



Speaker:
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The End of the World

◀ Series: The Gospel of Mark • 46 of 46

5/2/2021 (SUN) | Bible: **Mark 13**

And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, "Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here." And Jesus answering said unto him, "Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?" And Jesus answering them began to say, "Take heed lest any man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, 'I am Christ' and shall deceive many. And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled. for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there shall be earthquakes in diverse places, and there shall be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows.

But take heed to yourselves, for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten. And ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. And the gospel must first be published among all nations. But when they shall lead you and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye, for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake, but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not (let him that readeth understand), then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains. And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take anything out of his house. And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days. And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

And then if any man shall say to you, 'Lo, here is Christ'; or 'Lo, he is there', believe him not, for false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.

But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he

send his angels and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

Now learn a parable of the fig tree. When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near. So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed. Watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh—at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning—lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

And what I say unto you I say unto all, ‘Watch’”.

This chapter’s quite unique in Mark’s gospel. It’s made up almost entirely of a single teaching monologue by Jesus, the largest one recorded.

Because Jesus had left the temple and gone and sat on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, the chapter’s often referred to as the Olivet discourse. It’s also known by some as the “Little Apocalypse”.

Reading it today, and those times you may have read this in the past, will have left you with some sort of impression of what the teaching’s all about. Everyone’s agreed it’s about something serious that’s going to happen at some point in the future. You may think it sounds like it’s referring to the destruction of Jerusalem, or even the second coming of Jesus Christ.

It’s not a short chapter, and it contains an abundance of material. I could easily spend six months or a year going through this single chapter bit by bit. But as I said last time, I want us to keep a certain momentum going as we work our way through this book.

Another reason for dealing with this in one go and so not giving it much attention is that it’s complex. It’s one of the most keenly debated sections in Mark’s gospel. It ties in with prophetic books like Daniel and Revelation, and there’s the potential to get bogged down trying to tie everything together. The truth is no interpretation of this passage is without difficulty. My job’s to present to you what I believe is the best interpretation.

When we consider prophecy in the Bible, there has emerged a number of different positions among Bible students. Briefly, we have those who believe all the prophecy in the Bible was fulfilled in the first century AD. Some believe prophecy was partly fulfilled back then and will be entirely fulfilled when Jesus returns. Others believe prophecies refer to events spread throughout history. And yet others believe all prophecy’s to be fulfilled in just a few years at the end of the world.

I remember RC Sproul saying he'd held most of these positions at different stages in his Christian life. That was a welcome admission, because I too have held different views, and it's fair to say my understanding's still evolving.

The view that these New Testament prophecies are all concerning events immediately prior to Jesus's return is sometimes called "Futurism". Even if you've never heard of this, you'll be aware of some of their beliefs. When you see Hollywood films about the end time Antichrist, Armageddon or the rapture of the saints away from the earth, all that stuff's based on Futurism.

From my perspective, this view of prophecy is the least satisfactory. It fails to accept the heavy use of symbolism in books like Revelation. And although you might think this rapture business has been around forever, it hasn't. It began in the 1820s with Edward Irving, a Scottish clergyman. It was then promoted by John Nelson Darby, a pastor in the sect known as the Plymouth Brethren. Darby had massive success with his teaching in the United States, and today his dispensationalism is widespread. To make matters worse, this teaching has made its way into the British church.

The issue with Mark 13 is this. Almost everyone agrees the first section's about the invasion and destruction of Jerusalem. By the time we get to verse 24 however, there's disagreement about whether Jesus is still talking about Jerusalem or about his return at the consummation of all things when he'll raise the dead.

It's important we remember we're reading a first century book with 21st-century vision. The first century hearers had an advantage over us, at least in this respect. And one of the principles I've fought to get across in my preaching is about the dramatic language the Bible uses sometimes. The tendency with modern readers is to see things more literally. When I preached through the book of Revelation, I had to assume the folks had previously been influenced by this literal viewpoint, and I encouraged people to put aside what they'd learned previously in order to take a fresh look at these Scriptures.

The single most important verse in understanding this passage is verse 30. **Jesus tells his listeners that some of them will get to see ALL these things take place.** So if you believe any of this chapter's to do with the distant future, you have a problem. And theologians have tried to interpret what Jesus said to get around this, but none of their efforts are persuasive. I believe Jesus meant what it looks like he meant: **everything in this chapter was to be fulfilled in the first century.**

The historian Eusebius wrote of his amazement when he saw Jesus's predictions unfolding in the approach to AD70. He asks, "How can one fail to acknowledge and wonder at the truly divine and extraordinary foreknowledge and prediction of our Saviour?"

In Revelation we observed a recurring theme. Sin was followed by God's judgement, but the Lord's people were ultimately delivered from trouble. This theme's also seen throughout the Old Testament, so it's no surprise we see it here.

Now I've finished this rather long introduction, I intend to treat this chapter in two ways. Firstly, I want to show why an early fulfilment of these prophecies is to be preferred. Secondly, I want to comment on the *pastoral* elements of what Jesus said. These warnings and encouragements he gave to his disciples are usually overshadowed by the exciting language of prophecy.

PART ONE: THE PROPHETIC

I'd like to go quite quickly through the first 23 verses. It's a much easier task to show these refer to the destruction of Jerusalem than the verses after that.

The first element we come to is in v6. It's about false messiahs. Prior to the Jewish revolt of AD66, a number of fake messiahs arose. One of them was Theudas. He even gets a mention in the book of Acts. He claimed to do miraculous signs, one of them being the parting of the Jordan River. Another was an Egyptian magician. These two alone were each able to generate a significant following among the people.

In verse seven, Jesus talks of **wars**. If you read this and wondered what was so unusual about there being wars, you'd be right. War *is* an ever-present evil in our world. When the disciples heard of a war which particularly troubled them, they were to understand this. War is normal, and they weren't to think the end was upon them.

In verse eight, Jesus mentions **earthquakes**. This is another phenomenon which has always happened and always will happen. You may have heard Futurists claim there's been a recent upsurge in earthquake activity, and they use this to persuade us their Great Tribulation is coming. There are two things we need to bear in mind: there's no proper evidence of an overall increase in frequency of earthquakes; and more importantly, *the Bible doesn't even mention* an increase in their frequency. Jesus simply says there *will be* earthquakes. And of course we have records showing earthquakes occurred in the first century, such as the one which levelled Pompeii in AD63.

Also in verse eight we see mention of **famines**, and these are also recorded for us. You can read about one of them in the 11th chapter of Acts which took place in the reign of Claudius.

In verse 10, Jesus talks of **the spread of the gospel**. Here we have an example of a verse that seems to be speaking about a worldwide mission. But diligent students of the Bible will be well aware the word "world" has a variety of meanings. Sometimes it refers to the Roman world. In one of Paul's letters, he says this about the evangelism which had taken place to that point:

But I say, *Have they not heard?* Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

Romans 10:18

Now obviously the gospel hadn't been taken to Argentina and Thailand and Alaska. He means the gospel had gone out throughout the Roman Empire. It even reached Western Europe, possibly even Britain. And all this took place before AD70.

In verse 14 we come across the abomination of desolation. “Abomination” is to do with sacred places being profaned with idols. That word “it” in the middle of the verse makes us think of an object. This will be clearer if I paraphrase that part: “When you see the abomination that causes desolation standing where HE does not belong...” It’s important to make this point because it directs us towards a person rather than, for example, a statue.

Are there any records of people profaning the temple in this period? There are several. One was Eliezer, a revolutionary who shed human blood in the temple. The best candidate though seems to be Phanni, who was illegitimately ordained as the high priest not long before Jerusalem was overrun by the Romans. I know some people say the abomination of desolation refers to the standards carried by Roman troops. These did end up standing in the temple, but only after Jerusalem had been conquered, so as a sign to escape Jerusalem it’d be useless. And again, the desecration was to be through a person not an object.

Verse 19 mentions a time of trouble. Because it says this tribulation was unprecedented, it’s led many to believe it can only be the judgement at the end of time. But the Bible uses that sort of language elsewhere for local events. The language of exaggeration’s used to highlight how momentous these events are.

Having said that, we shouldn’t think the overthrow of Jerusalem wasn’t unique. It was severe. The historian Josephus says the Romans crucified as many as 500 Jews every day during the siege to persuade the city’s defenders to surrender. Hundreds of thousands would be killed when the city fell. He tells us about the cannibalism that took place. One example was a woman who was so hungry she killed and cooked her own baby. It’s said some of the men of the city smelled the cooking and went to her home demanding she shared the meal with them.

You’ll note in verse 18 Jesus expresses the hope that the flight from Jerusalem doesn’t take place in the winter. The word can also refer to storms, and the flooding these caused would certainly make escape far more difficult.

Just to reinforce that the point of this was all about the destruction of Jerusalem, look again at verses 14 to 18. It’s pretty obvious what Jesus was referring to. He talks about the people of Judaea. He mentions Jews who are keeping the Sabbath. The description of the houses located Jesus’s message in his own time. We also remember this warning of his in Luke chapter 23:

But Jesus turning unto them, said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.”

Luke 23:28

Verse 24 is seen by some as a turning point. From this point onwards, some believe the end of time is referenced.

Certainly, the language is powerful. If readers aren’t familiar enough with their Bibles, they’d get the impression this potent language cannot possibly refer to a local event 2000

years ago. Those who are more familiar with their Bibles will likely be aware this apocalyptic language is used throughout Scripture for numerous other events.

Let's start with verses 24 and 25; a darkened sun and moon, and stars falling to earth. In the 21st-century, we now know enough about the nature of stars to force us to read these descriptions figuratively. The Futurists are looking out for comets, eclipses and the like, because of their commitment to reading everything literally.

There's nothing more common in Scripture than for great commotions on earth to be represented by disturbances in the heavens. Here are some examples:

- In the 13th chapter of Isaiah, the fall of Babylon is represented by the heavenly bodies being darkened.
- In Ezekiel 32, the destruction of Egypt is pictured as the heavens being covered, and the sun being clouded over.
- In Amos chapter 8, the Assyrian conquest of Israel is represented by the sun setting at midday, bringing darkness to the land.
- In Daniel's eighth chapter, the oppression of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes is symbolised by stars falling to earth.
- And in the second chapter of Joel, this present destruction of Jerusalem is pictured as wonders in the heavens and the earth and includes a dark sun and a blood red moon.

Interestingly, in the book of Acts we hear Peter describe current events as the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy:

But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: "And it shall come to pass in the last days", saith God, "I will pour out of my Spirit...and I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke. the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come".

Acts 2:16–20

When we see pictures like stars falling from heaven, we're to understand them as referring to complete reversals in the power structures on earth. With all the changes we see in history, the earth, moon, sun and stars are used in Scripture to represent continuity and stability. So when these reliable bodies are said to be shaken or removed, something momentous is happening.

The apostle Paul was fully expecting the coming calamity to take place even if not in his lifetime very soon afterwards:

But this I say, brethren: the time is short. It remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it. For the fashion of this world passeth away.

1 Corinthians 7:29–31

The world as we know it is about to end, he's saying.

Let's move on to verse 26. The Son of Man coming in the clouds. Once again, a hasty reading of this verse without any background study will lead to a faulty interpretation.

We'll see again how individual words can change the meaning of a verse. Jesus's phrase is a loose reference to a vision of Daniel:

I saw in the night visions and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him.

Daniel 7:13

You see that the Son of Man came, but he didn't come to earth! He came—or rather went—to God. The image was meant to conjure up the idea of a prince approaching the king and receiving all authority and power to rule and judge. (This is just a vision of course. None of this happened. It's a picture.)

When we come back to verse 26, Jesus uses the same word: "coming". But the word can mean coming or going. And it makes sense to understand it in the same way Daniel perceived it in his vision. Jesus "coming in the clouds" was never meant to be understood literally. In Isaiah, for example, the Lord is said to come to Egypt on a cloud. But it simply represented God's judgement.

The point is if we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture, we won't have to be committed to reading this verse 26 literally, as perhaps most believers do. Jesus *did* come in AD70. *He came in judgement.*

Did you notice this verse says "they" rather than "you"? He's speaking of a particular group of people. We haven't reached it yet, but when Jesus is put on trial, he says the following to his wicked accusers:

Jesus saith unto him, "Thou hast said. Nevertheless I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven".

Matthew 26:64

Whatever Jesus's coming means, the witnesses to it are his enemies. And whatever this interaction was between the Father and the son at this momentous time, God's enemies wouldn't see it. **But they would see the result of it**, which was the destruction of their beloved temple, the centre of the universe in their view. He told them at his trial he'd come in power and they'd see it, and that's exactly what happened!

Let's have a look at verse 27 now. We don't appreciate the difficulty Bible translators have, I don't think. When they come to a word that can be translated in a variety of ways, they have to make a judgement and choose one. This is an example. They had to decide whether to translate this word as "angels" or "messengers". They translated this exact same word as "messenger" when it referred to John the Baptist. Here, it was no doubt their doctrinal position that led them to conclude angels were meant.

A more satisfactory way of looking at it is that these angels are evangelists, who are described as messengers in the Bible. And I say this for the following reasons:

- For one, we know from elsewhere in Scripture the end time reaping will see the tares, or the weeds, gathered up for destruction, not the elect.
- The Son of Man remains in heaven while the gathering takes place.
- The Bible itself describes our coming together with Jesus as a type of gathering:
Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him
2 Thessalonians 2:1
- And let's just remind ourselves that this ingathering would take place within the next few decades, according to Jesus.

Overall, we can identify three events here: the destruction of the temple, the vindication of Jesus Christ, and an army of evangelists going to the nations testifying about the Messiah, the very thing the religion of the temple was unwilling to do.

Let's briefly have a look now at verse 31. Jesus talks about heaven and earth coming to an end. It won't surprise you that I'm suggesting we read this in the same way we examined the disturbances in heaven and earth. And once again there's evidence within the Scriptures themselves to show this language being used symbolically:

And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved. And the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll. And all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree.

Isaiah 34:4

The heavens disintegrating? Surely this must refer to the end of time. But no: **Isaiah was prophesying about the coming desolation of Edom.** And this is by no means the only example. So if we take Scripture as our guide, whenever we see a reference to the destruction of heaven and earth, our first thought should be that it's symbolising catastrophe. And it follows from this that when we read about a NEW heavens and a NEW earth, this is the New Age, the one that begins when the old one ends. I attempted to express this when we came across this phrase at the end of Revelation. I said the new heavens and new earth was symbolic, and they describe the whole gospel age. (This doesn't, of course deny the reality of a future paradise for us.)

Elsewhere, Jesus implies the Mosaic law would be in effect *until* heaven and earth have passed away.

For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Matthew 5:18

Now if we understand the passing of heaven and earth as occurring in the first century, it all makes sense. Jesus obeyed the Mosaic law. It was still in effect at that point. Not one jot or

tittle would be taken from it. But with the destruction of the temple—the passing away of heaven and earth as it were—the law came to an end, because all was fulfilled.

Take note of this: Jesus said this time of great trouble would never be repeated in the future. “Never seen before” and “never to be seen in the future” means this great tribulation cannot refer to something at the end of time, because there’d be no future. Just another reason to reject the Futurist view.

The events of AD70, and those leading up to it, were of cataclysmic proportions. It’s near impossible for us to understand the significance of it as the first century Jews did. History as they knew it was coming to an end, and the age of the Messiah was to begin.

This Jewish community in Judaea and Galilee was supposed to be favoured by God. Following the overthrow of Jerusalem in the sixth century BC, God allowed a remnant to return to the region. But their favoured status led them into overconfidence. And part of that confidence was tied into these grand buildings like the temple.

I’ve laid out a case then for these predictions having been fulfilled in the first century. We’ve seen how the warnings were directed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. We’ve used Scripture to interpret Scripture in showing the dramatic language Jesus used was symbolic. And again, we remember how Jesus said some of his listeners would survive to see all of this take place.

PART TWO: THE PASTORAL

I said at the start the pastoral side to what Jesus said has been neglected. But I’d suggest we view this whole chapter as being primarily pastoral. Jesus is more concerned with preparing his disciples for what was to come than anything else. You may not have noticed, but Jesus’s discourse begins with “take heed” and ends with “watch”. Let’s read them: verse five, “take heed”; verse seven, “be ye not troubled”; verse nine, “take heed”; verse 23, “take ye heed”; verse 33, “take ye heed”; verse 35, “watch”; and verse 37, “watch”.

So the chapter’s full of expressions of care for the disciples. He wants them to keep their eyes open for the signs of the end but doesn’t want them to be overly worried. An example is the advice he gives them should they end up in court. Many of his followers would be nervous about the prospect of giving a speech in a court. Jesus tells them the Holy Spirit will lead them when the time comes, so they’re not to worry. He also assures them that those who persevere in faith will be saved.

This talk Jesus had with his disciples was primarily for them. The events he predicted were to take place in their time, not ours. They were to look for signs that a cataclysm was coming—we’re not. But I’m confident God expects that we will take things like this and apply them to our own situation as best we can. So in the time we have left, I want to very briefly look at three warnings Jesus gave, and also see what we can learn from them.

False Christs

We read about this in verse six and in verses 21 and 22. Pretenders would show up claiming to be the Messiah. Some would do this to lead people into joining them in defending Jerusalem against the invaders.

Those latter two verses show us some of these gaining support. I can't say for certain whether they were genuine miracles or smoke and mirrors. But it's interesting to compare the use of these signs and wonders with the way Jesus used them. He never employed miracles to show off or force people into following him. On one occasion, when he was specifically asked to show a sign in the heavens to prove who he was, he declined. Not only that, but he also said the type of people who desire a sign like that are wicked!

I'm trusting no one gathering with us today is in danger of following any false Christs. A more real threat is in the form of false doctrine. Now I know many Christians like to throw their weight around and accuse people left right and centre of being heretics. They'll have some doctrine they especially like. It's the one they want to talk about all the time. And they convince themselves anyone who believes otherwise is a heretic.

Imagine I asked each of you to make a list of ten preachers who you trust to preach the Word of God faithfully. They wouldn't agree with each other on everything. So there'd be some doctrines held which are biblical, and preachers who don't agree with that view are technically preaching false doctrine.

Although I believe the doctrines I hold are biblical, it would be arrogant to think I've got everything right. I don't think it's possible for anyone to. But does that mean we should all count each other as promoters of false doctrine and steer clear of each other? Well of course that's silly. I think it's safe to say every Christian who has ever lived has believed some things which are unbiblical.

The warning of Jesus for us is to **beware that doctrine which strikes at his person or undermines his work**. So for example we should be wary when professing believers—preachers maybe—tell us Jesus Christ was divine but not human. We should be on our guard if one tries to persuade us we can be saved by putting our faith in someone other than Jesus.

Deciding what constitutes the false doctrine Jesus warned about and what are merely minor differences in interpretation isn't always easy. We must determine though to always use the word of God to tell us what's of vital importance and what's not.

Upheaval in the world

We read earlier about a time of great trouble coming in the first century. It culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. As we saw, it was preceded by trouble all over the place. The disciples were told not to worry. Hopefully, they had confidence that God was indeed sovereign over all these things.

Today, we still have wars. We hear about massacres. Governments are toppled. Tyrants arise. There are political shenanigans everywhere we look. There's looting and rioting in the United States.

People may lose control, but God never does. **He is sovereign.** And when we consider this alongside knowledge that he loves us immensely and brings about all things for our good, there shouldn't be any anxiety within us. And if we can learn this well enough, we're then in a position to help others who do feel anxious:

...who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

2 Corinthians 1:4

I'm sure I'm preaching to myself today more than anyone else. I know God is on his throne, but I still allow myself to get worried about things happening in the world. I worry about the power the tech giants have to suppress free speech. I worry about the ease governments now have to place their citizens under house arrest for the good of their health. I worry about the success so-called progressives have had in their bullying of society.

God is in control, Paul! The enemies of God will go only as far as God dictates. Wicked people are only able to gain political power by the ordination of God. Everything which happens in this world, whether good or bad, is playing a tiny part in the overall purposes of God.

Hatred

We read in our passage about persecution of the disciples. They were warned they'd end up in court, be assaulted, possibly be betrayed by their own families, and generally be hated. But they're told to persevere, after which they'll receive their eternal reward.

Does anyone believe they're hated by **all** people? Of course not. So I need to clarify this. For one thing, "all men" doesn't mean every individual without exception. The disciples will have encountered people who they were able to lead to Christ, and these obviously didn't hate them. But they'd be hated by *all kinds* of men. There wouldn't be a town or village they evangelised where they'd receive no opposition.

Another thing to remember is since most of you will not be involved in full-time evangelism, there's less potential for you to suffer that kind of persecution. But if you've been involved in any type of evangelism, and I expect you all have, you will at least have had a taste of opposition. Our twins were recently posting tracts through people's doors, and their young age didn't stop people coming out and throwing the tracts away in front of them.

But just like when we considered upheaval in this world, we again remind ourselves that God is sovereign even over the opposition that we face. He arranges these hostile encounters, and he expects you to act in a Christlike fashion. What that means is we show kindness to the people who hate us. We pray for them, that God would have mercy on them.

We're not to be anxious. We watch out for false doctrine but we don't worry about it. We pray for peace in this world but we don't fret when it's not present. We receive opposition but we comfort each other with the knowledge that this, like all things, is all part of the grand and wise purpose of God.

You know, one of the great benefits of understanding this chapter in the way I presented today is it's an antidote to all the hysteria and anxiety that Futurism generates. This great tribulation has passed. We're not forced to believe the world is in a terminal decline. There's no discouragement, thinking evangelism is becoming less and less effective. We can ignore those preachers who tell us they have everything worked out and can predict when Jesus is coming back. And we can expect Jesus at any time, with no complicated sequence of events having to take place first. We believe he could come today!

And do you know what? Even if I'm deluded...Even if I'm completely wrong in my interpretation...Even if everything plays out according to what the Futurists tell us; **we are God's elect. We are his precious children.** And that means he'll deliver us out of all troubles.

I'm grateful for your patience today. I've spoken longer than usual. Even if I haven't spoken entirely clearly, I hope there's been enough in this message to prompt you to think on these things and delve into the scriptures more.

Amen.