

## **The Future Tribulation**

Mark 13:14-23

41-67

It's the thirteenth chapter then of the gospel of Mark. As we come to this section before us, we are with our Lord Jesus and the disciples sitting on the Mount of Olives. It is the end of the day on Wednesday of Passion Week. On Friday He will die on the cross. On Sunday He will rise. On Thursday He will prepare for the Passover and celebrate the Passover meal Thursday evening with His disciples. And that's where the betrayal will occur, that night, and it will all come to fruition on Friday, He will be tried, He will be executed on the cross, as I said, to rise on Sunday.

So in a very real sense, this is a very, very important moment for our Lord. His final day of public teaching has been concluded, spent the whole day in the temple. He arrived in Jerusalem on Monday. On Tuesday He went in to attack and assault the temple and threw out the buyers and sellers that were there and prepared that temple for His entrance on Wednesday. Went in and used that full day to teach the truth in that place, first time in hundreds of years the truth had dominated the temple. But for a day He taught His final lessons, His final messages.

Then He pronounced judgment on the temple, judgment on Israel as well. He left the temple and His disciples followed Him. They went out the Eastern Gate, down the little bank, across the Kidron Valley, a little stream that runs there, up the slope to the Mount of Olives and He sat with His disciples on the Mount of Olives in the dusk of Wednesday. And they looked and they saw the temple fading in the glow of evening.

This prompted a question on the part of the disciples, as you remember. They asked Him privately in verse 4 of chapter 13, "When will these things be?" That is, the destruction of the temple, "And what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?" They wanted to know about the end of the age. Matthew's account of this, he says, they asked about the end of the age and His coming. Jesus had told them, "I'm going to die and rise again." Maybe they had come to some understanding of that, although they resisted it. But more importantly to them, whatever that meant, they wanted to see the establishment of the Kingdom and Jesus has just said to them, "This thing is coming down, not one stone will be left on another. This system will be destroyed, this temple will be destroyed and with it the city and the nation.

When is this all going to happen? When is the Kingdom coming? When are You going to establish Your rule and Your glory. That prompts a question for which our Lord gives the longest answer to any question asked Him in the gospels. He answers the question about what's going to happen before He comes back to establish His Kingdom? It's all is precipitated on the fact that there's a future Kingdom, a future return of Christ to establish His Kingdom on the earth to fulfill all messianic prophecy. And the Old Testament promised the Messiah would come, the Messiah would bring salvation. He would fulfill all the promises given to Abraham, all the promises given to David, all the extended promises related to the New Covenant, spoken to Ezekiel and to Jeremiah. In other words,

everything that the Old Testament promised in the Millennial Kingdom to come. The prophet Isaiah, even in chapter 11 of Isaiah and following, speaks of the glories of the Kingdom.

So they want to know when are You going to establish the Kingdom? You are the King, You are the Messiah, we know that. You are David's Son, but You are David's Lord. You are the Son of the living God. You are the Christ, the Messiah. When is the Kingdom coming?

That was on their minds. In answer to that, our Lord gives them a picture of the history between that evening and His Kingdom. What that means is our Lord tells them what the future is going to be. They didn't know how long that would be because He even says to them, "No one knows the day nor the hour, not even the Son of Man, but only the Father who is in heaven."

He didn't tell them when, but He told them what to expect. And He told us what to expect and future generations what to expect. Jesus gives a view of history here. This is very, very important because if He is who He says He is, God, and if He possesses what He says He possesses, all knowledge and all wisdom, and if He knows the future as only God knows the future, then what He predicts will be exactly accurate. It will be exactly and precisely accurate. And you will have to give testimony, along with every other human being on the planet who has any knowledge of what is going on that what He said is exactly what happens. This is the future.

As a point of entry into our discussion today, which will be of verses 14 to 23, we've already looked at the opening thirteen verses last time, but in looking at verses 14 to 23, just some general comments to kind of get us where we need to be.

It ought to be obvious to all of you now, I think it will be when I say this, that there is no hope for a better world. Are you pretty well settled in on that? Yeah, the world is not getting better, is it? More scary, more threatening, more dangerous, more deadly, more hopeless. Humanity is not headed toward a humanly engineered utopia. Folks, there is no age of Aquarius. There is no coming time of world peace. This is a cursed planet and it exists under the effects of sin and divine cursing. Not only does all creation groan because it is cursed, but sinners live in this creation are also cursed and so it is a compounded curse that makes life so difficult. The environment feels the effects of sin. The population feels the effects of sin. And collectively, mankind with all of his ingenious abilities and all of his mental powers, and all of his determination cannot restrain the deadly influences that are in the very DNA of this creation. The earth and its environment and its inhabitants makes survival difficult. We live on a dangerous planet and it is becoming more dangerous as it nears its final end. The second law of entropy, the law that tells us all things are breaking down tending toward disorder is at work at every level.

Human history itself has been a long ordeal of survival against the deadly and dominating effects of sin and corruption. And even as society advances scientifically, as it advances educationally, as it advances technologically, it does not advance morally. It does not advance spiritually. And it does not advance socially. Man is simply a more comfortable beast. Advancement materially from the discovery and the application of the powers and rich resources that are in this planet has in some way only made it more dangerous and increased the threats of death and killing force. Educators, religious leaders, politicians, social scientists, philosophers have relentlessly pursued the solution. Hitler thought he had the final solution, the problem is the Jews will exterminate him. That was not the final solution, or even any solution, but only a manifestation of how desperately we can't find a solution.

There's no advance. There's no advance in mankind socially. There's no advance spiritually. And there's no advance morally. Man is a beast, he is corrupt. His environment is corrupt and corrupting. He corrupts everything around him. And he doesn't get any better. Is this what life is supposed to be? Is this what it should be? Didn't Jesus come to change that? Didn't He come as the Son of God to fix that? Isn't something wrong here?

No. This is exactly life as Jesus predicted it would be because, as I said last Sunday night, the Bible always corresponds to reality. Whatever the Bible says is so is the way it really is because the author is God.

Let's go back and hear what Jesus said. They asked Him in verse 4 of Mark 13, to tell them when these things would be fulfilled. This is also, this message, recorded in Matthew 24, Matthew 25, Luke 21. You have to compare all those if you want the full picture. But they asked Him, "When will be the fulfillment of these things? The things of the end. What will be the sign of Your coming? they asked Him, Your presence, Your arrival, what do we look for? How do we know when the Kingdom will be established?"

Jesus began to say to them in verse 5, "See to it that no one misleads you." First of all, realize that there are going to be a lot of folks out there trying to deceive you about spiritual reality and about these things that have to do with eschatology, or the end. "Many...for example...will come in My name...verse 6 says...and mislead many." There will be many false Christs, false Messiah, false prophets, false teachers, they will abound all over the place to lead people astray about reality.

"You will also hear of wars and rumors of wars. Don't be frightened. Those things must take place, that's not yet the end. So there are going to be wars and rumors of wars and that doesn't even signal the end. Nation will rise up against nation, Kingdom against Kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places. There will also be famines. These things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. Be on your guard, they will deliver you to the courts, you'll be flogged in the synagogues. 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 speak 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."

In those verses, our Lord tells us what life will be like from that moment until His return, until the end of time. It will be characterized by deception, religious deception. It will be characterized by disaster, the disaster of war and cataclysmic natural disasters, like earthquakes and famines, and our Lord also said there would be pestilence, which means plagues. There will be signs in the sky which will have to do with hurricanes and rain floods and tornados and whatever other disasters come along. All of these things happening all the time in various places. These things are to be expected.

And there will be the persecution of believers. They will be killed by the Jews who will take them in to the synagogues, hold a trial against them, find them guilty and flog them in the synagogues. They will then be taken before the Gentiles and believers experience that. The Gentiles, governors and kings,

he refers there in verse 9, will hold court for them and persecute them and martyr them. They will actually be persecuted and even killed by family members. And so through all of history, you're going to have religious deception, you're going to have disasters of military proportions and natural proportions. And you're going to have persecution of believers. That is just the beginning. That is just the beginning. That's why at the end of verse 7 He says, "That's not yet the end." At the end of verse 8 He says, "This is merely the beginning of birth pangs." And He uses the analogy of labor pains, how when a woman is going to deliver a baby, she has pain, mild at first and somewhat separated by time...intervals are separated. As you get closer to the birth event, the intervals get closer and closer together, the pain gets more and more and more intense. That's the way to understand human history. It's going to be painful. At first the pain will be separated and moderated. But eventually as you get closer to the event of the Second Coming of Christ, the cataclysms will come rapid fire and the pain will be severe.

So our Lord is simply giving us the beginning in verses 5 through 13. Then you come to verse 14 and in verse 14 through 23 we find a specific event being referred to, very important specific event. In fact, this event is identified in verse 19, it is called there a time of Tribulation. It is a time of Tribulation, please notice, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now and never will. That means it is worse than anything that has ever happened, and that would even have to encompass the Noachic Flood. This is a series of cataclysmic events that have no parallel.

So if you're waiting for Utopia, it's not coming. It's painful to live in the world. The pain will increase and the intervals between the pain will shorten. This dangerous period in which we live continues until the Second Coming of Christ. But just before the Second Coming will be this time of Tribulation that will be more painful than any time before...like increasing labor pains faster and more severe and extreme will come the time of Tribulation. Never anything like it since creation. This will be an escalation of terrifying destructive judgments of massive proportions never experienced before. Jesus said, in this present time expect false teachers, false prophets, deceivers, false religion, false Christs, wars, rumors of wars...that would be hot wars, cold wars...earthquakes, terrors in the earth, terrors in the sky, famine, plagues, pestilence, persecution of believers, martyring believers, but in the future, all of that is going to escalate to a level never ever heard of and never ever imagined. All of that will be in a period identified in verse 19 as a time of Tribulation...a time of Tribulation.

That is a seven-year period, according to the prophet Daniel in Daniel chapter 9. It's called the seventieth week of Daniel. It's a seven-year period called the Tribulation. It is a time of deadly destruction. Satan is let loose, demons are let loose. Satan and demons do terrible damage to people, terrible destructive damage and death is brought upon people. The Antichrist shows up, the false prophet shows up, the Antichrist takes over and dominates the world with his power. He is aided and abetted by demons and by men who form his armies. All of this, however, though it is the activity of Satan and those associated with him, is the judgment of God. Behind it is God's judgment.

That period of seven years is clearly defined in Scripture...clearly. There are 69 weeks of Daniel's history from the Decree of Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem, to the coming of Messiah. You can track those 69 times seven years and you'll end up with Jesus came in to Jerusalem on this week. They're actual seven-year periods. That seventieth week, therefore, must be also a seven-year period. In fact, half way through that period comes the Great Tribulation and the last three and a half is the worst of all. The Bible refers to it as the three-and-a-half period, Daniel called it time, times and half a time...time is one, times is two, and half is one half, so it's three and a half, if you add it up. He said

it's a period of twelve hundred and ninety days, or twelve hundred and sixty days in Revelation. That again speaks to that three-and-a-half period. So it's clearly the second half of that seven years when it is most severe.

To put you in touch with what these things are going to be like, because we don't have that description from our Lord here, turn to Revelation chapter 6 because in Revelation 6 through 19, that period is described. Revelation 6 through 19 describes that period and the events of that period. We put in the Grace Today a little image of the two commentaries on Revelation, the condensed look of Revelation, Because the Time is Near, and the book on The Second Coming so you can dig a little more deeply than we'll be able to this morning. But I want you to get that character of that time which is to come, that time of Tribulation like the world has never, ever seen, Jesus said. Here's characteristics of it.

The best way to understand the characteristics of that period is to follow three sequences in the book of Revelation. Stay with me, now. There are seven seals, not animals, seals of a scroll, scrolls being sealed; there are seven trumpets and there are seven bowls. Those constitute judgments. And they unfold sequentially, almost telescopically. You have the seven seals and out of the seventh seal come the seven trumpets, out of the seventh trumpet come the seven bowls. The seven seals stretch over the whole period. The seven trumpets cover the middle point and beyond. And the seven bowls are all the rapid fire at the end. So these are the disastrous judgments that come, condensed in these images.

If you start in chapter 6, you see that the seven-sealed scroll is opened by the Lamb because it's a Title Deed to the earth, it's the Title Deed to the Kingdom. And the Lamb has the right to take the scroll and to open the scroll because He has the right to rule and reign. And so He unrolls the scroll, which is like the will and testament of God. In ancient times they would take a will and testament and they would roll it and seal it and roll it and seal it, and roll it and seal it so it couldn't be broken until the person was dead...and then it would be unsealed and his will would be revealed.

So the Lamb who is the heir to the throne of the world takes the seals and breaks them. And as they break, you get a sequence of what's going to happen in that seven years. First comes a rider on a white horse, he has a bow and a crown and this is the Antichrist. At the beginning of the seven years, the Antichrist establishes his power. You notice he has a bow and no arrows. He comes with peace. He comes with power, but with peace. And he establishes a peaceful covenant with Israel. He reaches the ascendancy and ruling in the world because he supposedly offers himself as the solution to the chaos. Doesn't take long for him to reveal who he really is, however, because following that first horse in the image and vision of John is a red horse in verse 4 and peace is taken from the earth and men begin to slaughter each other and a great sword is in the hand of this rider.

Then a third seal is broken and famine follows. The conditions of verse 6 are famine conditions. And then the fourth seal is broken and death and Hades come forth and a fourth of the earth are killed with the sword and famine and pestilence and the animal kingdom is turned loose on the world. A fourth of humanity will die in the early time of that seven years.

The fifth seal is broken and we hear from the martyrs who are beginning to be martyred, slaughtered for the Kingdom. The persecution that our Lord talked about will take place in great force.

The sixth seal is broken in verse 12 and there is an earthquake. An earthquake, a great earthquake and the sun becomes as black as sackcloth made of hair. The whole moon becomes like blood. The stars of the sky fell to the earth as a fig tree casts its unripped figs when shaken by a great wind. The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up. And every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

The kings of the earth, the great men, the commanders, the rich, strong, every slave and freeman hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains and said to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of the wrath is come and who is able to stand?" You can see the escalating horror by the time you get to that collapse of the sky and the earth in the sixth seal.

There is a seventh seal as well. And the seventh seal is in chapter 8 verse 1 and it is silence. While out of that seventh seal, seven trumpets come. And now the disasters come even more rapidly. Trumpet number 1 in verse 7 brings hail and fire, mixed with blood, thrown to the earth. A third of the earth is burned up. A third of the trees burned up. All the green grass burned up.

The second angel sounds and a great mountain burning with fire, some kind of an asteroid or meteor or whatever it is, thrown into the sea. A third of the sea became blood. A third of the creatures in the sea had life, died. A third of the ships are destroyed. A third angel sounds and another flaming torch comes out of heaven and falls on the fresh water and the springs of water called wormwood, a third of the waters become bitter. A fourth angel sounds, a third of the sun, a third of the moon changes everything, day, night, tides, seasons. A third of the stars are struck. A third of them darkened and the day wouldn't shine for a third of it and the night in the same way.

Chapter 9, the fifth angel sounds and hell opens up and belches out demons who are in the picture of locusts here and they come out with demon power. They have been bound but they're fully released in the time of the Tribulation. It's going to be so bad, demon infestation that verse 6 says, men will seek death and not find it, a long to die and death will flee from them.

Verse 13, the sixth angel sounds and verse 15 says a third of mankind will be killed. And there will be an army coming from the east numbering two hundred million and their path will be made ready.

Go over to chapter 11 verse 15, the seventh angel sounds and the message is given, the Kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He will reign forever and ever. When the seventh angel sounds, that's right at the very end and that seventh trumpet blast ushers in the six rapid-fire bowl judgments that are listed in chapter 16. Verse 2, the first one is poured out on the earth and unloads some malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image...the Antichrist. The second angel poured into the sea, not just a third but every living thing in the sea died. A third angel pours out his bowl and all the rivers and springs of water, all the fresh water becomes like blood. The fourth angel in verse 8 causes the sun to scorch men with fire and they blaspheme the name of God. The fifth angel pours out his bowl on the throne of the beast, the king, and becomes dark. They nod their tongues because of pain and they blaspheme the God of heaven because of their pain and their sores and didn't repent of their deeds. The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, water was dried up and the way would be prepared for the kings coming from the east, probably the army of two hundred million to come to Armageddon because Armageddon starts in the next verse.

Down in verse 17, the seventh angel's bowl is poured out. And then in verse 18, flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and a great earthquake such as there hadn't been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it and so mighty.

Now you can go back to Mark 13. That is a glimpse of the time of Tribulation and its escalating terrors and horrors. You say, "Will we be there?" I have good news for you. I think the New Testament teaches the church will be raptured before that time. That we'll be kept from that wrath, that we'll be taken out. But once we're out and that breaks loose, at the same time the gospel will be preached. It will be preached by 144 thousand Jews, twelve thousand from every tribe, according to Revelation 7. It will be preached by two powerful witnesses according to Revelation 11. It will be preached by an angel flying in the sky with the everlasting gospel. So powerful will the gospel be that there will be people saved out of every tongue, tribe, people and nation who will come out of that period. Israel will be saved. Two thirds of the Jews will be judged for unbelief, one third will be saved. There will be the greatest revival in any short period of time in human history.

But that is what is coming on the world.

Now, in thinking about that, let's look back at the text. Now we'll finally look at the text here. Three things to see...the event, the event that marks this time of Tribulation. How do we know when it comes? If all of history is going to be full of deception, false prophets, false teachers and deceivers, all of history full of disasters, wars, famines, earthquakes, all of history is going to be filled with persecution of believers, how do we know when this is on? How do we know that?

"When you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be, let the reader understand." When you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be, that's the event, a major event that will let everyone know you are in the time of Tribulation. When that happens, you will know you are in the time of Tribulation.

Please notice, this is not for the disciples. This was for readers. See it? "Let the reader understand." That is not added by some editor, that is what Mark wrote. This isn't going to happen until this is written down in Scripture and read. Therefore this is for a future generation of readers, not for those who are listening on the Mount of Olives, but for future readers of the New Testament.

And what would they look for? The ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION. You say, "What is that?" Well, if you go to Matthew's text on this, he says, "Which was spoken of by the prophet Daniel," Spoken of by the prophet Daniel.

Daniel spoke about it three times. We're not going to go to Daniel, that would be a whole tangent, I promise you. Daniel three times refers to the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION. But first let's talk about the word. Abomination means something blasphemous, something detestable, something abhorrent to God, something sacrilegious, something irrelevant. It's used to refer to immorality, idolatry, pagan religion. It's used in the Old Testament and it's used even in the book of Revelation at least three times. Anything that abominates God. Anything that blasphemes God. And at the same time, desolates, or destroys, or devastates. It's frequently used in Scripture to refer to something that was absolutely devastating.

There will come along, an act of blasphemy that will devastate, or desecrate. What is that? What is the blasphemous act that defiles and desecrates and is therefore hated by God? Well, he says here it occurs where it shouldn't be. Something is standing where it shouldn't be.

We know what Daniel is talking about because he mentions it, first of all, in Daniel 9:27. He says, "When the Antichrist comes, the prince who is to come, he will destroy the city and the sanctuary. He will attack Jerusalem and the restored temple." There will be a restored temple in the time of Tribulation. In fact, Daniel says he'll make a covenant with the Jews for seven years. He will be the guy who supposedly will bring the final Middle Eastern peace treaty. He will make a covenant but, Daniel says, in the middle, three and a half years. In the middle, he will break his covenant. He will attack Israel. He will begin to massacre the Jews. And he will set up his throne, the Antichrist, in the temple...in the time, and declare himself God.

By the way, you might want to know that in Islamic eschatology, the Mahdi, the Islamic Antichrist, who comes, it says, in their eschatological literature, their authoritative literature, when he comes he will set up his throne and establish world Islamic rule in Jerusalem on the temple mount. That's their eschatology. And by the way, he will be aided and abetted by a prophet and the prophet will be Jesus. That's what they say. Jesus, who will come back and say, "You were all wrong about me all the time, I didn't die, I didn't rise, I didn't pay for sin, I am a radical Muslim." And he will correct all the misunderstandings about him and he will report the whole world to the Mahdi. And anybody who doesn't worship the Mahdi will be massacred. That's Islamic eschatology.

Very consistent with Scripture. Their Messiah is the Bible's Antichrist. By the way, they have an Antichrist, too. Their Antichrist is a man who will come and say He's Jesus, the Son of God. Complete reversal.

So when the Antichrist comes, he's going to establish his rule in Jerusalem, in the temple, and he's going to place himself where he ought not to stand...in the temple devoted to God.

Chapter 12 of Daniel repeats this in detail, that he will come, two thirds of the Jews will be judged by God for unbelief, one third will believe. And the midpoint, time, times, and half a time, the Antichrist will come. He will desecrate the temple for a period of three and a half years, or as Revelation 11:2 says, 42 months. So those are two times Daniel refers to it. The first two, and one other time, and that's in chapter 11 verse 31, it's really important because in chapter 11 verse 31, Daniel has a very interesting mention of the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATIONS. In 11:31 he mentions the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION in reference to what Antiochus Epiphanes did. Antiochus Epiphanes was a Selucid king who on December 15, 167 came in to Israel and brought an army of a quarter of a million men, Selucid army. Slaughtered Jews, massacred Jews, 167 B.C., sacrificed pigs on the altar, splattered pig broth everywhere. Set up an idol to Zeus, banned sacrifice, stopped all temple worship, that according to 1 Maccabees. Wanted to establish the worship of Zeus in the temple. That is also an ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION and the reason Daniel gives that in the middle of the other two, is to give us a historic model of what this abomination will be. It will be a ruler who goes into the temple wanting to blaspheme and desecrate that which is associated with the true and living God and establish the worship of himself there. You have a model of it in Antiochus. That too is an abomination when he put an idol standing where it shouldn't stand.

That's exactly what's going to happen in the middle of the week. This guy will appear to be a peacemaker. He will break the peace. He will start the slaughter of the Jews. He will establish a

throne from which he will rule. That's Antichrist. You read more about him in the thirteenth chapter of Revelation and elsewhere. Well that's enough for now.

So how do you know when you're in the time of Tribulation? You know because of that event. Let that generation of readers know. That's the event. All of human history is labor pains. The first three and a half years of the Tribulation is increased frequency and increased intensity. However, from that event on, the frequency is rapid fire and the intensity is extreme as things come to a final end.

You say, "What's the final end?" The final end, we're going to talk about tonight. Go down to verse 24, "In those days after that Tribulation...then what?...then the sun goes out, the moon goes out, the stars all fall and then...verse 26 says...the Son of Man comes." So this goes right up to the coming of Christ.

So you look at human history and you say, "Wow, Jesus right, is it the way He said it would be?" It absolutely is. "Is it getting worse?" Yeah, evil men grow worse and worse and worse." An accumulated power of corruption. Yes. Is it conceivable or possible that there might be some powerful force, some massive force of people who are armed and dangerous and who hate the Jews and who hate the God of Israel who might come to Jerusalem and establish their rule there and their leader there. Does that sound like a foreign concept? It sounds pretty normal from the world that we live in now.

The Antichrist will make war with the saints, according to Revelation 13:7. He will also kill the Jews, according to Revelation 12:1 and 13, and 17. So there will be a massacre of great proportions. Again this is part of the judgment of God on unbelieving Israel. But even the believers that die will enter into the presence of the Lord, won't they? God will allow some of them to die. God won't allow all Israel to die. He saves a third. Why? He protects them. According to Revelation 12, what's going to happen is when the Antichrist unleashes his fury on the Jews, the immediate act of God is to take them and He'll fly them, it says, on great wings of an eagle. He'll fly them on the wings of an eagle to a place of refuge to protect them...to protect them.

Why have to protect them? You have to protect them, why? Well if they kill all of them, then there's nobody to go into the Kingdom. This is an earthly Kingdom, so you have to protect some people who will inherit the Kingdom. "Come, beloved of My father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you." That was our Lord's word in Matthew 25 in the same message.

So God is not going to allow an Antichrist to kill all the Jews. A third of them are going to be redeemed and many of them will be protected and they will be put in a place of refuge where the Antichrist can't get to them, so they can be protected to go into the Kingdom. The Antichrist will slaughter many believers. We see them crying under the altar, don't we, in chapter 6. "How long, O Lord, how long are You going to let this go on? But ,many of them will live and survive and go into the Kingdom." So the Kingdom will be populated by people living on earth.

You say, "What about the raptured church?" We come back with Christ when He comes back with ten thousand of His saints. He returns, we are here in our glorified form, they're here in their human form, we interact like angels did with Old Testament people. I hope I'm whetting your appetite to get the commentaries on Revelation and start reading, a lot to cover.

So that's the event. That's the event. What's the reaction to the event? What's the reaction? It's pretty simple. Verse 14 again, "When you see that event, then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains." Get out. "And the one who is in the housetop must not go down and get anything in the house, and the one who is in the field must not turn back to get his coat." In other words, it's just a tremendous urgency. And if you happen to be living in Israel at the time, and you know what I believe, I believe Israel will become a focal point even for the gospel and a focal point for Christian missions cause you're going to have 144 thousand Jews there, twelve thousand from every tribe, preaching the gospel. And the two witnesses in Jerusalem preaching in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is going to be converted, it says in chapter 11 of Revelation. That will be a world focal point for Christianity. So there will not only be Jews there who have come to Christ, there will be Gentiles there who come to Christ. And if you happen to be there and this abomination takes place, and the temple is overtaken and this is established there, the persecution begins, you get out. This is a dramatic change in strategy. This is a dramatic change.

How else can I say it but maybe like this. This is when the Great Commission is no longer in place. Normally our Lord would say, "When that hour comes, don't worry about what's going to happen to you." We just read that, right? Don't worry about what you're going to say, the Holy Spirit will give you words. Be bold, preach the gospel, proclaim the cross. But He doesn't say that anymore, not now, not here. Get out. Run for your life because by your fleeing, I'm going to preserve you for My Kingdom. This is when we no longer have an evangelistic obligation to the world. The gospel will then be preached by a flying angel, perhaps. Who knows what other means, plenty of available literatures, downloads, etc., etc. But as far as you're concerned, get out. No more take your cross, be bold, stand up, give witness, whatever. Just run. This will be, Luke says in Luke 21, a time of Great Tribulation. And as we read here, not like anything the world's ever seen. Get out.

And the urgency is also indicated by the statement in verse 18, "Pray that it's not in the winter, that you're not inhibited in your movement by the weather. And also, sad..verse 27...for those who are pregnant and nursing babies, cause they can't move fast." And also, our Lord said, "Pray that it's not on the Sabbath cause there may be restrictions on Sabbath law." In other words, the reaction is get out because what's triggered by this is the final seals, the rapid-fire trumpets and bold judgments. And in the middle of all of that, the slaughter by Antichrist and his forces as they react to the judgment of God and God wants to protect His own for His Kingdom.

And that's the third point...the protection. The event, the reaction, and the protection. Verse 19 says, "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."

I don't know how you can say it more clearly than that. Please, dear friend, this is not a description of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., as the Preterists say. If you don't know what that is, be thankful, be grateful, rejoice. And if you do know what it is, and you're confused, get the book, The Second Coming and read the first part of it. There are people who actually think all of this came to pass in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. All of it. There are people who actually think that was the Second Coming. Look, that was a disaster. But what the Romans did there could not be described as something that occurred that was worse than anything that occurred since the beginning of the creation. This can't describe some past event in one country by one army at one moment, and certainly doesn't do anything to explain the book of Revelation.

If you take that view, let me tell you what happens when you get to Revelation. You are lost. You are

hopelessly lost because you can't explain any of that. This is going to be an unparalleled time. It's so horrible that the Lord shortens it. Verse 20, "Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved for the sake of the elect whom He chose, He shortened the days." Why? Because He has to keep them alive. If it was prolonged, Antichrist would find them and go after them. Look, we live in a world where they can find anybody, right? You can be found anywhere you are, some GPS is on your head right now. If the Lord didn't shorten this, there wouldn't be anybody left for the Kingdom.

So God has to do this very, very precise work of judging the ungodly, destroying all the ungodly, allowing some believers to die, but at the same time protecting Jews and Gentiles to enter in to His earthly Kingdom, to then have families and populate the Kingdom, the Kingdom which He rules for a thousand years as indicated in the twentieth chapter of Revelation. So for the elect's sake, He shortens the days.

And during those shortened days, if anyone says to you, "Behold, here is Christ. Behold He's there." Don't believe them. That's exactly what Muslim eschatology says. They've got two Jesus' bounding around at the end. Don't believe that. False Christs will be everywhere. False prophets everywhere. Why? Because it's a perfect time for false prophets to arise because people are going to be so desperate for an understanding of this, for an explanation. Why is this happening? Where do we do, where do we go? And all the lying, satanic deceivers will drive them in the directly of Satan's deceptions, away from the truth.

And it will be fairly convincing because it says they will show signs and wonders in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect. Is it possible? Is it possible to lead the elect astray? No. That's the whole point of the sentence. It's really important that it says the elect in verse 20, and the elect in verse 22 because that puts the burden on God's choice, rather than on our faith. You know, if it said, "For the sake of the believers, He shortened it." Or if it said, "In order to lead astray, if possible, the believers." You might say, "Well somebody could stop believing. But if you look at it from God's standpoint and you are the chosen, that settles the issue. He's going to protect His own. He's going to protect His own.

So you have a word on election and you have a word on perseverance here. Run, flee, don't believe the wrong thing. That's the perseverance aspect of it. The doctrine of perseverance means that you obey and you act and you respond. You flee false teachers. You flee deceivers. You don't believe them. That's our side, that's the perseverance of the saints, the back side of that or the front side of that is that you're the elect and He holds you and He keeps you and He protects you. And the false Christ, as I said, will be very, very powerful. They will have all the forces of Satan behind them to be able to do signs and wonders. We don't know what the nature of those things are, but they will apparently be very convincing but not to the elect. Why? John 10 verse 5, listen to this, speaking of the elect, "They will, by no means, follow a stranger. But will flee from him because they do not know the voice of strangers," John 10:5. Jesus put it on the positive side, "My sheep hear My voice and they know Me."

You don't have to be fearful of false teachers. You know your Shepherd's voice, you know the truth. False Messiah is apparently going to actually infiltrate the ranks of those who flee. They're going to be saying, "Look, here's Christ," according to Matthew 24:26, "Here's Christ," "There's Christ," "Christ is in the desert." "Christ is in the inner room."

They'll all be lies, don't believe, don't come out, don't expose yourself to death. So how are we going to know when the truth Christ comes? Oh, you'll know. You'll know. Because in verse 24 the sun is going to go black, the moon is going to go black. The stars are going to go black. The whole powers of the heaven are going to be shaken and then you will see the sign of the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.

And by the way, Revelation 1:7 says, "Every eye will see Him." So don't worry. You know, it's just so strange for people to say, "Well actually Christ came in 70 A.D." Really. The whole world see Him? Who saw Him? They saw Titus, the Roman general. Now you have some guy who is now predicting Christ is coming, what is it? May something? May 21st, he's done it before and all these people who followed him got their pajamas on and sat on the roof and had to go down and get dressed because he didn't come. And they're actually cults that say He actually came but it was a private coming. No. Not going to be a private coming. Revelation 1:7, "He comes with clouds and every eye will see Him." Matthew 24:27, "As the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be." It's not going to be any secret, it's going to be blast across the entire sky. Plus, He's coming with ten thousand of His saints, Jude 14 says. And, in addition to that, didn't we read that the whole collapse of the universe is going to cause people to hide their faces from His coming? Revelation 6.

Well tonight we're going to talk about His coming at the end of the time of Tribulation. Luke says this, Luke 21:28, "When these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads for your redemption draws near." For that generation alive in the Tribulation, all we have to do is open the Bible to the Olivet Sermon of Jesus and the book of Revelation, they'll know exactly where they are. Without knowing the exact moment, the exact hour, precisely, they can certainly know the time they are in. and we know, dear friends, that we're not in that time. We're not in that time. There hasn't been an ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION. These things haven't unfolded. And as I said, the good news for us is I believe the Rapture of the church takes place first and we are protected from that hour when all these things take place on the earth.

Well that's an introductory course, that's like Eschatology 101. I remember when I...I'll close with this...I was in Kazakhstan and Kazakhstan is a long way from here and we were having a great week and I was trying to teach them everything about the church. And there were, there were, I think if I remember, sixteen hundred pastors from Central Asia who had never had a Pastors' Conference in their lives. This is right after the breakup of the Soviet Union. And the leadership came to me and they said, "Look, we're talking about the church, you're talking about the doctrines of the church, the life of the church, all things that are important, could you tell us the good part, please?"

And I said, "Yeah, I think it's all good, what do you mean the good part?" They said, "We want to know the future. We want to know the future for the church. What can we expect in the future."

So I said, "Wow, I have no idea what you believe, but eschatology is a pretty...a pretty diverse subject and..." And so I said, "Okay, I'm going to take Friday of that week and I'm going to teach you everything the Bible says about the future. I'm going to talk all day." And I think it was like eight hours on the future, eschatology. And I just had a couple of pages of kind of springboard notes to go everywhere and I got finished with it, about eight hours of eschatology to a bunch of people that I never had met before and didn't know anything about what they believe. And when it was all over, the leaders came and sat down with me and they said, "You believe exactly the way we do." I said, "Are you kidding? You mean you really...that's the way you believe?"

“Yeah, that’s the way we believe.” And I realized that we’ve been reading the Bible, that’s the reason we believe the same thing. You know, to believe something else, you’ve got to read something else. But if you’re reading the same book I’m reading, there it is. There it is. It was very gratifying, very encouraging. Also it’s nice to get out of there with your hide intact. So...but anyway...God’s people through the ages, and God’s people around the world today who look at the Scripture, see what the Scripture says. And that’s all I pointed you to today.

He is coming. He is coming. And before all this unleashes itself on the world, I believe the Lord’s going to collect His church. And if it looks like it could happen any time, these kinds of things, as the world shapes up into what looks like a revelation kind of staging, that means the Rapture of the church is all that closer. Be ready.

And the last verse our Lord says is, “I told you all these things in advance. You are without excuse. Go preach the message, right?”

Father, we thank You for the truth. We thank You for its powerful impact. We live in a world when people are fascinated with fantasy. How foolish. How foolish to speculate about the future. How foolish to speculate about fantasy, to live in a world of fantasy rather than a world of reality. Even Christian fiction about the future is pointless. Help us to live in the reality of Your Word and to understand what Your Word reveals. And knowing the terror of the Lord to persuade men while we still have an opportunity before we’re gone and before these things are unleashed on the world, help us to be faithful in the proclamation of the gospel, and calling people to salvation so they can escape the wrath to come. We thank You, Lord, for Your great, great goodness in setting our hearts at rest that the way things are going in the world doesn’t surprise You, it’s exactly the way You said it would be. And this affirms our trust and our confidence in Your Word. Lord, we thank You that You love us and that You sent Your Son to provide salvation for us and rescued us completely from the wrath to come. And may all of us who hear this message believe the gospel. May there be no one walking out of this place who is resisting the glorious salvation that You offer, but may each of us put our trust in Christ and then go forth to proclaim this truth. We pray in His name. Amen.

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