

Fear Not! For I Am With You!

LHC: Message Eleven (031109AM)

Week 11: Fear Not! For I Am with You!

(Revelation 1:17–18)

As the end of days approaches, you can find hope in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, for the ultimate victory is Christ's, and He will never leave or forsake you!

SUNDAY: Troublesome Times Are Here

*And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “**Do not be afraid**; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.”*

—Revelation 1:17–18, emphasis added

While on Patmos, John felt Christ's comforting touch, which is exactly what Jesus offers to each of us. At the end of His ministry, He promised to be with us always, even to the very end of days. Since we may be living in those actual days right now, we need to feel His calming presence—His comforting touch that removes all fear.

There are fearful times coming to this planet, but if you compare our American news with that of the national papers of the industrialized nations of the world, you can easily see that our news lacks foresight and discernment. Why is that? News reporters in other nations look at the entire world while we Americans usually focus on ourselves. Unless the news is of a catastrophic nature, like the 2004 Tsunami, our major American news sources do not generally report on global events other than the usual happenings in the Middle East. But sticking one's head in the sand when it comes to discerning the signs of the times globally will not hold back God's ultimate plan for mankind. All the events He has foretold in His Word will happen exactly as predicted, and precisely on schedule.

Every time something that was predicted in Luke 21 happens, Jesus said it should cause us to lift up our heads. Actually, the Greek words mean “to turn your body; to cause your whole body to focus upward.” Jesus said that we are headed toward such trying days that people will “expire” due to fear of things to come: “**Men's hearts [will be] failing them from fear . . . of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken**” (Luke 21:26, emphasis added).

I love the color of the Greek language! In verse 26, the Greek word *apopsucho* means that their “breath or soul pops out” or “expires” because of complete fear. Isn't that a graphic word? It is not that some fearful disaster happens, and then people react by becoming afraid. No, they see it coming *toward* them and just die at the very *thought* of what is going to happen. Jesus is not referring to just the elderly, or a person who

already has a bad heart. He is talking about healthy people who see the Tribulation events coming—and it literally scares them to death!

The overwhelming tribulations on the horizon will cause a “panic attack” in many healthy humans who will then expire in fear. Events like the scientific arena’s flurry of concern over the solar explosion on October 28, 2003 (reported only in overseas papers) are but a small taste of things to come.

For seven days, scientists all over the world were glued to their seats watching the space weather. Then, that Tuesday, they sat up in their chairs, rubbed their eyes, and started to sweat because of anticipation of what might happen. They watched the sun bulge, the buildup of the energy, and then saw the sun explode a cloud of superheated gas equivalent to a million hydrogen bombs! It all exploded at once in one small area, then went out from the surface of the sun, and headed across the solar system away from the earth.

That explosion was the greatest solar event ever measured. It was so big that scientists didn’t have descriptions that could explain its magnitude. And they didn’t even get to see the fullness of the explosion because, as the sun turned, it just floated off in the opposite direction—almost as if the Lord did not want it to be seen!

God is in control. What a wonderful comfort to know that our Creator is in charge of the entire universe! Not even a tiny sparrow falls to the ground apart from the Father’s will (Matthew 10:29b). If it were possible for any person or thing to possess even a tiny modicum of power greater than God’s, then He would cease to be our sovereign King of Kings and Lord of Lords! So rejoice in the fact that all authority has been given to Jesus in heaven and on earth, and in Him we live and move and have our being (Matthew 28:20; Acts 17:28)!

We need never fear because God is in absolute control—not only of the past and present, but also of the future!

My Prayer for You This Week: *Father in heaven, this is Your message: we are to have a Word-filled life in fearful times. We are not to fear terrorists, bioterrorism, economic terrorism, cancer, stalkers, somebody in the dark around our house, the future, a new job, or whatever it is. I pray that we would see that Your prescription for not fearing is meditation—a Word-filled life. For when we meditate on Your Word, we know that You are with us always to the end. So help us to have a Word-filled life even in fearful times. Help us to truly understand and grab hold of that reality! In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.*

MONDAY: Signs in the Sun

*“And there will be **signs in the sun.**”*

—Luke 21:25a, emphasis added

What did Jesus mean by “signs in the sun”? I believe that the marked increase in sunspot activity and solar flares is the beginning of the horrors to come. Paal Brekke, Deputy Project Manager of the SOHO spacecraft (the big solar orbiting heliosphere study observatory which looks at the sun) had this to say about those solar explosions that occurred on October 28, 2003: “I think the last week will go into the history books

as one of the most dramatic periods of solar activity we have seen in modern time.”¹ He, an unbeliever, was trying to come to grips with the significance of three additional bursts on top of the two back-to-back monster flares.

Scientists now know that all of this is a cycle. There is an eleven-year cycle of events on the sun, such as sunspot activity and solar flares. Since 1755, twenty-one eleven-year cycles have been recorded by solar observatories. The sun has observable patterns; it will have numerous solar flares and then be very quiet for a season. At the moment (2006), we are four years into the quiet side, but, according to Mr. Brekke, there are signs that the sun is revving up like it never has before in history.

On March 6, 2003, the largest sunspot ever seen developed. The unusual spot created a new, giant flare almost daily, saturating the space between the sun and earth with solar X-rays, gamma rays, and protons, and creating surging waves in the solar wind that disturbed the earth’s magnetic field with unprecedented regularity. Scientists say the sunspot activity is harmless to human beings and that we are protected from radiation by the atmosphere. The only effects most of us will notice will be sporadic problems with cell phones, TV reception, and a bumpier Internet than usual. In practical terms, it is pretty much an interesting non-story. It was a non-event until the morning of Tuesday, October 28, 2003. In spiritual terms, I believe that we now face “a whole different ballgame.” Fascinating, isn’t it?

Where to Find Hope in Troublesome Times: *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit* (Romans 15:13). Hope comes from the living and written Word of God; as you read and meditate upon the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit will apply His truths to your heart, filling you with joy and peace. For example, as you read Psalm 121 below, God will encourage you to know that He is your helper, keeper, protector, and preserver. So whenever fear attacks, be comforted by meditating on these wonderful truths:

I will lift up my eyes to the hills—From whence comes my help? My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. . . . The LORD is your keeper; The LORD is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore.

—Psalm 121:1–3, 5–8

TUESDAY: We Live in Fearful Times

*“When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. . . . And **Jerusalem will be trampled** by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”*

—Luke 21:20, 24b, emphasis added

Jesus has said that Jerusalem will be a focal point globally in the end times. At the end of Luke 21:24, He was referring to where we are right now in history. After A.D. 70, Jerusalem ceased to exist as it had previously. No longer could the Jews worship God as they once had because Jerusalem had been trampled by the Gentiles. In fact,

Revelation reports that there would be an abomination up on the Temple Mount, and it is there today—the Dome of the Rock!

Jesus spoke of wars and rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, pestilences (deadly diseases), and changes in climate. He spoke of Israel as a literal place in the last days, and of Jerusalem's rise to global prominence. Have you ever considered that Jerusalem has the third largest press corps in the world? Why is that? After all, Jerusalem has less than one million people, so why do they have more reporters there than anywhere, except for New York City and Washington D.C.? The only possible explanation is that the whole world is fascinated with Israel! Other nations do not like Israel being there; they are afraid of Israel because it is so disproportionate in its influence and attention.

To a science fiction enthusiast, a paraphrase of Luke 21:25–26 might read like news reports in a futuristic episode or miniseries: “The end of the world is upon us! There are troubles with the sun, moon, and stars! On earth there is distress of nations, with mass confusion, and the waves are roaring! All over the planet men and women are dying from fear!” From a Christian perspective, however, look at what Jesus says when all that happens: “*When these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near*” (Luke 21:28).

There are two separate Greek verbs in verse 28. Not only are we to lift up our eyes, but we are also to turn our whole bodies toward Christ because His coming is near! Every time I hear of a major solar event, a huge earthquake, a catastrophic hurricane, or an unprecedented tidal wave, I am grieved for all those who have been snatched into eternity without knowing Christ. Yet my heart is also thrilled because such events remind me that our redemption is getting nearer!

Whenever there are signs in the sun, moon, and stars; signs on earth when the nations are in distress; and signs when fear and deadly “panic attacks” hit the planet, we should “*look up*” because Jesus said our redemption is close at hand. In Luke 21:31–33, Jesus says the generation that is alive when these things begin will be the final generation, and will see His coming—if they survive!

Where to Find Hope in Fearful Times: More and more we see the reflection of society's fears in apocalyptic-themed films. From some of the early global disaster movies in the 1980s and 1990s, such as *Apocalypse Now*, to more recent ones like *The Day After Tomorrow*, people are watching and thinking about fearful themes on this doomed planet. Sometimes just reading those titles is enough to scare anyone who is not grounded in the Word of God!

God has an offer for those who live in fearful times. More than any other prohibition in Scripture, He repeatedly calls out to us, “Fear not!” To conquer fear, a truly wise person will earnestly pray: *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer* (Psalm 19:14; see also Proverbs 3:21–26).

WEDNESDAY: The Antidote for Fearfulness

Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You. In God (I will praise His word), In God I have put my trust; I will not fear.

—Psalm 56:3–4, emphasis added

We live in a world that is possessed by fear. The “spirit of fear” is all around us—even in unexpected places. For example, once I was standing in line next to someone and was about to give my order when the clerk looked me right in the eye and said, “I know what you want.” She then proceeded to tell me what I wanted to order. I asked her, “How did you know that?” She replied, “I am a psychic.” “If that is really true,” I told her, “I am sorry for you. You are going to have a bad ending.”

That clerk didn’t understand where I was coming from, so I continued, “The psychic realm is from the devil, and if that is who you are associated with, God says you are going to have a very bad ending.” As she was confronted with the Word of God, her eyes widened and got hard as she exclaimed, “You are wrong!” A pastor from that town, in line behind me, whispered in my ear, “Don’t you know that woman is a practicing witch?” And I said, “Well, I found out, didn’t I?”

We live in a world filled with darkness. Therefore, God repeatedly tells us: “Fear not!” We are to live in constant touch with the God of heaven so that no matter what happens we can walk in boldness. I therefore challenge you, from the Word of the living God, to live what I call “the Word-filled life.” This is what Paul described in Ephesians 5 as a Spirit-filled life, and in Colossians 3:16 he said to *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.*

God offers His presence and influence to permeate each of us, for that is what the Word-filled life is all about. It means letting God take total control of us, much like that psychic has let the devil control her. To use biblical words, in a positive supernatural sense, God wants to utterly possess our reins, the very center of our feelings and passions. This applies even in fearful times, for that is when we should be most confident that we know Him. The Word-filled life is an anchor during those distracting times when the whole world seems to be falling apart around us.

Joshua is a wonderful example of how to conquer fear by living the Word-filled life. In Joshua 1:1–3, God himself commissioned Joshua to be the head of His army on earth—Israel. Then God promised: *“Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. . . . No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. **I will not leave you nor forsake you**”* (vv. 3, 5 emphasis added).

Because it is natural to be afraid when facing what Joshua was facing, God reminded him: *“**Be strong and of good courage**, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. **Only be strong and very courageous**, that you may . . . do . . . all the law which Moses My servant commanded you . . . that you may prosper wherever you go”* (Joshua 1:6–7, emphasis added).

God not only commanded Joshua to not fear, but He also told him what to do to be successful: *“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall **meditate in it day and night**, that you may . . . do . . . all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, **and . . . have good success**”* (Joshua 1:8, emphasis added).

In light of the fact that Joshua was a soldier, how could God command him to meditate on the Scriptures day and night? Was he supposed to carry a scroll along with his sword and shield? Can you imagine trying to lug one of those things around while trying to fight at the same time? No, God intended that Joshua *meditate* on His Word. The Lord expected him to absorb His words into his mind, into his heart, and be saying or thinking upon them constantly. In other words, he was commanded to be involved in Scripture memory and meditation. Why was that so important?

Meditation is the key to success. Whether it is business, the arts, homemaking, relationships, a military campaign, or whatever, meditation is God's prescription for success in any endeavor. If you want to succeed, you need not pay for a seminar to inspire you—just learn to meditate faithfully on the Scriptures. You will always succeed if God is with you and your mind and heart are filled with His Word.

Living a Word-filled life will conquer any fears you might have. Meditating on God's precious Word will provide the needed assurance that Jesus is with you always, even to the very end of life!

THURSDAY: Joshua's Plan

*"This Book of the Law **shall not depart from your mouth**, but you shall meditate in it day and night."*

—Joshua 1:8a, emphasis added

Joshua's hectic schedule and constant life on the road, heading to and from battles, never stopped him from spending time with the Lord twice daily. How did General Joshua Ben-Nun keep this up when he became a career military and political leader?

Joshua started a lifelong habit when he was a young man: [Moses'] *servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle* (Exodus 33:11). What was that habit? He loved to spend time at the Tent of Meeting (similar to church and Sunday school), which was the representation of God's presence. In today's vernacular, you could say that Joshua formed a habit in his youth of hanging around church and the fellowship of God's saints. He was different from the typical young person of today. He did not hang around with the crowd; he preferred to hang around with his Creator, the Lord God of the universe. When he was older, the habit of investing time for God to the exclusion of other activities never left him.

Joshua obeyed God's command: *"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it"* (Joshua 1:8a). Having made a habit as a young man to love God's presence, he immediately followed the Lord's command when He said, "I want you to let My Word be in you so full that it overflows!" In other words, Joshua obediently cultivated the Word-filled life by meditating upon and loving God's Word.

Joshua stayed with it to the end: *"Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. . . . But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"* (Joshua 24:15, emphasis added). Do you know why Joshua could make such a majestic statement—one that we love to hang on our walls? Because, in his youth, he purposed that he would always love God and linger in His presence, even to the neglect of the

crowd. He continually kept God's Word in his heart and mind, and that is why he could stay with it to the end. Thus, no matter what any other family did, Joshua and his family determined to stay faithful to the Lord.

Whom do you serve? Ask yourself these questions: *Am I lingering in God's presence? Am I writing His Word on my heart so that I don't fear? Am I committed to saying, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"?*

The most powerful form of leadership is not the leadership of position: *I am the manager*. It is not the leadership of expertise: *I know more than everybody else*. It is the leadership that is impossible to be challenged: the leadership of character, living a life that people *want* to follow. That is what Joshua had.

Are God's words stuck to your heart, your mind, your mouth? That is what the Lord wants. Then you can lead your family God's way. Fearful times are coming, but don't get swept up by the spirit of fear all around us because *fear is not from God* (2 Timothy 1:7)! So remember to meditate upon the promises the Lord has made!

FRIDAY: Joshua's Command

*"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your **God is with you wherever you go.**"*

—Joshua 1:9, emphasis added

When Moses died, and Joshua was commissioned to be the head of God's army on earth, it must have seemed like a formidable task to him! Of this challenge, John MacArthur writes:

Joshua was approaching 90 years of age when called on by God to lead a seven plus year war against entrenched enemies. At age 90, Joshua had graduated from prep school. He had followed Moses for 40 years, everywhere he went. He had learned to obey and see God at work in protecting the nation of Israel, providing for their daily needs. But now the legendary presence of that monumental man from Egypt is gone.

There were giants, there were huge walled cities and vast armies, and there was this group of people that hadn't been exactly cooperative with Moses. And what would be a normal human response? FEAR. And that is exactly what the Lord confronts and comforts Joshua about—be courageous, don't fear since I am with you.

God speaks to Joshua, and gives him a promise—Joshua 1:9. "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."²

When the Lord God the Son, the Commander of the hosts of the Lord, came and spoke to Joshua, He called him to lead the nation and to perform all the conquests ahead. Think about what a monumental task that involved: Joshua was to lead an untrained army of three million into a hostile territory and do frontal attacks on established armies, cities, and walled towns. Imagine coming up to a forty-foot-high wall with your bow and arrow and saying, "All right you guys, you might as well surrender now. We're here to take over your city!"

Joshua's army didn't have aerial bombardment drones or M-16s; these farmers and herdsman had only arrows, slingshots, and spears. So this was a fearful prospect indeed—for *all* Israelites! Therefore, God told Joshua in verse 9: "I don't want you to be dismayed or afraid. I want you to know that I, the Lord, am with you. And the way you will experience My presence is by meditating on My Word. Let it fill and overflow your heart!"

Fearfulness is a common malady. I meet people all the time who are terribly afraid. In fact, a while ago, one young man ran up to me and announced, "I heard a sound in the closet!" Of course, since he was only six years old at the time, his being afraid came as no surprise. (The sound was his sister playing with her toys, but he thought it was a monster.) Now then, if you are six, afraid of the dark, and you suddenly hear strange sounds in the closet, a fear response is normal. But should you still be that fearful in a few more years, that is bad news. Therefore, the Lord says to be progressively letting His Word richly dwell in you. Being a Word-filled believer will keep you from fearing terrorist attacks, ill health, lack of security, and an unknown future. God does not want us living in constant fear, so He tells us plainly, "Fear not!"

There is one solution for facing trouble: take God with you. There is one antidote for fearfulness: experience God's presence as you live out the Word-filled life!

SATURDAY: Fear Not!

*"**Fear not**, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; **You are Mine**. When you pass through the waters, **I will be with you**; . . . When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the Lord your God."*

—Isaiah 43:1b-3a, emphasis added

It is just like our Lord to speak to us when we need Him the most. His tender "Fear not!" can calm the storm in our hearts regardless of the circumstances around us. Consider how He assured these great saints: (Emphasis added in the verses below.)

- **Abraham:** *The word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "**Do not be afraid**, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward" (Genesis 15:1).*
- **Isaac:** *And the LORD . . . said, "I am the God of your father Abraham; **do not fear**, for I am with you" (Genesis 26:24).*
- **Jacob:** *So He said, "I am God, the God of your father; **do not fear** to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there" (Genesis 46:3). In other words, God said to Jacob, "Don't worry! I am running this."*
- Daniel: *"O man greatly beloved, **fear not!** Peace be to you; be strong, yes, be strong!" (Daniel 10:19).*
- Mary: *Then the angel said to her, "**Do not be afraid**, Mary, for you have found favor with God" (Luke 1:30). Do you know what that word "favor" is? It is grace. If you are saved, you have been graced with *grace*! Thus, there is no need to fear.*
- Peter: *And Jesus said to Simon, "**Do not be afraid**. From now on you will catch men" (Luke 5:10).*

- Paul: “**Do not be afraid**, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you” (Acts 27:24). That was when he was in the storm.

I love highlighting verses like these in my Bible so that when fearful times come, whatever shape they take, I have an instant source to remind me of God’s promises! The next time you are afraid, and fear comes over you as you feel alone and defeated, claim by faith the presence of the Lord, for He truly is with you.

Do you recall that Hebrews 13:5—“**I will never leave you nor forsake you**”—is from Joshua 1:5? God never changes: “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever*” (Hebrews 13:8). God said to Joshua, “I have been with you in the past, and I will never leave you. I am right by you, and I want you to experience My presence. When you feel My presence you will not fear.” He says the same to us today!

Isaiah 41:10 is a wonderful promise: “*Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.*” Have you caught the connection that “fear not” always comes with an “I am with you”? As parents, we like to say that to our children, don’t we? During storms in the night when my little ones have felt insecure, I have comforted them by saying, “Daddy’s here!” Oh, it has been so sweet! I remember a precious time when my youngest, Elizabeth, was troubled about something, so I went into her room and said, “I am here, Elizabeth!” I loved it when I saw her relax, crawl back in that tiny little bed, and snuggle up to her blanket once more. She felt as secure as if she was in Fort Knox. She simply had forgotten for a moment that Daddy was there, but once she was reassured, she could rest once more.

As a beloved child of God, when you are afraid, cry out to Him, “Abba, Father!” (Romans 8:15). Since “Abba” is the equivalent of the English words “Daddy” or “Papa,” listen for His comforting voice as He says to you, “Fear not! Daddy’s here!”

Make a choice to live in hope: “*Fear not!*” is the most repeated negative prohibition in the Bible, used no less than seventy-two times. Fear is not from God, for He *has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind* (2 Timothy 1:7). Fear comes from our flesh; it surrounds us in the world, and it is the realm of the devil. So when the signs of end times multiply, and you are feeling anxious or fearful, ask God for His peace *which surpasses all understanding* (Philippians 4:7).

Jesus says to you: “Do you want to live in hope during fearful times? Have a Word-filled life, and you will experience My presence as never before—for I am your eternal refuge and hope.”

I exhort you to meditate upon the words of this beautiful song, and then worshipfully sing these praises to the Lord!

Jesus the Very Thought of Thee

*Jesus, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far Thy face to see,
And in Thy presence rest.*

*No voice can sing, no heart can frame,
Nor can the mem'ry find
A sweeter sound than Jesus' name,
O Savior of mankind!*

*O Hope of ev'ry contrite heart!
O joy of all the meek!
To those who fall, how kind thou art!
How good to those who seek!*

*But what to those who find? Ah! This,
No tongue or pen can show
The love of Jesus, what it is
None but His loved ones know.*

—Latin Hymn, 12th Century,
Tr. Edward Caswall (1814–1878)

¹ Lee Siegel, “A Major Flare Shot Off the Sun Friday July 14, Pummeling Earth with the Biggest Solar-R Radiation Storm in Almost Six Years,” *Space.com* (July 14, 2000), accessed online at http://www.space.com/scienceastronomy/solarsystem/solar_storm_000713.html.

² The MacArthur Study Bible, Joshua 1:2, in loc.