

The Grim Reality of the Last Days

Scripture: Mark 13:1-13

Code: 41-66

Let's go to the gospel of Mark, our familiar location. When I have been kind of discussing what we might do after the gospel of Mark, thinking about after a little bit of a break this summer for me and Patricia, a little time away, we'll come back and it has been suggested to me by several people that we ought to do the gospel of John, and go back through and start again on the story of Christ from a completely different viewpoint, from the person of John, because it's been essentially 40 years since we had the opportunity to do that. So that's just how much people love the story of Christ. You cannot get enough. So I'm weighing that wonderful consideration.

I think we're all finding out that this is a very dangerous planet to live on. You...you can get caught in a war, a war that you really had nothing to do with and become a victim of the hatred and the greed and the struggle for power by people in high positions. We are watching essentially war stretching across the Middle East, very much aware of it. Now that war engages virtually the world in a no-fly zone of Libya, a coalition of nations coming against Muammar Gaddafi. Before it's all over, there will be thousands if not tens of thousands who die. That's really nothing new for us.

It's a dangerous world as well because you can be the victim of an earthquake, or a tsunami. You can be the victim of a famine because you can't get to the food or the food can't get to you because of a natural disaster. You can be the victim of a fire, or a flood, as we see repeated again and again throughout the world.

In spite of the fact that living in this world has its bliss and its blessing, and in spite of the fact that our world, our planet bears the marks of divine creation, and the benevolence of God is in the very fabric of life on this planet, in spite of the fact that riches are provided for us and provisions are provided for us, the backside of all those provisions puts us in really imminent danger. We can be killed by disease. We can be poisoned in our food. We can be radiated to death. All of these things are the backside of the blessings. We create civilizations, we create crops, we create dams to dam up the water. We harness all the resources in the world and yet we have to do everything we can to create the prevention of those very things destroying us. It is a very dangerous place to live. Disaster is all around us. War and death are ever present from a myriad of ways.

This, by the way is no surprise to anybody who understands the Bible. Human history is no surprise to God and it is no surprise to our Lord Jesus. If you go to Mark chapter 13, we're going to find Jesus on the last day of His public ministry in Jerusalem, Wednesday of Passion Week. On Thursday He

will prepare to celebrate the Passover with His disciples. On Friday He will be crucified. On Sunday He will be raised from the dead.

But here on this last day of public ministry, He has brought that public ministry to an end and now He is speaking to His disciples as of verse 43 in chapter 12, He calls His disciples to Him. And for the remainder of this day and the next day, He focuses on talking to them.

In this portion that is recorded for us by Matthew in Matthew 24 and 25, and also by Luke as we have recently seen in Luke 21, He gives a picture of history to come. This is prophetic. It is predictive. And it will be very familiar to you because this is exactly the way history has gone.

Now this will be a shock to the disciples. It will be the shock of all shocks to them, what our Lord says, because they are anticipating the Kingdom. After all, the King has arrived. They are convinced Jesus is the Son of God, that He is the Messiah and that He is the One who will establish His Kingdom. They believe that they are about to experience the establishment of that glorious Kingdom. They are familiar, for example, with Isaiah 9, that the government shall be on His shoulders, that He will literally take over the rule not only of Israel but of the world. They are familiar with Zechariah 14 which lays out in detail how the coming Messiah establishes His rule in the world. They're familiar with every Old Testament promise that looked forward to that Kingdom. Messiah is to come, establish the Kingdom, destroy all the enemies of God, destroy all the enemies of Israel, restore the glory of Jerusalem gather the Jews into the land, set up His Kingdom there, and from that vantage point rule the world.

Israel then would be the favored nation on the planet. Righteousness and peace and knowledge and truth would fill the earth. And life the way it was would be no more. Jesus clearly is the Messiah, announced by John the Baptist, validated by miracles, and truth teaching. He entered Jerusalem on that Monday of the very week that we're looking at now and He was given an appropriate messianic welcome. Everything looked like it was on schedule. And then somebody hit the pause button and we're still in the pause mode. What seemed to be imminent came to a halt.

So the question comes from the disciples in this passage, when is the Kingdom coming? They now know that rather than are talking about a Kingdom, Jesus has been talking about His death, specifically. The chief priests and the leaders of Israel will arrest Me and beat Me and mock Me and crucify Me and I will rise again. They have been told that repeatedly.

Looking beyond that, they assume that if that is the case, when He rises then He will immediately establish His Kingdom. That's what they expect. It's that expectation that's behind His words in chapter 13. Let's look at them.

Just so you get the full picture, let me read this to you. "As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, 'Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings.' And

Jesus said to him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down.'

"As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately. 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?' And Jesus began to say to them, 'See to it that no one misleads you. Many will come in My name saying, "I am He," and he will mislead many. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened, those things must take place but that is not yet the end, for nation will rise up against nation, and Kingdom against Kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places. There will also be famines. These things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.

"But be on your guard, for they will deliver you to the courts and you will be flogged in the synagogues and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake as a testimony to them. The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speaks but it is the Holy Spirit. Brother will betray brother to death, and the father his child, and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

"But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be, let the reader understand, then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. The one who is on the housetop must not go down and go in to get anything out of his house. And the one who is in a field must not turn back to get his coat, but woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days. But pray that it may not happen in winter, for those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now and never will. Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved, but for the sake of the elect whom He chose, He shortened the days. And then if anyone says to you, "Behold, here is the Christ," or "Behold, He is there," do not believe him, for false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show signs and wonders in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect. But take heed, behold, I have told you everything in advance.

"But in those days after the Tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light and the stars will be falling from heaven and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken, then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send forth the angels and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.

"Now learn the parable from the fig tree when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. Even so, you too when you see these things happening,

recognize that He is near, right at the door. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away but My words will not pass away, but of that day or hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son but the Father alone.

“Take heed, keep on the alert for you do not know when the appointed time will come. It is like a man away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning in case He could come suddenly and find you asleep. What I say to you, I say to all, be on the alert.”

This must have been a stunning experience for them to hear these words because it was clear from these words that it was going to be a rather significant amount of time have to pass to fulfill these things. Wars, rumors of wars that were going on all the time, indicate that there were more to come, not a war, or a rumor of wars. Kingdoms against Kingdoms, nations against nations, earthquakes in various places, various kinds of famines, persecution, extensive persecution from the Jews from the Gentiles in families, specific events start in verse 14, the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION, the time of the Tribulation, and only after that will come the sign of the return of the Lord Jesus.

So our Lord clarifies the issue of His return and establishing the Kingdom by saying, there will be time that passes, that time will manifest the same disastrous conditions that have been a part of life on this planet since the Fall of man. Wars and disasters and disorders and distress and it will go on for an extended period of time. Believers will be subjected to persecution and even martyrdom. False Christs, false prophets will fill up history with their deception before He comes.

So between the first coming of our Lord and the Second Coming, history will be marked by relentless trouble, trouble that will eventually will escalate in the period of the Tribulation, as it is called here, the final few years of human history in which trouble reaches absolutely epoch proportions.

If you break this passage up, you can break it up a number of ways, the first two verses talk about the destruction of the temple. And then verses 3 through 13, which we'll look at tonight, talk about present history. And then verses 14 through 23 talk about the future specific Tribulation time. And then from verse 24 on, it speaks of His Second Coming.

So in between the first and Second Coming, life on this planet will be marked by relentless trouble. That general period of time and the trouble that will be part of that period of time is described in verses 5 to 13 in specific and we'll see that in a moment.

Let me just add a footnote here. This is another evidence of our Lord's deity because the things that He said would be true are in fact true. He predicted the destruction of the temple in verses 1 and 2

and it was destroyed in 70 A.D. He predicted that not one stone would be on another, and that's exactly what happened in 70 A.D. and its never been rebuilt. He predicted the nature of life on a corrupt cursed planet, and everything He said is true. And if you want to get all that He said, you put Matthew and Mark and Luke's account together and you get the full picture of what life is like on this planet. All the things that He said would come to pass, have come to pass and they are very familiar to all of us.

We conclude from that, and this is an important thing to hear, the Bible always perfectly corresponds to reality. When the Bible says something will be a certain way, that is exactly how it will be. It will be what Scripture says it will be, both in general terms as well as in absolutely specific terms. You have a specific event in 70 A.D. that fulfills the words of our Lord and fulfills what the Scripture records. You have the very general description of time between the two comings of Christ that we obviously know is the way life really is. And in the future time of Tribulation, the very specific things mentioned there concerning the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION and the end of that period, the sign in the sky of the return of Jesus Christ, it will all be exactly the way the Scripture says it will be because any examination of history and comparing history with what Scripture says always validates the Scripture.

Let me say it again. The Bible always perfectly corresponds to reality. Whatever the Bible says about creation is in accord with reality. Whatever it says about God is in accord with reality. Whatever it says about man is in accord with reality. Whatever it says about history is the way it really is. And it cannot be denied.

Now as we look at the verses, we'll start at verse 1 and go down to verse 13, I just want to pull out a few points. First of all, our Lord predicts destruction, verses 1 and 2. As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, 'Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings,'" commenting on the temple where Jesus had been teaching each day that week. "And Jesus said to him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down.'"

Now we remember the familiar experience our Lord has in the temple. He basically comes to the temple on Monday after His triumphal entry, He returns to the temple on Tuesday and throws out all the buyers and sellers, all of the robbers that had filled up that place. Then He comes back on Wednesday and occupies that temple for the full day on Wednesday. And for one day in the midst of hundreds of years of history, that place is proclaiming the truth for a change because the truth Himself is holding class in the temple.

The end of the day, He leaves the temple. Heading east, because He was staying with His friends, Mary, Martha and Lazarus, who lived out the east side of the temple gate, the eastern gate, up over the tip of the Mount of Olives to the east, down into the little village of Bethany, a couple of miles away.

So as they leave the temple at the end of the day in the dusk, headed for Bethany, one of the disciples looks, perhaps all of them were looking at the beauty and the wonder of this incredible temple. As I told you this morning, it was overlaid with gold, it was a massive building. It had been being built for literally decades. By the time it was destroyed, it had been under construction for eighty years. It was a massive monument to the architectural brilliance and genius of Herod, as well as to his desire to demonstrate how wealthy he was. Coated with gold and covered with votive offerings of all kinds that demonstrated the rich gifts that had been given to add to the beauty of the building.

In the morning when you came over the top of the Mount of Olives, you couldn't even look at the building because the morning sun reflected off the gold would blind one. In the evening its glory was only slightly diminished, perhaps the most strikingly beautiful building in the ancient world. They're impressed. What wonderful stones and what a wonderful set of buildings. But Jesus responds by saying, "Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down."

You know, the disciples are fully aware of the apostasy of the place. They're fully aware of the corruption because they know what Jesus has done in there twice...once in the beginning of His ministry in John 2, and once just Tuesday of this week, He did essentially the same thing. They are aware of the corruption of the religious system of Israel. They have been the enemies of Jesus through His whole ministry and therefore they have been the enemies of His followers, His Apostles and His disciples.

There's an interesting portion of Scripture in Luke 19 that maybe should be noted at this juncture. Luke chapter 19 and verse 40, familiar. Jesus said, "I tell you, if these become silent," and He's referring to people who were saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest." They were hailing Christ. Jesus responds because the Pharisees reacted. The Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples, they shouldn't be saying this. They shouldn't be hailing You as the King."

But Jesus answered, "I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out in testimony to Me." What stones? What stones? The next verse. "When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it." Then He said in verse 43, "The days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you and surround you, and hem you in on every side and they will level you to the ground and your children within you and they will not leave in you one stone upon another because you didn't recognize the time of your visitation." And it's at that point that He entered the temple on that Tuesday to cleanse it.

What stones would cry out in testimony to Jesus? I'll tell you. The stones that the temple used to be made of. The stones that would cry out would be the stones lying in rubble, left by the judgment of God. All that beauty that those men saw as they left was a symbol of corrupt apostate religion. The

house of Israel, Jesus said, in Matthew 23:38 and 39, is left desolate. The cup of God's fury is full. It's all coming down. And in 70 A.D., that's exactly what happened.

So the first thing He predicts is destruction, destruction of that temple and as we all know, history records that's precisely what happened.

At that moment, we come to verse 3. They're reaching now the Mount of Olives and they sit there, opposite the temple...As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, opposite the temple. They're still looking at that building. Our Lord is looking with a mixture, holy anger, and sadness because, you remember, I just read that He wept over the city of Jerusalem. He said, "How often I would have gathered you but you would not." They have a perfect vantage point sitting on the Mount of Olives. If you're sitting on the Mount of Olives even today and you look directly west, you will see the temple wall, the temple ground. They would have seen the temple itself rising above that eastern wall. As they sit and look, having just heard from the lips of Christ that the whole thing is going to come down, their gaze must have been even intensified. Peter, James, John and Andrew, kind of the inner circle...Peter, James, John and Andrew, two sets of brothers who were part of the more intimate group that were around Jesus, they questioned Him privately. And this is their question, verse 4, "Tell us, when will these things be and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?" They want to know when the end of apostate Judaism is coming, but they also want to know when the establishment of the divine messianic kingdom is coming.

In fact, their question is bigger than the destruction of the temple because in Matthew 24:3 Matthew records that they asked about the coming of the end of the age...the coming of the end of the age. And the sign of the end of the age...and even the word "coming" means presence, *parousia*. When will there be divine presence, the end of this age, the end of this age, if you will, of apostasy and the fulfillment of all Kingdom promise, how soon will it come? And they're still asking this question 40 days after the Resurrection because in Acts chapter 1, after 40 days of being instructed by Jesus, they still ask the question...Will You at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel? They think maybe all it was going to be was 40 days of wars, rumors of wars, nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom, earthquakes, famines, etc., etc.

But our Lord gives them in this passage of Scripture the full answer. In fact, this is the longest answer recorded in Scripture to any question asked of our Lord and it's very important for us to understand the future.

Now just a note at the moment here. Our Lord is clearly pessimistic. There are people who think the world is going to get better. They have a label, they're called post-millennialists. That view says that the world is going to get better and better and better and go right into the Millennial Kingdom. And Christ will come at the end of the Millennial Kingdom. The Millennial Kingdom will be the product of the efforts of the church and the redeemed in the world. They will produce a better world. They take

over the institutions of man and they produce a better world, they produce the Kingdom and they give it to Christ.

Well, I'll promise you one thing, Jesus was not a post-millennialist. He certainly didn't believe things were going to get better and better and better. This is a long pessimistic look at history. He doesn't say when. In fact, He says, "No one knows, not even the Son of Man, only the Father." But He does define the nature of human experience while history waits for His return. While history is waiting for Him to come back, there will be a barrage of false Christs, false Messiahs, false teachers, false prophets, wars, disasters, persecution, all through human history and getting worse and worse and worse. And at the end, the explosion of these kinds of things will reach epoch proportions that are described in Revelation 6 through 19 in a seven-year period called a time of Tribulation. Even the latter half of that is a time of Great Tribulation, the last three and a half years being the worst of all.

These prophecies do not describe 70 A.D. That's impossible. And yet there are people called Preterists who say that everything that our Lord predicted here came to pass in 70 A.D., or by 70 A.D. That is an impossible interpretation, to be sure. And there's no need for that You can take Scripture at face value.

And by the way, this fits in to an essential understanding of the deity of our Lord, it validates His deity by being absolutely accurate. Another thing to say is the Second Coming is not an optional doctrine. The Second Coming is not a doctrine to be amused by. It is not a doctrine in which you have the freedom to take any view you want. The Lord said something, not everything. I know it's popular today to change views on the Second Coming. There's only one biblical view and there's only one accurate understanding of the Second Coming and that is the understanding of the Second Coming that is yielded by a historical, grammatical, contextual explanation, the meaning of the text...by the same rules you interpret everything else. I covered a lot of that in the book that I wrote called The Second Coming. The church lives in anticipation of Christ's return. The things that have been indicated here are happening now through all of human history, we aren't yet at the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION, the time of the Tribulation, the time of the Great Tribulation, or the return of Jesus Christ. It is impossible to stuff these things in to the event of 70 A.D. or any other event in the past.

So the Lord then begins with the immediate destruction of the temple, and He was absolutely accurate about that, as all Scripture is obviously, absolutely accurate.

The second thing He talks about as He discusses this period of time is that it will be marked by deception. The first thing is destruction of the temple and then deception, this being a general reality. Between the time He leaves and the time He returns, the world will be subjected to relentless deception by spiritual frauds. Verse 5, "Jesus said...this is the beginning of His response, 'See to it that no one misleads you.'"

To start with, when you begin to examine the future, make sure you don't get connected to people who are misinforming you. If you want a name, stay away from Nostradamus and the ilk that follow that particular genre. Don't follow deceivers, there will be many. The latest in the moment in which we live is Harold Camping(?) of Family Radio who has now established another date for the coming of Christ. He already established one and that was wrong. Now he's at it again. False teachers, false prophets, false Christs will fill up the centuries and they will make false prophecies about all kinds of things, do not be deceived. Do not be misled. How do you avoid being misled? By staying true to the Scripture.

Now these people who come along who want to convince you, some of them are even going to be so bold as to acknowledge themselves as Christ. Verse 6, "Many will come in My name saying, 'I am He,'" and mislead many. There will be Christ figures, the bizarre kind like Charles Manson and the People's Temple leader, Jones, are simply illustrations of the myriad of these false Christs, these people who claim to be Jesus. They will continue to deceive. They will all have followers who will follow them in many cases to death.

Go over to verse 22. You heard me read this, "False Christs, false prophets will arise, show signs and wonders in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect." They can't lead the elect astray but they will lead those who are not true believers to follow them.

I want to just talk about that for a moment, in a way that perhaps will be interesting to you. There are always false prophets, always false teachers, we know that, always people who claim to be Jesus, claim to be Jesus Christ, some more notable than others. But as you get to the end of human history and you get in to the period of time called the Tribulation, there is a specific fulfillment of this prophecy that I want you to understand, and it has to do with Islam.

Most people think of Islam as an utterly distinct religion from Christianity, with no connection to Christianity. We would think if someone is a Muslim, they have absolutely no connection to Christianity. And there are many religions that have no connection to Christianity, Hinduism has no connection to Christianity, Buddhism has no connection to Christianity, many others have no connection. It's amazing how many do connect because Satan wants to counterfeit and deceive and get as close to the truth as he can.

There are actually confessed evangelical people who think that. Muslims not only believe in God because they are monotheist, believing in one God, but who think that Muslims are okay because they actually believe in Jesus. And by the way, they do. Brian McClaren an Emerging Church heretic writer in his book *The Secret Message of Jesus* says, and I quote, "All Muslims regard Jesus as a great prophet. A shared reappraisal of Jesus' message could provide a common ground for urgently needed religious dialogue. This reappraisal of Jesus may be our own way of saving a number of

religions, including Christianity,” end quote.

So if we want to save Christianity and save other religions, we need to all get together and that should be easy for us to do because we can start with the Muslims because they already believe in Jesus. A popular speaker and author, Tony Campolo, says, quote: “When we listen to the Muslim mystics as they talk about Jesus and their love for Jesus, I must say it’s a lot closer to New Testament Christianity than a lot of Christians.” Really! So you think that the Muslim Jesus is the same Jesus?

I can help you with that because they describe Jesus. The Muslim Jesus plays a crucial role in Islamic eschatology. Now you do know that the Muslims have an eschatology. In other words they have a theology of the end. They know where they’re going, according to their writings. They know where they’re going.

Let me describe the Muslim Jesus to you. This is out of their own writings, the Koran and the Sunnah. The Koran is supposedly the word of Allah, actually the word of Satan, but they think it’s the word of Allah. The Sunnah...the Sunnah are the words of and the works of Mohammed. The Koran then constitutes their holy Scripture and the Sunnah, sometimes called the Hadith constitutes their holy tradition. Their theology comes out of the Koran and the Sunnah, just as Roman Catholic theology comes out of the Bible and Tradition, or Judaism comes out of the Old Testament and rabbinic tradition...the Muslims have two sources of authoritative truth.

In their system they have Jesus. Jesus was a man, he was not God. He did not die, he went to heaven like Elijah. He did not die, therefore he did not rise. He did not rise, therefore he did not provide an atonement for anyone because no one can provide an atonement for anyone else. He is a man. He is a prophet. He is nothing more. He went to heaven like Elijah. And he’s in heaven right now, standing alongside Allah, waiting for Allah to send him back. In their system, this man, this prophet Jesus who is now in heaven, never having died, plays a key role in the end times because he will return from heaven without dying, he will come back when Allah sends him back.

Now the question to ask, is why would Allah want to send Jesus back? He has a lot of prophets to pick from, why does he send Jesus back?

Answer...so that when he shows up he can correct all the Christians who have misunderstood who he is. The sources for this, again, are the Koran and the Sunnah. The great event of the coming of Christ, or coming of Jesus, is so that this prophet, this man who comes back can straighten out the misdirected, misguided, misconceiving Christians who think He was God who died and rose again and provided atonement...he’ll come back and straighten it out. And by the way, after he gets here, he’ll get married, have children and die and be buried next to Mohammed. That’s the Muslim Jesus.

In Islamic eschatology, there are three great signs of the end of history...three great signs. There are some lesser signs, or some minor signs, or some major signs. In their eschatology, again quoting their sources exclusively, there are three great signs of the end of history. And each of them is a man. Let me tell you about those three men.

First of all, the first man that will come in the end of history is the Mahdi...M-a-h-d-i. Sometimes he's called the Twelfth Imam. Every time Ahmadinejad over in Iran gives a speech, he gives glory to the Mahdi, glory to the Twelfth Imam, every time. He's waiting for the coming of the Mahdi.

What is he coming to do? He's coming, listen carefully, to slaughter all who will not worship Allah, convert to Islam. They are identified in their writings as pigs and dogs. And to establish the everlasting world dominating kingdom of Islam. That's what he will do.

The Mahdi, or the Twelfth Imam, that means the guided one, is the long-awaited savior. He is the establisher of the final Caliphate. The world must follow him as he takes over or he will destroy all enemies of Islam. He will come and he will carry on holy war and either you convert or you're killed by the Mahdi. He will have an army. His army will be a massive army and his army will go from nation to nation to punish the unbelievers. The holy writings of Islam say that this army will carry black flags. And on those black flags there will be one word and that one word will be the word Punishment. By the way, the Iranian army today carries black flags. They want to be ready for the coming of the Mahdi.

He will lead the army of black flags first to Israel, slaughter all the Jews, and then he will establish his rule in Jerusalem on the temple mount. That's what their literature says. Slaughter the Jews, establish his rule on the temple mount.

According to their holy writings, the Mahdi will bring rain and wind and crops and wealth and happiness so that all will love him and no one will speak of anyone but him. Their writings say the Mahdi will come and make, at first, a peace agreement with the Jews and the west for seven years. The reign of Mahdi will last seven years in which he establishes Islam on the earth.

Their holy writings say this, the Mahdi will come riding on a white horse, and it even says in their writings, "As it says in Revelation 6:1 and 2. Saddam Hussein, by the way, painted murals of this Mahdi on a white horse all over Baghdad. And he comes carrying a sword to kill the infidels.

When the Mahdi arrives, he will discover hidden scriptures, he will discover them, interestingly enough, somewhere near the Sea of Galilee and there will be there hidden scriptures, hidden gospels and a hidden Torah and they will be the true scriptures which will be used by the Mahdi to show the Jews and the Christians they were wrong, that their scriptures were the false scriptures.

Let me summarize. The Mahdi will be a messianic figure. He will be a descendant of Mohammed. He will be an unparalleled, unequaled leader. He will come out of a crisis of turmoil. He will take control of the world. He will establish a new world order. He will destroy all who resist him. He will invade many nations. He will make a seven-year peace treaty with the Jews. He will conquer Israel and massacre the Jews. He will establish Islamic world headquarters at Jerusalem. He will rule for seven years, establish Islam as the only religion. He will come on a white horse with supernatural power. He will be loved by all people on earth.

If that sounds familiar, that is a precise description of the biblical Antichrist...absolutely step-by-step-by-step-by-step. The Bible's Antichrist is their Mahdi. We know that the rider on the white horse in Revelation 6 is the Antichrist. They use that verse to describe their Mahdi.

Why am I giving you all this? Because the description of the Mahdi is exactly the description of the biblical Antichrist, the beast of Revelation 13, and you go into any kind of a study of that and you will find that all the details match up perfectly. The Bible's Antichrist is Islam's Savior and world conqueror who establishes a universal Islamic kingdom.

And there's a second sign, a second person, and it is Jesus. The Mahdi is not Jesus. The Mahdi is greater than Jesus, and that's important to their system because if you have somebody greater than Jesus then the Christians were wrong. So Jesus will return. Yes, Muslims believe that Jesus will come again. They believe in the return of Jesus, not the true Jesus, the Jesus of Islam, not God, didn't die, didn't rise, didn't provide a sacrifice for sin, but he does return. He's a prophet and he comes back and he has one purpose when he comes back and that is to assist and aid the Mahdi. He returns, listen to this, as a radical Muslim. He comes back as a radical Muslim. He will arrive, by the way, at a minaret near Damascus. And he will come back holding the wings of two angels who flew him down to meet the gathering army of the Mahdi in the east, the army of the black flags.

Jesus when he comes back will pray to the Mahdi who is greater than he. He will acknowledge the Mahdi as his lord. He will make a pilgrimage to Mecca. He will worship Allah and thus he will lead all Christians who will follow him to reject their notion of Jesus and accept the real Jesus who is nothing but a prophet and a man. He will establish worldwide Sharia law. He will become the greatest Muslim evangelist and he will be the final witness on the day of judgment against non-Muslims. Christians everywhere will affirm that they were wrong, that the gospel is wrong, the New Testament is wrong, He didn't die, He didn't rise, He isn't God, He isn't the Son of God. He Himself will come back and point out how wrong we've been. He will correct all misinterpretations and all misrepresentations.

Let me quote what their literature says. "He will shatter crosses." That's metaphoric for the destruction of the church, a symbol of Christianity being placed in the church. He will kill pigs. He will abolish the tax on non-Muslims because there won't be any living non-Muslims, can't tax dead people. And then

he will do one more thing. He will kill the Islamic Antichrist. He will kill the Islamic Antichrist. Then he will die and be buried by Mohammed, but not until he has destroyed Christianity by revealing who he really is.

Who is this? You compare what he does to the false prophet in the book of Revelation, chapter 13, 16, 19, 20 refer to the beast coming out of the earth, the false prophet, who aids and abets the Antichrist. He is as the Mahdi is the exact replica of the Antichrist, the Jesus prophet in Islam is the exact parallel to the false prophet who aids and abets the Antichrist. One of their writings says he espouses the cause of the Mahdi. He is the Mahdi's executioner. He is the Mahdi's enforcer. He is the Mahdi's prophet. And it is he who kills the Antichrist.

That leads me to the third person. The Antichrist will show up. The Muslims call him Dajjal, he is the great deceiver. He comes to earth on a mule and he's blind in one eye. He is an infidel. He is a false miracle worker, this Antichrist, this Islamic Antichrist. But you know who he claims to be? He claims to be Jesus, the son of God. He claims to be deity. He will attempt to stop the Mahdi and the true Jesus but the true Jesus will slaughter him.

This is their view of the true Christ. Our Jesus is their Antichrist. Our Antichrist is their redeemer. It is a satanic counterfeit that is in complete reverse. The army...this is a quote... "The army of Satan will be led by a person who will claim to be Jesus Christ." There will be a battle. The Muslim Jesus will fight the false Jesus and kill him and establish Islam forever. The truth is, the true Jesus will destroy the Antichrist and the false prophet and establish His Kingdom forever. This is Satan's complete counterfeit, Muslim world domination.

Now somebody might say, "Well, when you think about the future and what's going to happen in the world, don't we have a revived Roman Empire? Doesn't that mean the west? You remember that the image in Daniel 2 of the final world empire had two legs and the Roman Empire had the west and the east? You know, of course, if you know history that the western part of the Roman Empire basically dissolved and the east survived for a thousand years or more so that at the time of the New Testament, sixty percent of the Roman Empire was land that is now under Muslim control...at least 60 percent. The vast majority of the Roman Empire in New Testament times is today under Muslim control and Islam is moving across the west rapidly in Europe, isn't it?"

When you have a picture in Ezekiel 38, you have a picture of the Antichrist, Gog and you have the listing of eight nations, that will be a coalition for the Antichrist. All eight of those are Muslim nations, all eight of them. And they ring the Mediterranean to Libya.

In Revelation 17:9 to 11 it says there were six kingdoms and then a seventh and finally an eighth. What is the seventh? Well there's been a discussion about that, it well could be the Ottoman Turk Empire which lasted five hundred years and didn't really fall until the modern era. The Turkish Empire

was the last Caliphate which ended in 1923 and they're waiting for the restoration when the Mahdi comes.

So right at the very end somebody is going to say, "I'm Jesus." Somebody else is going to say, "I'm Jesus." Who you going to believe? That's just one form of this deception that will show up at the end, and even now it's deceiving people. There are a whole world of Muslims who think Jesus is someone He is not and consequently reject the true Jesus. Do not be deceived. There's a world of Muslims deceived about the person of Jesus Christ. You cannot accommodate that by saying, "Isn't that wonderful, they love Jesus." They don't. Any other Jesus than the true Jesus is not Jesus. And if you worship any other than the true Jesus, you are cursed.

So destruction and deception. Maybe just a few minutes on disaster, verses 7 and 8. This is so obvious. The third aspect of looking at the future, when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened, those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise up against nation and kingdom against kingdom.

This is human history. Wars, hot and cold wars between nations and kingdoms have been a reality through every year of history. And we're not getting any better. We're not really evolving too well, are we? Our Lord accurately foresaw the world would never know peace, never...never improve morally, never improve socially, never improve spiritually that it would rather devolve and devolve and devolve into worse and worse condition. By the way, as many as ninety-five percent of societies throughout history have engaged in war. It's ubiquitous. And as technology increases, so does killing power. And it's amazing to read the theories of why people make war. I won't explain them, I'll just list a few of them that I found. There's the Marxist theory which has to do with economic inequality. There's the evolutionary theory which has to do with the survival of the fittest. There's behavioral theory that there's some people who have an inherent violent bend. There's the demographic theory, the Malthusian theory it's called of expanding population that leads to conflict. There's the rationalistic theory, having to do with information asymmetry, some people just don't have enough information. Then there's the political science theory, a quest for security, and on and on and on. And we know that James says you war because you lust and because you hate.

Since 1985 up until recently, almost a half a million people have died every year in war. In World War II seventy-two million people died. In 755, let's go back to 755 to 763, a period of time, the great war in China, thirty-six million people died. In the Mongol Conquest in the thirteenth century, thirty to sixty million, twenty million in World War I and so it goes. And that is human history and it's not changing. It will escalate. Wait till we get to Revelation 6, 9, 16, and you see the wars at the end, massive death will take place, massive death.

And not only war in this category of disasters, there will be earthquakes in various places. There will also be famines. Luke's account says great earthquakes, *seismos megalos*, *mega* quakes, like the 9-

point quake 80 miles off the shore of Japan. Through history, millions and millions, countless millions have died in earthquakes. I read this week that there are one-half million earthquakes a year every year. You are on a shaky place. A hundred thousand of them are felt. But half a million register on Richter scales.

Luke 21 also adds there will be plagues, terrors and great signs from heaven. You want plagues, how about the black death, 1300's in Europe, carried by rats, killed 60 percent of the population of Europe in excess of a hundred million people. How about 40 million plus in the great influenza, the early twentieth century. Great signs from heaven, terrors, fires, diseases, heat, cold, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, drought. It's a dangerous place. And the worst is yet to come. Revelation 6 and Revelation 8, our Lord says, "Those things...in verse 7...must take place but that's not yet the end." It's the nature of living in a cursed planet. It's not yet the end. In fact, if you will look at the end of verse 8 it says they're merely the beginning of birth pangs. That's an analogy of a woman's contractions. They are separated, they are mild, and they intensify and intensify and intensify to a great degree just before birth. What we're seeing in human history is just the beginning, is just the mild contractions. Wait till you see what's going to happen just before the very end.

Two thousand years of these milder contractions will explode in the end, in the time of Tribulation described starting in verse 14 and more in detail in Revelation 6 through 19. Amazing predictions by our Lord...destruction, deception, disaster. A fourth, distress...distress. From conditions that effect the whole world, our Lord turns to conditions that effect believers. This, I'm sure, the disciples didn't want to hear. Verse 9, "Be on your guard, for they will deliver you to the courts. You will be flogged," and so he goes. Be on your guard. A shock to their senses. It's not going to get better, it's going to get worse. This isn't what they expected with the arrival of Messiah, it's not what they wanted. Persecution, distress to the believers.

Well, that's not new. He told them this was going to happen back in chapter 10. "I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. But beware of men for they will hand you over to the courts, scourge you in the synagogues." That was way back at the beginning of their time as disciples. But I think they probably thought, "Oh, we'll we've already suffered that. Yeah, we've already faced the hostility of the Jews." We've already seen their hatred and animosity, even though there is no record in the ministry of Jesus that they were ever hauled into court and scourged and flogged. Maybe they thought that was metaphoric talk and that was all past.

Not so, the next night, Thursday night when they gather in the Upper Room, our Lord is going to tell them for sure in case they were wondering that this is definitely still future. If the world hates you, John 15:18, you know it hated Me before you. A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. And then He says in chapter 16 verse 2, this is on Thursday evening in the Upper Room, "They'll make outcasts from the synagogues of you. They will

kill you thinking they are offering service to God.

You haven't yet experienced this. You will experience it and as 2 Timothy 3:12 says, "All who live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted," it will be worse and worse, it will escalate. Specifically they will deliver you to the courts and you'll be flogged in the synagogue. That's Jewish persecution. The courts of Israel were in synagogues. Courts were held in synagogues, cases were tried in synagogues by local appointed judges and scourgings were decreed in synagogues. And they were carried out and executed there. Never more than 40 lashes. That was the maximum, 40 lashes and they always gave 39 because they didn't want to miscount and go over the limit. That's why Paul says, "Five times I received 39 lashes from the Jews." He was hauled in to synagogues. He was accused of blasphemy and he was beaten.

But persecution will not only come from the Jews, and by the way, the book of Acts will give you the story of this, Acts 4, 5, 8, 12, 13, 21, 22, 25, 26, you'll have in all those chapters in the book of Acts, the record of Jewish persecution. But it won't only be Jewish execution, he tells them...go back to Mark...it will be Gentile persecution. The middle of verse 9, "You will stand before governors and kings for My sake as a testimony to them." Acts records that as well. Gentile persecution in chapter 16, 17, 18, 21, 24, 25 and 26 as well. So it will come at you from the Jews, come at you from the Gentiles.

By the way, when you get to Revelation 6, 7, 13, 17, 18, you see the worst persecution just before the Lord comes. The big picture is, false religion has massacred Christians and it's doing it right now as we speak in this modern world. Why do they do this? They do this because they hate Christ. That's why they do it. They resent Christ. They do it for My sake, verse 9, for My sake, because of Me. As Paul said, "I bear in my body the marks of Christ." Or as He said to the Colossians, "I fill up in my flesh the sufferings of Christ."

It's a serious thing. They're thinking the Kingdom and He's telling them it's not what you think...it's not what you think. But in the midst of all of it, this is so wonderful, in the midst of all of it, you will give a testimony to them because all that persecution will not break your faith, all that suffering will not cause you to deny your Christ. In the midst of all that suffering, grace will abound to you. Where there is this kind of persecution, where there is this kind of suffering, grace abounds. Second Corinthians 12 tells us that. The Lord gives us whatever grace we need, doesn't allow us to be tempted above we are able. It gives us a way of escape. And what will happen is, you will in the midst of that suffering give a testimony. We have a record of that, don't we? Foxes Little Book of Martyrs. I have three original volumes in there and they're this big....the record of all the people who gave testimony to the honor of Christ in the midst of facing death.

And with that warning comes a promise. The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. In spite of the hatred, the gospel is going to go to the ends of the world. They will not stamp it out. In fact, we

always say the blood of the martyrs becomes a seed of the church. In Acts 1:8 He said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel." Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the ends of the earth, be My witnesses.

We are two thousand years after that and the gospel has for all intents and purposes covered the world, hasn't it? It's covered the world. Two thousand years later it has spread to the ends of the globe. Just what Jesus said. You can't kill it. Just imagine this. He's sitting there with these twelve men, one of whom was going to betray Him in a few hours. That little group of nobodies and Jesus says, "From you the gospel will cover the globe." What a prophecy that has come to pass.

Matthew 24:14 then adds, "Then shall the end come." Persecution, yes. But in spite of that persecution, the promise that the gospel will cover the globe and then a personal promise in verse 11, "And when they arrest you, and when they hand you over, don't worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour for it is not you who speak but it is the Holy Spirit." Isn't that a wonderful promise? Sometimes you read about the martyrs singing hymns, giving testimony to Christ. I've spent years and years and years reading those testimonies and the power of the Holy Spirit would come upon them and they would utter things that in the human moment were just way beyond human strength and power. This is comfort.

So they get a promise and a comfort. None of your opponents, Luke 21:15 says, "None of your opponents will be able to refute it. Your testimony will be so powerful." That's what happened. Virtually all of the Apostles were martyred. The last of them, John, ended up in exile, a kind of permanent martyrdom. They were killed in a myriad of different ways, beheaded., crucified. That didn't stop the spread. And in the moment of their death, as with all true believers through history in the midst of persecution, the Spirit of God was there to lift them above human strength to say things that were basically generated out of their hearts by the work of the Holy Spirit.

In verse 12 Jesus says, "Not only will you be persecuted by the Jews and persecuted by the Gentiles, you'll be persecuted in your own family. Brother will betray brother to death. And a father his child and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death.

I just can't imagine how hard it was for them to hear this. They had so much hope. Oh there are people who say, "Well, Jesus came, made a good effort, and miserable failure." Huh, He predicted exactly the way history would go, exactly the way it would go. There would be literally animosity in a family.

Go back to Matthew 10, it's all in Matthew 10, it's in Matthew 14. How many times do you remember Jesus saying you have to hate your father, hate your mother, your sister, your brother, even your own life to be My disciple? This is reality. And again I say, reality corresponds to Scripture. Jesus was correct about the destruction of the temple. He was correct about endless deception, escalating at the

end so you have Jesus here and Jesus there. He was correct about disasters of all proportions escalating. He was correct about the distress of persecution and martyrdom and about the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth. He must be God. Only God knows that.

And then one final statement. Verse 13, "You'll be hated by all because of My name." It will be because of Me. "But the one who endures to the end will be saved. The one who endures to the end will be saved." What do you mean saved? Taken to glory. Taken to heaven. What do you mean the one who endures to the end? How can we survive? How can we handle this? How can we handle Jewish persecution, Gentile persecution, family hatred, family persecution, family execution? How can we handle it?

Well the truth is, the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. And what are we learning from that? That false Christians will not be able to handle it. By your endurance, Luke 21:19, you will gain your lives. You don't earn salvation by endurance. You prove you have the real thing by endurance. Superficial faith will collapse under persecution. "They went out from us because they were not of us," 1 John 2:19. This is basic gospel truth, authentic, God-given faith will endure because the Holy Spirit will provide strength, God will provide grace. Trouble, deception, persecution, suffering will burn up the chaff, it will reveal the shallow, weedy, rocky ground of false profession. And under these kinds of pressures, superficial interest in Christ will have no endurance. And so I say again, we don't earn our salvation by enduring, we don't keep our salvation by gritting our teeth and enduring. We demonstrate our salvation by enduring. We have a salvation that's a gift of grace. It's authenticated in the midst of suffering.

James, "Count it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials knowing the testing of your faith produces endurance." True faith is strengthened to endure.

Peter, 1 Peter 1, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to obtain an inheritance imperishable, undefiled, will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you who are protected by the power of God through faith, for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Then this, "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while if necessary you have been distressed by various trials so that the proof of your faith being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

The testing of your faith produces endurance. The testing of your faith proves to you that it's the real thing.

So our Lord gives warning, promise, comfort and even heavenly hope in the face of the way history inevitably must go. That covers all of history until the time of the Tribulation triggered by the event of

verse 14, which we'll look at next Sunday.

Father, we thank You for the wonderful time we've had tonight in Your Word. It stretches us, it expands our understanding and our thinking, and it challenges us. It draws us into Your Word to know more and to understand more. How we hunger to know that we might know You and that we might understand the world the way the world really is. Thank You for the reality of Your Word, the truthfulness of Your Word that gives us an accurate understanding of everything that's going on around us. It is a dangerous place to live, even though there are marks of Your benevolence and Your common grace all around us. It is a dangerous place to live. And we need to be sure that we have been rescued from that danger ultimately by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever might come, be it war or earthquake or famine, or fire, or flood, or persecution, or whatever may come, we know that we who have that faith which is a gift from You, the real thing, will endure to the end and enter in to Your glory. That ultimate promise secures us in the midst of everything.

We thank You for that as a gift of grace we acknowledge that we cannot earn it, we can do nothing to keep it, it is You who grant it and You who sustain it. We thank You for that. May we be faithful to so live that we would bring honor and make a testimony such as the martyrs through history have made to Your glory in the face of every difficulty. Be honored in every life, we pray. These things we ask for the glory of our Savior. Amen.

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