate change and subsequent environmental disasters. Whether this is happening because of human activity or as a result of natural cycles, climate change is becoming one of the major issues worldwide. The fear of what is happening to planet Earth environmentally seems to be the root motivation of various protest groups in many countries. Some protestors are adopting extreme positions, but even in the general population there is increasing anxiety about future economic wellbeing, with or without fossil fuels, and a growing awareness of the extreme weather conditions. The danger from "the roaring and tossing of the sea" is now causing "anguish and perplexity" among politicians and meteorologists around the world (v 25).
2. Attacks on Earth from space. This is also mentioned in our passage (v 25 – 26). The fear of such attacks arises both from possible collisions with asteroids and comets, and from radiation over the electro-magnetic spectrum. This could be the result of activity on the sun, or from gamma rays from the much wider and general region of space beyond the solar system. In popular culture there is also the constant threat of alien invasion and activity, and many people appear to take this as a serious possibility, raising another source of fear, whether or not they believe aliens really exist.
3. The growth of powerful autocracies. These embrace philosophies which deny human rights and the international rule of law, even threatening the use of nuclear weapons. Any of the conflicts between Russia and Ukraine, China and surrounding states, North and South Korea, some of the Middle Eastern countries, could unleash another world war. In many of the traditional democratic states there is fear that the rise of populist movements will lead to support for more dictatorial politicians gaining power, with the loss of basic freedoms and democratic checks and balances.
4. Artificial intelligence (AI) and quantum computers. This is all being described as the biggest change in world lifestyle since the industrial revolution. The fear is that with so much human activity being taken over by machines there will be no stopping the spread of deep fakes and fake news, with no distinction between fact and fiction. There will be widespread loss of jobs and human decision-making, with robots not adhering to standards of human morality. There is also concern that if we embrace implanted microchips, as some have suggested, there will be no real understanding of what it is to be human.
5. The impact of social media. Here the fear arises from the hold that social media seems to be having on public attitudes, and on young people especially. The consequent "woke" thinking, conspiracy theories, the threat to freedom of thought and expression of opinion, plus vicious anonymous "trolling", are all leading to uncertainty and insecurity for great numbers of people. Lives are being seriously blighted and reputations permanently destroyed by the unchecked use of social media, and nobody seems to know where this will all lead in the future.

6. The education of our children. With interest groups widely disseminating their values and literature on diversity issues - gay rights, trans rights, religious plurality including paganism, etc - especially to schools, there is great fear that parents' rights are being marginalised and even denied. It seems that increasingly parents are not even being allowed to see and know what their children are being taught on moral, lifestyle and religious matters.
7. Population growth and migration. There are many fears about the sheer numbers of people on this planet, and whether population growth at the current rate is sustainable. In many parts of the world the consequent mass migration of people seeking economic improvement, and political freedom from oppression and corruption, is becoming a major issue of international political concern.

Christians are not immune from fear and three areas in particular appear to be unsettling many believers at this time.

1. The closure of many smaller fellowships and churches, especially since the Covid-related lockdowns, and ageing congregations in many groups that are left, having very few younger people to take the place of those being called to Glory.
2. The rapidly declining spirituality, biblical knowledge, and holy living, of younger generations in Christian families. In the words of Judges 2 v 10: "After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what He had done for Israel".
3. The lack of widespread expository and authoritative Bible teaching. In the words of 1 Samuel 3 v 1: "In those days the Word of the Lord was rare". Music and social care, as good as they are, now seem to take a higher priority in church than teaching.

So, in the face of this epidemic of growing fearfulness in the world around us, on a scale foretold by Jesus Himself, what should be our response? In what ways can we "stand up and lift up our heads"? There are four possible responses that I will mention here.

1. We must accept a great change from church-based evangelism to individual testimony. The covid pandemic seemed to mark a profound watershed in the history of the Christian Church, especially in the wealthier countries. We have become used to our churches being the base for virtually all witness: gospel services, missions and rallies, support for great crusades and many other united forms of evangelistic outreach, both local and national, Sunday schools and youth work of all kinds, meetings for various segments of society, and many other organised programmes of outreach. In no way am I suggesting these should cease, but the fact is that such activities in general are now just a pale shadow of what happened in the past. There are very welcome exceptions to this trend, for which we give thanks to the Lord, but in general the world stays completely outside the Church and has very little to do with it. As at the beginning, the true Church now is just what the name means – the gathered people of God, meeting for worship and fellowship, and is no longer at the centre of the "religious" life of the nation.

Hebrews chapter 11 is a wonderful catalogue of men and women of faith. Although they were members of God's chosen people, they are recorded as individuals exercising their amazing trust in a faithful God. As the chapter progresses, the writer runs out of time to go into other personal details and continues from verse 32 with a list of more people and their deeds in a general way over the Old Testament period. He sums up in verse 38 with these words: "The world was not worthy of them". It was the same in the early years of the Church, before institutional Christianity set in. The real power of the Holy Spirit was seen in and through the lives of a vast multitude of individual men and women of God, living in a pagan world and exhibiting the Christlikeness brought about by the fruits of the Holy Spirit. And this is where we stand today. The real work of God will be through the lives of countless Christians, living in a world of fear, showing the tremendous power and beauty of the character of Jesus. We have majored on the gifts of the Spirit, but maybe we have not had the sanctified lives that should come first and which can then make the gifts so much more effective. Two fruits illustrate the point. In John 14 v 27 Jesus tells a very fearful band of disciples that He will give them a unique peace (shalom), which will be the complete antidote to fear. With that kind of peace their hearts are not to be troubled and are not to be afraid. In Philippians chapter 2 we are told to have the mind of Christ by sharing His humility ("He made himself nothing" v 7), so that in us "God is able to will and act according to His good purpose" (v 13). This is exactly as He did with His Son, the Lord Jesus (John 3 v 34 and 8 v 28 - 29).

2. We must recognise that human fear is God's opportunity. We remember Peter's Pentecost sermon (Acts 2 v 22 – 36) when the people were "cut to the heart" and 3000 were saved that day (v 37 – 41). The Philippian jailor (Acts 16 v 27 - 34) was so fearful he was trembling and about to commit suicide. That was the birth of the great church at Philippi. Human fear could be the means through which a wave of the Holy Spirit's power of conviction will bring many to the foot of the cross in these last days. Like Paul at Philippi, the Spirit-filled and obedient servant of God will then be put in the right place at the right time.
3. We must be watchmen on the wall. Ezekiel 33 v 1 – 9 tells us that if we know of approaching danger, we have a duty to warn those who are unaware of it. And we do know. The signs that are now beginning and causing great fear in people's hearts herald the judgement of God (the Tribulation) at the end of this age. Our response to the growing fear must be to warn that this is the foreshadowing of all that the Bible tells us will be the consequence of the rejection of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus.
4. We must emphasise the nature of the coming Kingdom of Jesus on Earth. The promises of the glorious return of Jesus and the establishment of His reign on David's throne are very clearly set out in scripture. If any reader of these notes is not sure, there is a study (All Hail, King Jesus) freely available and downloadable on the Quantock Ministries website, details of which are at the head of this study. Alternatively, a copy can be obtained from the address given above. The future of Earth is not disaster. There will be judgement on the present age and a cleansing of the whole planet by fire, but Satan and evil will not win. God will send His long-promised Messiah and every eye will see Him and every knee will bow, Philippians 2 v 9 – 11, and everyone will know His Name – Jesus!