

Challenges

SACOG – Kansas City

(Sermon Notes)

By Warren Zehrung – 7/6/2013

Here is the reality that is facing us.

Before Jesus Christ returns to establish His Kingdom, there will be a time of global turbulence such as this world has never known – a time when:

Luke 21:

26 Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

And from all indications, it appears that we are rapidly approaching that time. One advantage that you start to have when you have a few years on you is that you can begin to see trends – and how things are changing.

There was a time when God's blessings were still being poured out bountifully upon us – but no more. The “good old days” are gone and bad times are upon us.

I've put together a “Reality Check List.” You might want to add to this list.

Our unemployment number is at all time high and as a result – the crime rate is also high.

Inadequate border security is not being handled properly and as a result – the enemy will get up very high above you.

Deuteronomy 28:

43 The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low.

Two years after the revolution that toppled the Mubarak dictatorship, Egypt is already a failed state.

The Arab Spring is yielding bitter fruit across the Mideast and in Syria.

Quantitative Easing at 85 billion a month is rapidly shrinking savings and weakening the dollar.

High food prices and high gas prices.

New diseases that are antibiotic resistant. New viruses for which there are no cures.

I saw this week where they are using three parents to clone one child – that should work out well for the little guy. The Bible calls this kind of conduct “**confusion.**”

*Increasing religious deception – brethren overwhelmingly accepting substitute religion.

Weather extremes affecting food production. Extreme temperature highs and new lows.

Genetically Modified foods replacing natural varieties – subject to blight, virus and molds.

Men Are Boycotting Marriage, Fatherhood, and the American Dream.

Divorce rates high – for those who bother to get married. Society and culture crashing.

Family values being eroded - no father in the homes.

We have a President who despises the spirit of America and the founding principles upon which it was built.

Valueless and destructive Supreme Court decisions without values.

To many people these things are not much of a concern – but let me ask you this: Could any of these **challenges** eventually bring America down? Think about this:

Every major societal function is in imminent danger of break down and failure. Government, education, military, health, agriculture, finance, religion and so forth... are all in imminent danger of collapse.

There are truly evil forces at work to rob men of their capability.

Consider what happened to ancient Israel:

1 Corinthians 10:

11 Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

We are going through these challenges just as our forefathers did. God calls all these things “**plagues**” that will consume us.

Compare the inner city of filth, squalor, disease, drugs, unmarried mothers, fatherless children, crime, and no morals at all.

Jesus said it would be like the days of Noah when He returned to this earth.

Luke 17:

26 And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

What did Jesus Christ mean?

Genesis 6:

5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Government agencies like the IRS are becoming a laughing stock. Monumental **Fraud, abuse** and corruption are the rule – rather than the exception.

The promised affordable healthcare law has not yet gone into effect – and it is already causing back-breaking increases in the cost of medical services.

We are living in Sodom and Gomorrah as surely as Lot was. The only thing left is to await the rain of fire and brimstone.

Genesis 19:

24 Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven;

Ezekiel 38:

22 And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.

Just last week a transgender first-grader boy won a civil rights suit in Colorado to frequent the girls' bathroom... What about the privacy rights of a hundred decent girls?

2 Timothy 3:

1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

Brethren, all these challenges we are looking at are **EXTERNAL challenges**.

A majority of Americans are not concerned one iota that these things are bring America down.

There are **INTERNAL challenges** that we are also fighting against that are of a **spiritual** nature.

Ephesians 6:

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Some of these challenges are: Vanity; Greed; Hate; Lust; Pride; Alcohol; Bad Temper; Gambling; Covetousness; False Representations; Pride; Selfishness...

We have to examine ourselves frequently on all these issues – and more... We know that ancient Israel went into captivity for two broad category of sins: **Idolatry and Sabbath breaking**. All their troubles extend from these two great faults.

And then, very seriously, there are **SUBTLE challenges**.

Idolatry: Do we realize that there is a lot of idolatry within the greater churches of God. Anytime that we do not put God first... Anytime that we are not looking directly to God in everything – we are guilty of idolatry.

Reconciliation: There is a terrible lack of reconciliation in the Church of God – especially among the ministry. They do not seek to reconcile with those brethren whom they have treated harshly. We all have those with whom reconciliation is called for.

Not Discerning Who is in the Lord's Body: There are many brethren in scattered groups who are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Do we recognize **all** those who have repented, believed in Jesus as our Savior, been baptized and had hands lain on them – equally as members like ourselves? When we were born, we were named after our dad's **last name**. We are given, and we take on the **Father's name** in baptism – showing that we have become brothers and sisters of Jesus and – children of God. We were baptized into the Father's name and spirit life – the same name and spirit Jesus has. We are the Body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:

29 For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, **not discerning the Lord's body**.

Not Laying Down our Lives as we must: Laying Down our Lives for one another and for God's Truth are **salvational** requirements. You might say, "Surely, Jesus does not expect us to literally be willing to die for one another" – but He does. Unless we learn to lay our lives down for the brethren, just as Jesus did for us, we will not have a part in the first resurrection.

So as to remove any doubt as to what He meant, Jesus explains:

John 15:

13 Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

It is starting to become fairly clear that Jesus is commanding that we **lay down our lives just as He laid down His life**.

James 5:

20 Let him know, that he which converts the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

Galatians 6:

1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

Our greatest challenge right now is to help others into the Kingdom of God.

New Age philosophies as a challenge: There are those in God's Church who are watering down the Doctrine of Christ (Hebrews 6:1-2), and teaching the brethren the heretical philosophy of just being happy, having fun, and being successful.

Do not treat these **SUBTLE challenges** lightly – because our salvation rests upon a right resolution of these matters.

Make your own list of "challenges."

Ezekiel 7:

23 Make a chain: for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence.

24 Wherefore I will bring the **worst of the heathen**, and they shall **possess their houses**: [Chinese foreclosure on a portion of their debt???) I will also make the pomp of the strong to cease; and **their holy places shall be defiled**. [No more **Sabbath** services in the open.]

Radical Islam is increasingly a threat while at the same time being protected and aided by Political Correctness.

Iran is getting very close to acquiring a nuclear bomb in order to carry out its threat to exterminate Israel and ratchet up its war against the free world.

Iran is exporting terrorism throughout the region – while the USA timidly watches from afar.

The NSA – National Security Administration – is spying on all Americans. It is a security invasion – phones, computers, banking, institutions. They are able to see you on your home computer and listen in on you cell phones – even then they are not in use. There will be no privacy again until Christ returns.

Military readiness and morale are undependable.

Regulatory and invasive encroachments of the government on individual liberties is increasing at a rate of a geometric progression.

If you had a lot of money to invest in a nation – would you bet your fortune on the USA? Would your stock in America grow like a good investment – I do not think so.

Do you know why these challenges are beyond measure?

Leviticus 26:

- 1 Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the LORD your God.

We have the ultimate idol in America – it is this: THERE IS NO GOD. God is being systematically removed from everything.

Leviticus 26:

- 2 Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD.

Leviticus 26:

- 12 And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.

Leviticus 26:

- 14 But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments;

Here we are – right here – right now! We have come to this turning point.

Leviticus 26:

- 17 And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursues you.

**Do you think that the USA is about ready to turn back to God?

We have **government funded abortions** after passing legislation that expressly forbids violations against the sanctity of life.

God hates abortion – it never entered His mind.

The killing of more than Fifty-three million innocents is a murdered nation – and it is an abomination in God's sight. Our Almighty God said this about the killing of babies,

Jeremiah 19:

5 I commanded not [abortion], nor spoke it, neither came it into my mind.

Our Lord could not imagine that mankind could be so cruel and heartless as to kill their own beautiful children.

Just this week, the Supreme Court in its war against traditional marriage ruled in WASHINGTON, DC that **The Defense of Marriage Act** was in fact defenseless.

Marriage is no longer sacrosanct in America by virtue of the fact that it is regarded as too important or valuable to be interfered with. Not even marriage between a man and a woman is held as sacred any more.

And at the same time the Senate in Washington passed an **Immigration reform** amendment that neglects the protection of our southern border – allowing terrorists easy access to our nation.

God warns us:

Leviticus 26:

18 And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.

20 And your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits.

21 And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more **plagues** upon you according to your sins.

The government's share of revenues skyrockets - lessening that portion of the wage-earners take home pay. Very soon the blessings that God intended for America will dry up.

The national debt at 17 trillion forecasts a failed economy and foreign intervention.

We are the modern Israelites who exactly like our forefathers have as a nation turned our backs on our Creator God.

Please understand that Ezekiel's prophecies are written to us. Ancient Israel and Judah had already rejected God with their Idolatry and Sabbath breaking - and had gone into captivity when God gave Ezekiel these prophecies for Modern Israel to heed.

Ezekiel 5:

1 And thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber's razor, and cause it to pass upon thine head and upon thy beard: then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the hair.

2 Thou shalt burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled: and thou shalt take a third part, and smite about it with a knife: and a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind; and I will draw out a sword after them.

3 Thou shalt also take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts.

A physical remnant will survive the tribulation for the purpose of populating the world tomorrow, and there will be a comparatively small number of true brethren who will be in a Place of Safety.

Ezekiel 5:

4 Then take of them again, and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire; for thereof shall a fire come forth into **all the house of Israel**.

*Seems to me that someone is falling short in warning the world. There are more than six billion people who have not yet heard the Gospel message.

The citizens of this once moral land must come to understand what happens when God is rejected and abandoned.

We are called for a purpose. We are called to be a part of the **better resurrection**.

Hebrews 11:

35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a **better resurrection**:

Our people will learn what happens when God's spiritual rules, which are for our good, are not followed.

Unless this country returns to God in business, in education, and in government, our social order will deteriorate to the point of total breakdown.

National defense will become insignificant, leading to final defeat.

Our enemies will walk in and pluck-up our land like a ripe peach.

Luke 21:

23 There shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.

24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

It will be **too late** to turn this nation around.

Luke 21:

25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

26 Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

27 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws near.

Specific Purpose Statement:

****How do we measure up to the challenges facing us right now?**

I believe that even if God were to give us a **righteous leader** who was not catering to the Muslim Brotherhood, rejecting Christianity, discarding God, apologizing for America, destroying our financial system, and scraping our laws – I believe it is still too late to avoid the crisis ahead.

Ancient Israel came to this point in their history. There was one last gasp for life for the nation. Good King Josiah tried admirably to give it to them. He tried to turn the heart of the nation back to God – but it was too late. Josiah celebrated the greatest Passover ever held!

2 Kings 23:

- 22** Surely there was not held such a Passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah;
- 23** But in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, wherein this Passover was held to the LORD in Jerusalem.
- 24** ... the idols, and all the abominations ... did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law ... of the LORD.
- 25** And like unto him [Josiah] was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.

Wow! That should have turned the nation around in repentance. But it wasn't enough.

Because Josiah's grandfather, wicked King Manasseh had destroyed the moral fiber of the nation.

2 Kings 23:

- 26** Notwithstanding the LORD **turned not** from the fierceness of His great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal. [Judah was sinning everywhere with idols and Sabbath breaking – just exactly like our Godless nation today.]

There are a few strongholds of God's people around the world – but I do not believe that there is anything sacred of worth saving in America anymore.

2 Kings 23:

- 27** And the LORD said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.

...even the Temple of God was destroyed at Jerusalem.

So, we must diligently - all of us – prepare to **face the challenges** that lie immediately ahead of us.

God says that we – the end time people of the Church of God – are likely to be spewed out of His mouth unless we repent.

Revelation 3:

16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will **spue thee out** of my mouth.

Let me ask you a question. When your favorite foods are no longer on the shelf... in fact no food at all, and you can't buy any gas for your car, and there is no electricity and there is sickness and death are all around you...

What will be your support structure? **Who** will be your support structure? The people you work with? Your Family? Some Church brethren. Where will you go? Who will you turn to?

God will not give us more than we can take – but we better be really close to God – with no reservations or substitutes.

Do we realize where we are today – just how close we are to the end? Increasing religious deception – brethren overwhelmingly accepting substitute religion.

Jesus Christ knows very well how we are made and what our proclivities are.

Jeremiah 17:

9 The heart is **deceitful** above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

10 I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

We, the people of God, are not to remain as we once were in the world. With the help of God's Spirit we are to grow and overcome. With repentance, faith in Jesus Christ, and baptism, we are cleansed. No longer are we to practice **deceitful behavior**. For a Christian it is unacceptable. We are not to defile the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed to us.

We are, however, warned that in the end-time one of the big problems that we would be facing is that of deception. The apostle Paul determined that he would handle God's Word with the utmost sincerity. Paul said:

2 Corinthians 4:

2 [I] have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God **deceitfully**; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

These are challenging times, Brethren. Some of our members have confided that they have lost confidence in their support structure – that is ministers, church organizations, Pastors, etc...

Jesus said,

2 Chronicles 7:

14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

I pray that there is still time for the church brethren to get their lives in order. Do we realize the absolute requirement to lay **down our lives** for others and for the Truth?

Revelation 12:

11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they **loved not their lives unto the death.**

There is only one way to escape the coming challenges: A change must take place in us; a metamorphosis must take place. (Satan fills the entertainment media with counterfeit “Morphs” that do not represent the Godly **change** we need to make.)

The Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Philippians 3:

21 ...Who shall **change** our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.

There’s a Godly principle that we see very early on in the scriptures – life begets life. Or, as the Bible correctly says, **kind begets kind.**

Genesis specifically shows that like kind begets like kind.

Kind after kind: This principle is applicable to all living things – to the grass, to the fruit trees, to the fish and everything we read of in:

Genesis 1:

24 And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.

God did not tell Adam to marry an ape – that would have been bestiality – and it would not have been in accordance with God’s principle of **Kind** after kind. God created man-**kind.**

Let’s talk about getting **our lives in order.** God designed the order. There was a time when we did not exist. And there will be a time when we are born into the eternal Family of God.

He made them, man and woman, capable of reproducing their species, their **kind**, only as an embryonic step in His plan to reproduce Himself, the God-**kind.**

*God is in the process of creating **God-Kind.**

God did **not** make Man-kind to be eternal. The God-kind is going to be eternal.

God is in the process of reproducing Himself by creating spiritual children who are a part of His Family – the Family of God.

In order for man to make that great leap, from man-kind to God-kind, God gives baptized Christians of His very life – His Spirit – making us His Godly children.

1 John 3:

2 Even now, we are the **children of God.**

This inconceivable truth is lost on the world. They think “children of God” is a platitude meaning simply that God created us. They cannot grasp the awe-inspiring reality that we are actually God’s spiritual children – that our mere humanity is being transformed into **God-likeness**.

When a human being undergoes the Christian conversion process, he enters a transformation **process** from temporary mortal life to eternal God Life.

I believe that the process begins in God’s mind – where He has predestined – that He wants you – He needs you – He is going to use you in His Kingdom as one of His Family forever and ever.

We are not there yet. We must go through this entire process:

Human **conception** → establishment of an individual **identity** where you become “you” → nine month of maturation to human **birth** → **childhood** → **adulthood** → your **calling** by God the Father → repentance → faith → baptism → conversion → **spiritual conception** with the laying on of hands → you are established as a **child of God** as assuredly as when you were once the child of your dad → put on Godly character → first and better resurrection → fully **born** into God’s eternal Family.

Jesus is Spirit. He will follow His principle of kind after kind.

It is impossible for Jesus to marry under His station. In the same way that Adam did not marry an ape, Jesus Christ in His God-form is not going to marry a mere human being.

Jesus Christ is going to marry a God-kind bride. That is why we marry **only in the Lord**.

1 Corinthians 7:

39 The wife ... is at liberty to be married to whom she will; **only in the Lord**.

We in God’s Church are no longer similar to those in the world – we are now children of God – and we are only to marry another of our same status in God’s process – or else be unequally yoked against God’s Will.

*That is why a converted Spirit led Christian cannot **date or marry** a person without God’s Holy Spirit. A child of God cannot marry a child of the world.

The Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, will marry a spiritually mature Bride possessing eternal life – God’s Spirit life. God has begun this process in you – He will surely finish it.

Philippians 1:

6 Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

There are few, if any, examples of exemplary marriages in the Bible.

The Church of God today has been given the opportunity to be the showcase of beautiful marriages founded on spiritual principles.

These exceptional marriages of truly converted people will be used in the millennium as illustrations upon which to build a Godly society.

The institution of marriage was established by God to symbolize the intimate relationship that exists between Jesus Christ and His Bride.

As spiritual reality always far surpasses the mundane physical occurrences, the most perfect love that has ever existed between any man and woman on earth **comes far short** of the perfect spiritual union that will exist with Jesus Christ.

That is the beauty of the wedding supper.

God's Plan is sure!

As long as we stay the course with all our heart, mind and soul, **we will overcome every challenge.**

Here is our action step: Prepare now for the final tests.

First, identify the enemy. First, identify the problems.

Most people do not know or recognize when to take a stand against evil. And I am speaking of the **Subtle** and **Internal** Challenges and Problems we have to deal with.

They forget that the spirit of Iniquity is already working, and will continue working until the last Feast of Atonement before the millennium begins.

2 Thessalonians 2:

7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now lets will let, until he be taken out of the way.

Learn to stand for righteousness – unto the death.

We are called – not to be like the world – but to be out of this evil world.

Hold God's doctrine high – it is sacred! When your brother is unfairly maligned – you die to save him – you lay down your life to help him into the Kingdom of God.

When your brother in Christ is seduced by a substitute religion – you save him by turning him from the error of his way.

The love of many is waxing cold – the fire of Godly Love is being snuffed out.

He who seeks to preserve his life will lose it – while he who lays down his life – will save it – be saved unto eternal Life.

Prepare now for the final **tests and challenges.**

Prepare now by making hard Godly decisions in every test and trial that presents itself.

Draw near to God. When we draw near to God we will share a “oneness” and “unity” with all others who have also drawn near to God.

Draw near to God by doing His stated Will in everything you do.

Whether you are single or married you have to do these things.

If someone thinks that he will wait until things get really tough – and then decide to do things in a Godly way – he will not be able. (The Catholics speak of death bed conversions – there is no such thing.)

God is not mocked – you will reap what you sow.

Galatians 6:

- 7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.
- 8 For he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.
- 9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Build on your personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Give of yourself – as He gave us His all.