

Celestial Signs of the Coming Savior

Scripture: Luke 21:25-26

Code: 42-262

It is that time when we turn to the Word of God to hear the Word of the Lord. The text before us today is found in Luke chapter 21...Luke chapter 21. And as you know, if you've been studying the Word of God with us, the twenty-first chapter of Luke's gospel is about the return of Jesus Christ. In fact, it is our Lord's own words regarding His return. He had much to say about the Second Coming. He gave this message on the Mount of Olives in the evening on Wednesday of Passion Week. After teaching all day in the temple and being confronted by the leaders, He left, sat on the side of the Mount of Olives and spoke to the disciples concerning His Second Coming.

Thursday, the next day, they celebrated the Passover. Friday He was crucified. Sunday He rose from the dead. Forty days later He ascended to heaven where He has been until He returns. The world is very familiar, at least the western world, with the elements of Christmas, the story of the birth of Jesus Christ, the story of His first coming. Most people are familiar with Bethlehem and a manger and Joseph and Mary and no room in the inn and the star and angels and shepherds and wise men and perhaps even Herod and the slaughter of the innocents. Those are precious elements to the familiar story of our Lord's first coming.

All of those elements are part of a grand scheme of things which God has revealed in Scripture. There are at least 300 plus Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in the first coming of Jesus Christ. The details of His first coming then were laid out in the Old Testament. So were the details of His Second Coming. In fact, the Old Testament in many places and in many ways describes details not fulfilled in His first coming to be fulfilled in His Second Coming. The precision with which the details of His first coming were fulfilled validates the Old Testament and establishes the credibility of those details prophesied with regard to His Second Coming.

In fact, the Bible has so much to say about His Second Coming that essentially this morning we are going to hear from God Himself. I don't hesitate to read the Word of God to you, it is the Word of God. It is alive and powerful, sharper than any two edged sword, it is piercing, it divides asunder soul and spirit the thoughts and intents of the heart being revealed. It is like a fire, it is like a hammer. It burns, it shatters, but it also heals and saves. And so much of what we do this morning is going to be listening to the very Word of God concerning the return of Jesus Christ.

But let's begin in Luke 21 with verse 25 and listen to what Jesus said about His Second Coming. "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars. And upon the earth dismay among nations, in

perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves. Men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads because your redemption is drawing near.”

The Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Very different than the first time He came in a manger in humility, condescension and lowliness, not the next time. And maybe in God's perfect timing this is a great time to fill in the details about His return. What are those details? Well we just read some of them. Verse 25, “There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, roaring of the sea and waves and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”

Here you have a summary of the elements that will precede the return of Jesus Christ and this is our Lord's own summary. These are His words. Now this is really the climactic moment, this is the culmination of a long discourse that began all the way back in verse 8. And it began in response to questions that the disciples were asking. The questions were framed up mainly by the leading apostles who are familiar to us, but they probably echoed through the whole group as they formed and framed their own version of the question. Jesus had said He was going to die. He was going to rise. He was going to leave. And He was going to return and establish His Kingdom and glory. They wanted to know when. And so, in verse 7 they questioned Him saying, “Teacher, when therefore will these things be? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?”

Parallel to Luke's account of this discourse by Jesus is Matthew's account which takes up two chapters, Matthew 24 and 25, and Mark's account which is in Mark 13. So we have a lot of what Jesus said on this occasion, more extensive response than to any other question He was asked that's recorded in the New Testament. But what prompted it was the query of the disciples about when He was going to come and establish His Kingdom. Matthew 24 records in verse 3 that some of the disciples asked, “What will be the sign of Your coming and the end of the age?” So they were framing up the question in different ways and Jesus was giving them broad answers, repeating and clarifying Himself as He explained things, the composite of all that He said is included in the three gospel accounts.

Now as we look at verses 25 to 28 and we look at the very event of His return, it's going to be helpful for us to break it down into some manageable bites. And I want to do that by using just a key word. The first word is “sequence...sequence.” That word helps us to begin to understand. Verse 25, “And there will be...” Now stop there for a moment.

The end strikes me, it is a connective, it indicates to us that this is in some sequence. That's why our first word is indeed sequence. “And” takes us back, what came before this? Well, if you've been here, you know what came before. When the question was asked...what is going to be the sign of Your coming and what is going to indicate that these things are coming?...Jesus gave them sweeping

answers. First He said, "Between now and My Second Coming there will be some general realities that you need to know about. The first is deception." We saw that, didn't we, in verse 8. "There will come people in His name pretending to be Christ or to represent Christ, or to represent Christianity who will mislead people. Do not go after them." Don't follow false Messiahs and false forms of Christianity, they will proliferate. Jesus has said this in other ways on other occasions, here He says it again. Expect during this period, between the two comings, a proliferation of false Christianity. And indeed we have seen that to the degree that there is more false Christianity in the world than true Christianity, there are more false representatives of Christ than true ones, there are more false Christians than true Christians. This indeed has come to pass. It is escalating. It is growing. The false forms of Christianity are growing and growing. They will continue to flourish, reaching their apex just before the Lord returns in final forms of apostate Christianity that are described in the book of Revelation, as well as in some of the epistles of the New Testament.

The second thing our Lord said to expect was disasters. Not just deceptions, but disasters. There will be great earthquakes, plagues, famines, terrors...that has to do with everything that's not specifically already listed, in terms of weather, earthly catastrophes, natural disasters, etc., great signs from heaven. This is an indication of the calamities and the wars that will characterize human history and will continue to engulf the world and escalate and become worse at the very end.

The third thing He said to expect in this sweeping time between the two comings is an escalation of persecution. They will lay their hands on you, persecute you, deliver you to the synagogues and prisons, and in the case of the Jews, synagogues were the courts where they tried Christians and then incarcerated them in prisons. They will bring you before kings and governors, that speaks of Gentile persecution. Verse 17 says you will be hated by all on account of My name.

This is what to expect. Expect false forms of Christianity misrepresenting Me and the truth. Expect disasters globally, continually, getting worse at the very end. And expect to be persecuted through all history until I come. These things have happened. They continue to be visible to us today and they escalate and become worse and worse as time goes on and you get near the return of Christ.

Also in thinking of sequence, we move from verses 8 to 19, general characteristics of the period between the two comings, to a specific event in verse 20. Verses 20 to 24, Jesus says, "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand." That will indicate to you, verse 22, that the days of vengeance, an Old Testament term speaking of the day of the Lord and the vengeance of God, have begun. "This is the time," verse 22 says, "that all things which are written may be fulfilled." That's the consummation of everything. You'll know you're near the very end when for the final time Jerusalem is surrounded by armies and her desolation is near. Matthew and Mark add to this by telling us that what triggers that is called the abomination of desolation, mentioned by Daniel the prophet three times, which is a desecration of the holy place in a rebuilt temple which the Jews are using to worship God in which the Antichrist will set up an idol of himself

and demand that the whole world worship him and being then to turn on the Jews and to slaughter them. Genocide will be his goal, and then to slaughter Christians who have come to faith during that period by the preaching of the gospel around the world in an attempt to obliterate both the people of God, Israel, and the people of God, believers, from the earth. Sequence.

You have a long period of time described in verses 18 and 19. Then in verses 29 to 24 you have that period at the end called the time of Tribulation. In the middle of that time of Tribulation, which is a seven-year period, according to Daniel 9, in the middle of that period the Great Tribulation is launched. That's when the abomination of desolation takes place. And then for the final three and a half years, before the Lord comes, all hell breaks loose in this world. God judges and He uses Satan and He uses demons, and He uses cataclysmic events of all kinds to effect this final three and a half years of terror on the world. At the same time the gospel will be preached, people will believe.

So that's the sequence. Now it's implied in verse 25 in the word "and." It is implied that we're in the flow. But we don't have to depend on the implication because in the parallel text of Matthew 24:29 and of Mark 13:24, they both record that Jesus actually said, "After the Tribulation...after the Tribulation." So as that Tribulation comes to its culmination, as it comes to its end, these signs in the sun, moon and stars will occur. They come in a flurry at the end of the time of Tribulation just before Christ returns. Mark tells us that our Lord called this future a time of Tribulation. Matthew tells us He calls it a time of Great Tribulation. And both of them say it is something the world has never seen or imagined in its horror. So that's the sequence. There is a period of history described by deception, disaster, and the distress of persecution. Then at the end there's a time of Tribulation, Great Tribulation in which Antichrist with his massive national coalition comes to Jerusalem, establishes the worship of himself as the only religion tolerable in the world and then sets out to massacre the Jews, obliterating them from the earth. God uses him to judge the ungodly Jews, two thirds of whom are slaughtered. God protects one third who believe in Christ who are saved to go into the Kingdom. He also attempts to slaughter all believing Gentiles all over the world. And, of course, God protects many of His own who also go into the Kingdom. That launches the Great Tribulation. Once the Great Tribulation begins, that last three and a half years, God's judgments begin to escalate until finally at the end the signs indicated in verse 25 to 28 take place. That's the sequence. When evil demons and evil people have finished the course of their sin in rebellion, when all the worst of vice and iniquity has exhausted itself, the holocaust of final judgment from God will come. That's the sequence.

A second word, and an important one, staging...staging. This is the biggest event in the history of the world, that is because the whole world will see it. Only a few people ever saw Jesus at His first coming...His mother, His father, a few shepherds, perhaps a few people connected to the town of Bethlehem, only a few. The second time He comes, everyone on the face of the earth will know it. This is the greatest, most widespread event in the history of the world and God will set the stage, He will present the backdrop. The staging is indicated in verses 25 and 26. There will be clear indications in the world that this is coming.

Now I want you to think with me about the actual coming of Jesus, for a moment, so look at Acts 1:9. And then I want to back up from that to set the stage. In Acts 1:9, Luke who also wrote Acts, said this, "After Jesus had said these things, He was lifted up and while they were looking on and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold two men, two angels in white clothing stood beside them." Here they are on the Mount of Olives, all of a sudden Jesus ascends, physically, literally, bodily He goes up and into a cloud and He's gone. And they're gazing intently stunned, two angels appear and say this, verse 11, "Men of Galilee," that's where the disciples were from, "why do you stand looking into the sky?" Which may seem like a silly question, where would you be looking if somebody just took off? But it's the verb "for looking" that gives you the insight. It has to do with a fixed gaze which implies far more than just seeing something, they were losing the one most precious and their look was a serious intent look.

"This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." You watched Him go, the world will watch Him come. He went up, He will come down. He went up in a cloud, He will come down in a cloud. He went up from the Mount of Olives, He will come down to the Mount of Olives. Second Thessalonians chapter 1 and verses 5 to 10, the subject here, according to verse 5, is God's righteous judgment. According to verse 6, God is going to repay those who have afflicted His children and give them relief. Then come down to verse 7 and it says, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus and these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day and to be marveled at among all who have believed."

Here we find that when He comes, He comes in a cloud but He also comes in flaming fire. He comes accompanied by His mighty angels and the cloud is certainly a glory cloud. He comes to deal out judgment and retribution to those who do not know God and don't obey the gospel, to give them the penalty for their unbelief, eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power. But He also comes for a positive purpose to be glorified in His saints on that day and to be marveled out by all who believe. He will be seen by non-believers who will be consumed by the fire of His judgement. He will be seen by believers who will be gathered into His Kingdom and glorified with Him. For believers, according to Titus 2:13, we are looking for the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. According to Philippians 3:20, our citizenship is in heaven from which we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. First Thessalonians 1:10, "We are waiting for the Savior who will deliver us from the wrath to come."

He will come. He will come physically, literally, bodily down from heaven as He ascended up into heaven. But this has to be staged. And the bottom line is that before He comes, the universe goes black and out of that blackness comes Christ in blazing glory, the cloud of His own glory, flaming fire

in judgment to set up His Kingdom, staging. Let's look at the staging, verse 25. He says to these men, "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars." He says, "There will be roaring of the sea and the waves." And in verse 26, "The powers of the heavens will be shaken and then, after that stage is set, you will see the Son of Man." Vast cosmic catastrophes with unimaginable consequences. This is an environmental hell being described here. And it may be hard for us to grasp, but let me see if I can simplify it a little bit.

A faint idea of what it might be like can be gathered by a description that I found by a scientist who was trying to warn the world of the possibility of being bombarded by celestial bodies. What could happen, for example, if a rogue star came too near the earth? What could happen is a rogue planet came too near the earth? What could happen if a rogue moon came too near the planet or any other flotsam and jetsam careening out of space came near the earth?

Not necessarily hitting the earth, but coming so near the earth as to create the kind of waves that would affect the delicate balance of the earth, a scientist named Belakovsky(?) said that if something came very close to the earth, it could readily cause it to tilt a few degrees on its axis. It is so perfectly aligned on that axis that even the smallest tilt would produce this. Here is his description. "At that moment, an earthquake would make the earth shudder. Air and water would continue to move through inertia. Hurricanes would sweep the earth. The seas would rush over continents carrying gravel and sand and marine animals and casting them on the land. Heat would be developed. Rocks would melt. Volcanos would erupt. Lava would flow from fissures in the ruptured ground, covering vast land areas. Mountains would spring up from the plains and would travel and climb on the shoulders of other mountains, causing faults and rifts. Lakes would be tilted and emptied. Rivers would change their beds. Large land areas with all their inhabitants would slip under the sea. Forests would burn and the hurricane and wild seas would rest them from the ground from which they grew and pile them branch and root in huge heaps. Seas would turn into deserts, their waters flowing wildly away." Just a slight tilt.

The point is that God can with no effort send this universe into an environmental hell. And He will. But what are the signs in sun and moon and stars? He doesn't explain them. And what about the roaring of the sea and the waves, He doesn't explain that? And what about the powers of the heavens being shaken? He doesn't explain that. And the fact that He doesn't explain that and it's so dramatic and so horrific and the further fact that no disciple said to him, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, what are You talking about?" indicates to me that He was saying things with which they were familiar. They were familiar. Well it's unimaginable that all heavenly bodies would careen out of control in some kind of wild frenzy as the universe descends into cataclysmic chaos...it's unimaginable. But it wouldn't be new to the disciples because, you see, they were Old Testament Jews, they understood exactly what the Old Testament said about these things and understood it well. Why? Because these parts of the Old Testament were surely the most dramatic.

Let's get a little education in what they already knew. Turn to Isaiah 13. Let's find out what would have been familiar to them when they heard sun, moon, stars, seas, waves, powers of the heavens shaken. Surely they would have remembered well the familiar prophecy of Isaiah which was regularly...regularly read in their synagogues along with all the rest of the Old Testament. And it didn't require a lot of explanation and so I say to you this morning, what I read to you isn't going to require a lot of explanation either. This is the Word of the Lord.

Verse 6 of Isaiah 13. "Wail, for the day of the Lord is near." The Day of the Lord always refers to judgment. Any period of judgment, divine judgment, was a day in which the Lord acted. But there is a final day of the Lord, the eschatological day of the Lord that the prophets ultimately looked toward. Here it's defined. "Wail, for the Day of the Lord is near. It will come as destruction from the Almighty." There's the best biblical definition of the Day of the Lord. It is divine destruction. "Therefore all hands will fall limp and every man's heart will melt." Isn't that what Jesus said in Luke 21? That men will faint for fear and perplexity? "They will be terrified, says verse 8, pains and anguish will take hold of them, they will writhe like a woman in labor. They will look at one another in astonishment. Their faces aflame. Behold, the Day of the Lord is coming, cruel with fury and burning anger to make the land a desolation and He will exterminate its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light. The sun will be dark when it rises. And the moon will not shed its light. Thus I will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity. And I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud and abase the haughtiness of the ruthless. I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold and mankind than the gold of Ophir, the most rare gold of all. I will make the heavens tremble and the earth will be shaken from its place at the fury of the Lord of hosts in the day of His burning anger." It's a furious God that you see here, judgment to come in the end.

Isaiah, of course, spoke of judgment on Babylon, but that was only a small preview of what was to come on the whole earth and the whole world. Turn to chapter 24 of Isaiah, another chapter that would have been read regularly through all their lives in their synagogues and taught by their teachers. Isaiah 24 verse 1, "Behold, the Lord lays the earth waste, devastates it, distorts its surface and scatters its inhabitants. And the people will be like the priests, the servant like his master, the maid like her mistress, the buyer like the seller, the lender like the borrower, the creditor like the debtor." What does that mean? Everybody will be the same. This judgment has no regard for the normal variables in society. "The earth will be completely laid waste and completely despoiled, for the Lord has spoken this Word. The earth mourns and withers, the world fades and withers, the exalted of the people of the earth fade away. The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants for they transgress laws, violated statutes, broke the ever-lasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth and those who live in it are held guilty. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned and few men are left."

Sometimes I want to shout these verses back when I hear somebody say that God loves everybody and just wants the best for you. This is judgment pronounced on a sinful world. If you go over to verse 19 in that same chapter, well...verse 18, "And it will be that he who flees the report of disaster will fall into the pit. He who climbs out of the pit will be caught in the snare. There's no escaping. For the windows above are open and the foundations of the earth shake. The earth is broken asunder. The earth is split through. The earth is shaken violently. The earth reels to and fro like a drunkard and totters like a shack, for its transgressions are heavy on it and it will fall never to rise again. So it will happen in that day. The Lord will punish the host of heaven, that is wicked demons, fallen angels. The kings of the earth, the angels on high punished, the kings on the earth punished. They will be gathered together like the prisoners in the dungeon, confined in prison after many days will be punished. The moon will be abashed, the sun ashamed for the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and His glory will be before His elders."

This is the triumph of Christ over all the ungodly in the world. The extermination of sinners worldwide, the final day of the vengeance of God. The phenomena is exactly what our Lord spoke of. Turn to Joel chapter 2...Joel chapter 2. That second chapter of Joel begins with a call to judgment, "Blow a trumpet in Zion," Joel 2:1, "Blow a trumpet in Zion and sound an alarm on My holy mountain. Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the Day of the Lord is coming. Surely it is near. A day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness as the dawn is spread over the mountains. So there is a great and mighty people. There has never been anything like it, nor will there be after it, to the years of many generations."

It's a horrible time, the most horrible time. Go down to verse 10. "Before them the earth quakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and the moon grow dark, the stars lose their brightness." The picture is vivid. Down to verse 30 of chapter 2, "I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth blood, fire, columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness, the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who will escape as the Lord has said, even among the survivors whom the Lord calls." There will be people saved and rescued and taken in to His glorious Kingdom.

Chapter 3 identifies this more specifically even with the end time. "Behold, in those days and at that time, it's the time when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, looking at the end when He fulfills all His promises to them, I will gather all the nations." Again this has to be the worldwide gathering of final judgment. "I will bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat and I'll enter into judgment with them there on behalf of My people and My inheritance is real."

Then in verse 15, "In that judgment there will be multitudes, multitudes, verse 14, in the Valley of Decision, for the Day of the Lord is near in the Valley of Decision. The sun and moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness and the Lord roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem and

the heavens and the earth tremble. But the Lord is a refuge for His people and the stronghold to the sons of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.” And after this holocaust comes the Kingdom and verse 18 says, “In that day the mountains will drip with sweet wine, the hills will flow with milk. The brooks of Judah will flow with water. Spring will go out from the house of the Lord to water the Valley of Shittim,” etc.

The aftermath, when God renews the earth, regenerates it in His Kingdom. They knew all these passages. They would also have been familiar with Ezekiel 38, you need to look at that. I just want to read a few more. Give me another few minutes? Is that clock correct? That is impossible. Just a minute. Yes, Ezekiel 38, this is so important...Ezekiel 38, verse 19, looking at this future judgment, “In My zeal and in My blazing wrath, I declare that on that day there shall surely be a great earthquake in the land of Israel and the fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field and the creeping things that creep on the earth, all the men who are on the face of the earth will shake at My presence.” The earthquake starts in Jerusalem as He shakes Antichrist and his powers and the nations gather and it spreads to the earth. The mountains also will be thrown down, that's going to cause the roaring of the sea and waves. The steep pathways will collapse and every wall will fall to the ground. And I will call for a sword against him on all My mountains, declares the Lord God. Every man's sword will be against his brother and with pestilence and with blood I shall enter into judgment with him and I shall rain on him and his troops and on the many peoples who are with him, a torrential rain with hailstones, fire and brimstone. And I shall magnify Myself, sanctify Myself, and make Myself known in the sight of many nations and they will know that I am the Lord.”

Haggai, a little two chapters of the prophet Haggai, chapter 2, familiar verses, verses 6 and 7, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land, and I will shake all the nations and they will come with the wealth of all nations and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts.” He's going to take the spoil from the world after He shakes it and destroys the ungodly and He has a right to all of it. “The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, declares the Lord of hosts.”

Zephaniah, one little prophecy back, chapter 1, same thing, 14, chapter 1 verse 14, “Near is the great day of the Lord, near and coming very suddenly. Listen, the day of the Lord, you can almost hear it coming, listen, the day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and the high corner towers and I will bring distress on men so that they will walk like the blind because they have sinned against the Lord and their blood will be poured out like dust and their flesh like dung, nor neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them on the Day of the Lord's wrath and all the earth will be devoured in the fire of His jealousy for He will make a complete end, indeed a terrifying one of all the inhabitants of the earth.” That's it. That's the end.

Now, the simple disciples knew all those prophecies. And when Jesus said what He said, they knew of what He spoke...final judgment just before His return.

Turn to the book of Revelation, and I close with this. In the book of Revelation, John, one of those Apostles, was given either further revelation of these very same signs that strike the heavens, the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the waves. John is given visions of the final judgments at the end of the time of the Tribulation. Revelation 6 verse 12. In the seven-year Tribulation, judgments come out of seven seals, those seven seals stretch across the seven years. When you get toward the end and you come to the sixth and seventh seal, the judgments intensify. Here is the sixth seal, verse 12, "There was a great earthquake, the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair," black goats' hair, pitch black. The sun goes out. The whole moon becomes like blood which hardens into blackness. The stars of the sky fell to the earth as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. And the sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up. You unscroll a scroll like this and you let go of it and burrrrrrr, it rolls up. The sky rolls up like a scroll. Every mountain and island were moved out of their places. This has to be near the end because this is not really a survivable planet. The kings of the earth, the great men, the commanders, the rich, the strong, every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains and they 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 has come and who is able to stand?" This is the future of our planet.

Chapter 8 describes the seventh seal. "And out of the seventh seal which is the last seal, comes seven trumpets. The seven trumpets make up the seventh seal." And we'll look at just some of them. Go down to verse 5...or verse 6, "The seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them. The first sounded, there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, the kinds of things that would happen in a chaotic altered universe. They were thrown to the earth. A third of the earth was burned up. A third of the trees were burned up. All the green grass was burned up. The second angel sounded, something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, a third of the sea became blood. A third of the creatures in the sea that had life died. A third of the ships were destroyed. A third angel sounded, a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters and the name of the star is called Wormwood and a third of the waters became wormwood and many men died from the waters because they were made bitter. A fourth angel sounded and a third of the sun and a third of the moon, a third of the stars were smitten so that a third of them might be darkened and the day might not shine for a third of it and the night in the same way." This is horrific, the gradual extinguishing of sun, moon, stars. When it first takes place, day and night become skewed, things don't grow anymore, the tides are altered. Tsunamis occur everywhere. If you think that's bad, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound."

In chapter 16, out of the seventh trumpet comes seven bowls. These are the absolute final elements of judgment, the bowl judgments. Look at verse 8, “The fourth angel of chapter 16, the fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. And before it goes out, somehow God turns up its heat. Men were scorched with fierce heat. They blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, they did not repent so as to give Him glory. The fifth angel poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast, his kingdom because darkened and they gnawed their tongues because of pain.” Intense heat and then it goes out. “hey blasphemed again the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores and they did not repent of their deeds.”

Go over to verse 17. “The seventh angel...this is the final bowl of the final trumpet of the final seal...poured his bowl in the air, a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne saying, ‘It's over. It's one.’ There were flashes of lightning, sounds and peals of thunder, a great earthquake such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it and so mighty. And the great city was split into three parts and the cities of the nations collapsed, and Babylon the great was remembered before God to give her the cup of the wine of her fierce wrath and every island fled away and the mountains were not found and huge hailstones about a hundred pounds each came down from heaven upon men and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.”

So, the visions of John, the words of Jesus match perfectly with the Old Testament prophecy. This is the staging. The whole thing in chaos and pitch blackness. And into that comes Christ. And we'll see that next time.

Bow your head with me for a moment. The sad part of this is that there are people who have lived through the Tribulation in the future, heard the gospel, preached all over the world at that time, seen Israel repent, seen Gentiles from every tongue and tribe and people and nation repent, come to salvation, they then have been warned again and again and again and again that Jesus is coming in judgment. They have seen the seals. They have seen the trumpets. They have experienced the bowl judgments. And even when it comes down to the end. They are still blaspheming the God of heaven. If you think that somehow you can just kind of wait around until all that starts and come to Christ, you may end up with the blasphemers. This is the day of salvation. This is the day of repentance. This is the time to embrace Christ.

Father, thank You again for telling us these things. You give us these warnings. You lay this out unmistakably so that we can know what's coming. There's no mystery about the future of this planet. There's no mystery about how it's all coming to an end. It's all clear repeatedly. May we live in the light of this. And as we heard in the music, may we know that this is the time of grace, this is the hour of salvation, this is the time for us to take this wondrous reality of Christ coming into the world to die for our sins, to rise for our justification and proclaiming that message far and wide, give us a passion for the gospel. May we take it to the ends of the earth. May we beg men to be reconciled to God while

there is time. May many come to faith in Christ before they die or before they face this horrible judgment.

And for those of us who belong to You already, we look for that secret moment when You take us out of this world and deliver us from the time of Tribulation to come and You reward us at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Thank You, Lord, for saving us. Save sinners today for Your glory, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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