

WHAT DOES IT COST TO BEHOLD THE BEAUTY OF THE KING?

FEATURE ARTICLE

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM being preached over the whole earth is the hope and plea of every believer and the high point of Matthew 24. In fact, Matthew 24 answers one of the critical questions that God's people have been asking since the foundation of the earth: What does it cost to see God's name be made "great among the nations, from where the sun rises to where it sets?" (cf. Malachi 1:11). What will the generation that fulfills Matthew 24:14 have to endure in that last generation?

In truth, we are privileged to be the generation that can say that there is literally no time zone in which Jesus is not worshipped. However, within each time zone, there are

dark pockets where Jesus is not known and worshipped. This should not be so.

Although we love Matthew 24:14, we tend to avoid the rest of the chapter. This is because Jesus makes it clear there will be many calamities in the earth leading up to when God is finally glorified among all the peoples of the earth.

For example:

- War on a global scale (v.6-7)
- Famines and earthquakes (v.8)
- Persecution and being put to death (v.9)

BY **DR. PAM ARLUND AND DR. MARY HO**

Mary Ho is the International Executive Leader of All Nations Family, which makes disciples, trains leaders, and catalyzes church movements among the neglected peoples of the world. Mary was born in Taiwan and first heard about Jesus from missionaries in Swaziland where she grew up. Her husband John's family became Christians through Hudson Taylor's ministry. Therefore, John and Mary are passionate about continuing to be part of Jesus being worshipped by all peoples. Contact: mary@allnationsfamily.org

Pam Arlund is the Global Training and Research Leader in All Nations Family. Pam worked in an unreached people group of Central Asia for many years. To serve them well in disciple making and church planting, she also learned how to be a linguist and a Bible translator. She longs to be a worshipping warrior with Jesus. Contact: parlund@allnationsfamily.org

- Hated by all nations (v.9)
- Many will renounce their faith (v.10)
- False prophets (v.11, 22-6)
- Increase of wickedness (v.12)
- Love of most grow cold (v.12)
- Multiplied lawlessness (v.12)

Jesus makes it clear that this coming of the kingdom is not neat, easy, or tidy. However, in this same passage, He gives us at least five ways that believers are to have “true grit” so we can stand firm until the end (v. 13).

Jesus tells us to be mobile and nimble. He points out that we must be able to flee at a moment’s notice (v. 16). This advancement of the kingdom will take us off guard. So, we must be ready for sudden opportunities and change our lives, priorities, and plans quickly. The current refugee

Jesus tells us to keep watch (v. 42). This means being aware of the strategies that God is carrying out. We are warned to be aware of false prophets. How can we distinguish false prophets from real prophets? By knowing the heart of the King. He captures our heart, soul, mind, and strength. And, when He does this, we have the power to be bold, be brave, live differently, love the unlovely, love our enemies, and endure hardship. This 1 Corinthians 13 love is per Leon Morris, “...not a patient, resigned acquiescence, but an active, positive fortitude. It is the endurance of the soldier who, in the thick of the battle, is undismayed.”

Jesus tells us to be good trustworthy servants (v. 45), to give to those in need of food. The passage does not seem to be literally about food, but an analogy. Unlike natural famines, where we respond with food aid to the neediest, we often send workers who are supposed to relieve spiritual famine to places where there is an excess of spiritual

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crisis is one such opportunity. More Muslims have come to Christ in this century than in all previous centuries of Islam. Those who responded to the refugee crisis have seen many Muslims come to Christ. But many had to stop our regular work to respond to this opportunity born of upheaval. There will be other opportunities in the future, and we have to be ready to respond quickly to the move of God. In fact, it appears that these calamities might also create unprecedented opportunity for the establishment of Kingdom Movements, but only if the people of God are mobile and nimble.

Jesus tells us we will have to flee but we can ask Him for mercy in the midst of our difficulties (v. 20). We are to be people of persistent prayer. This is not the kind of prayer that takes a few minutes. Nor will this be the kind of prayer in which we beg God to act. This will be the sons and daughters of the King militantly battling alongside their Heavenly Father (cf. Ephesians 6) against foes who are not seen but whose deeds are felt. This is the kind of prayer that is both hard and full of joy.

resources. This analogy helps us to understand why we prioritize the neglected peoples of the earth. We have to be honest and ruthless with ourselves to see whether our Great Commission workers are truly working where the spiritual need is greatest.

Jesus tells us to not be attached to earthly things. He points out that we should not go back and get our things (v. 17-18). Living this way is different than how our neighbors live. We live not for our own fleshly desires of entertainment, wealth, and beauty (cf. Romans 8:5). Instead, we live for the beauty of the King. This means spending less time for our own pleasures, but instead working harder for the welfare of others, giving away our time and money, and living for an unseen glory.

To live for the beauty of the King will require sacrifice—extreme sacrifice, sacrifice that hurts. However, with the sacrifice, it says in Malachi 1:11, that in every place where His name is great among the nations, there is the fragrant incense of our pure offerings. No sacrifice is too great if it makes His Name greater among the nations. 