

Events of the Time

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- [0 : 0 0] If you'll please open your Bibles to the Gospel of Matthew in the 24th chapter, Matthew chapter 24.
- Matthew chapter 24.
- I know that will take a little bit longer, but I think it will help us as we begin to look at this passage. I've had to divide. I would love to look at it all at once, but I've had to divide it into at least two sermons for this.
- But let's look first, Matthew 24, beginning in verse 1, and again we'll read to verse 35. Jesus left the temple and was going away.
- When his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. But he answered them, You see all these, do you not?
- [1 : 1 7] Truly I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down. As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately saying, Tell us, when will these things be and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?
- And Jesus answered them, See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name saying, I am the Christ. And they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars, so that you are not alarmed.
- For this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.
- All these are but the beginnings of the birth pains. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.
- And then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.
- [2 : 3 1] But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.
- So, when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place, let the reader understand. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.
- Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house. And let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas, for women who are pregnant, and for those who are nursing infants in those days, pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.
- For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now. No, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved.

But for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short. Then if anyone says to you, look, here is the Christ, or there he is, do not believe it. For false Christ and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders.

[3 : 43] So it's to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. So if they say to you, look, he is in the wilderness, do not go out.

If they say, look, he's in the inner rooms, do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other.

From the fig tree, learn its lesson. As soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near at the very gates.

[4 : 53] Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father, again we want to ask for your Spirit's help in understanding your word, that you would bless the preaching of it, that you would help us to be open and receptive to the truth of what's being presented.

Lord, we pray that what's presented would be true and consistent with your word, and that you would help us to rightly perceive your meaning and what you say to the disciples here privately, but it's also given for our instruction.

We ask this in Christ's name. Amen. Now we've read the larger contents of the passage, and of course you know that there aren't really chapter divisions in the way the book was written originally.

So we know the contents isn't just chapter 24, but it extends back to chapter 23 and what we've seen already. And so let's remember, in chapter 23, what were we seeing?

[5 : 59] Well, Jesus had proclaimed the seven woes upon the scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders of the time. And he spoke of God leaving his temple.

Your house will be left to you desolate. And so we see God leaving his house desolate. In chapter 23, verse 38, see your house is left to you desolate.

And then I spoke last week, and we're seeing it now fulfilled. Jesus, we see beginning in chapter 21, verse 1, Jesus left the temple and was going away. And I said, I think this is a visual representation of God departing the temple.

God's leaving the temple. He's leaving it desolate. He's going away from the temple. And so we spoke of how Jesus doesn't return to the temple. He's leaving the temple for the last time, and he goes away.

The prophecy, one of the prophecies I read last week about God's glory leaving the temple is Ezekiel 11. It speaks of God not only leaving the temple, but also leaving Jerusalem.

[7 : 04] And we looked at it last week, but we read in verse 23, it says, And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain that is on the east side of the city. Again, we spoke of how this is being fulfilled.

Now, Jesus is leaving. He's walking away. And the next place we see him is on the east side of the city on the Mount of Olives. And he gives all of that discourse, which we began reading today.

And so while, at least I picture, while they're walking, they've left the temple, they're going, and I had to look at Google Maps. Maybe some of you have been to Israel, have seen this, but this is, they're leaving Jerusalem.

There's the Kidron Valley. You go through, and then you ascend up to the Mount of Olives. And so you can still, you can look at it on a map if you want to, but the Mount of Olives is raised up above so that you can actually see over the city wall.

And these days, you actually see the Dome of the Rock, the Muslim mosque that's been built where the temple was. But you can see the perspective from there. You can see pictures of it online. From the Mount of Olives, you being able to see back over and see the temple.

[8 : 11] And so as they're walking up the Mount of Olives, it's a great chance as they're going up, as they look back, the disciples say, look at the temple. There it is in all its glory.

And at that time, it would have been quite glorious, solid white stone. It's a beautiful presentation. And as they're walking up, they say to Jesus, look back at the temple.

And so they point back, and again, from a good vantage point, only for Jesus' response to be, see the temple, it's going to be flattened, utterly destroyed.

Every stone thrown down. And so what is it that Jesus is speaking of? I hope that this isn't controversial. We've got to get into some prophecy that's going to be difficult.

But I think where we're at this week, at least I stopped at a point that I thought wasn't too controversial. It may get worse next week. But for now, let's just say, what's Jesus speaking of? I think the obvious implication is the destruction of the temple in AD 70.

[9 : 13] The temple was destroyed. Jerusalem was destroyed. The nation of Israel ceased to be a nation. It was utterly destroyed. So Jesus here is speaking of the destruction of the temple in AD 70.

He says, look, the temple's going to be destroyed. When the disciples hear this, their expectation is that at some point, the temple could be destroyed.

But if it is, it's the end of the world. Because, and I want you still to think about the Messianic expectations that the disciples had, they're still struggling with their expectation that the Messiah is going to overthrow the Roman Empire.

So Jesus is coming. He's going to set up his throne here on earth. He's going to overthrow Rome and any other empire that will come up against him. And he will establish his kingdom here on earth sitting in the temple.

And so they're picturing when Jesus says the temple will be destroyed, their expectation is, well, yeah, at the end of the world. And so then we come to verse 3. They've made it to the top of the Mount of Olives.

[10 : 18] Maybe Jesus is sitting there and they're discussing it together. When's that going to happen? And maybe in some way they're asking, how long will Jesus' kingdom reign for?

How long will it be on this earth? And so they go and they ask Jesus' question, when are these things going to take place? Now, you understand as well as I do that when they say, when will these things take place, they're referring specifically back to what Jesus just said.

And in fact, there's almost no context given the passage. Look at verse 3. As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately saying, tell us, when will these things be? Well, what are these things?

There's no qualification here. It's pointing directly back to what Jesus just said, right? So again, I picture them walking up, Jesus says it, they think about it for a minute, they talk about it, they go, when are these things going to be?

When, again, these things refer to destruction of the temple that Jesus has just spoken of. But notice the question.

[11 : 20] Tell us, when will these things be? And then they go on. And what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? Now, I'm going to make an argument and I feel very confident in this argument and maybe not all of you are going to be as confident or as comfortable with it as I am.

But I think that the disciples have misunderstood what Jesus is communicating. And they're asking two questions here and Jesus understands these two questions.

He answers the two questions separately to try to fix their confusion. But the disciples are confused. From their perspective, their interpretation is, if the temple's destroyed, then you must be returning and this must be the end of the age, the final end of all things.

This is the end of the world. So they're equating the destruction of the temple with the end of the world. Do you understand? And they're asking Jesus, when will the temple be destroyed and you return and the end of the world come?

And Jesus, I think, graciously answers their question in two parts and says, these are two different things. The temple's going to be destroyed here and the end of the world is going to happen here.

[12 : 35] Does that make sense? And so, my argument all along as we look at verses 1-35, which we just read, is that Jesus, in this, excuse me, we look at 1-35, Jesus is speaking of the destruction of the temple.

After verse 35, he transitions and begins to speak of his return, his second coming and the end of the world as we understand it. Now, to further, I want to say, boost this argument, but that's not really fair because part of why I came to this is because of this.

But look with me again at verse 34 because I think this is essential and foundational for our understanding of the passage. It says, truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

So we picture that as the end parentheses, if you will. Jesus just said, here are some things I'm talking about. All these things will take place while this generation is still alive, before this generation dies off.

It's going to take place in this time period. Now that gives us a very narrow time period. But first let me say, if that's our end parentheses, then our beginning parentheses, if we look back to what we were looking at last week, look at verse 35 of chapter 23.

[13 : 58] Again, the context, he's just condemned the scribes and Pharisees. He says, so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and their altar.

Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. And so, Jesus begins, still speaking to the scribes and Pharisees in public, there's a judgment that's going to come upon you and all those who are guilty for the blood of all the prophets up until the last prophet, the Messiah himself, Jesus Christ, will be put to death in Jerusalem and when he's put to death, understand that there will be a judgment upon you and the religious leaders and the nation as a whole for the rejection of the prophets.

And that's going to come when? It's going to come upon this generation. So, this is it. All the accumulated sins of Israel as a nation, all the religious leaders, all the rejection of all the prophets that resulted in the exiles which were really minor judgments by comparison, all those sins accumulated, judgment will come upon this generation for those sins.

That's our starting parentheses. Then as they're walking away, look at the temple, it's going to be flattened in that judgment. He speaks about the judgment and he says, all this will come upon this generation.

So, if we picture those parentheses, the way I can't help but see the passage if I take this literally is that what Jesus is speaking of in verses, really chapter 23 all the way through verse 35 of chapter 25 is the destruction of, of, really Israel, but the destruction of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, the destruction of Israel as a nation.

[15 : 40] That judgment's coming upon them and that's what I see him speaking of in this passage. Okay, that's the big thesis for the presentation.

And so, when we see that phrase, this generation in the New Testament, everywhere else we see it in the New Testament, it always refers to Jesus' contemporaries.

There's not an easy way to try to spiritualize. When we say this generation, he means all the generation. No, that's not what that, we know what this generation means. And so, everywhere else it seems to speak of Jesus and his contemporaries.

Let's just think for a second of what is a generation? Some of you may know this in terms of the Old Testament, what was considered a generation? Almost universally throughout the Old Testament, what we see a generation communicated in years is what?

Forty years. So, remember the sin of the Israelites in the wilderness and God says to them, this generation is going to die in the wilderness.

[16 : 39] And how long did they wander in the wilderness? Forty years until that generation had died off. And so, forty years was given as a standard length in terms of how long a generation might persist before they die out.

And so, again, remarkably, we understand now historically that Jesus' crucifixion probably happened in 30 A.D. and the destruction of the temple happened in 70 A.D.

Almost exactly one generation. Before this generation passes, this is going to take place. So, Jesus, I would argue, is already setting up for you a time period in which we're going to see fulfillment of prophecy. It's going to happen within a forty-year period.

And in fact, it happens almost exactly at forty years. And so, in hindsight, hindsight makes it really easy to understand prophecy sometimes, doesn't it? We were talking earlier about how great it is when the New Testament interprets the Old Testament prophecies.

We're like, oh yeah, that's what that meant. Well, we can look back on that and say, well, when Jesus says this generation, forty years, of course, he's saying it's going to be almost exactly at forty years.

[17 : 43] and so, up to the point of verse thirty-four, I'm arguing that Jesus is answering their first question. When will the destruction of the temple take place?

He's not yet begun to try to answer the second question, which is, when will you return and what will be the end of the age or the end of the world? And so, the short answer that Jesus gives is they're asking them, when will the temple be destroyed?

And his answer is, within your lifetime, within a forty-year period, it's going to happen. You don't have to wait any longer, you can expect it to take longer than that, within a forty-year period, you're going to see the destruction of the temple.

And so, then starting with verse thirty-six, I believe he begins to answer the second question. And let me go ahead and give a spoiler for this is two, three weeks out from now. His spoiler, my spoiler for verse thirty-six is he says, no one will know.

So, they're asking, when will the temple be destroyed? He's saying, within forty years. And then he asks, okay, when will you return? And Jesus says, no one will know the time.

[18 : 51] In fact, I believe Jesus is arguing, there's no signs given to us to know when the times are. And I hope to make that argument more strongly as we go through this passage. But we'll look at that in a few weeks.

But as we look even at this, you're going to see some of that. And so, Jesus is telling them, the destruction of the temple can be dated by signs that will be given to you. But no such sign will be given for the return of man.

The son of man, no one knows the time, he says, not even the son of man knows the time for his return. So, again, everything we look at this week, I believe, this week and next week now, I believe is going to take place within the first seventy years of this, or before AD 70.

And as I said already, this is really a fulfillment of what we saw in chapter 23, God's judgment upon the religious leaders, and that the judgment is going to fall on this generation.

Also, think back to the parable of the tenants back in chapter 21, if you remember that, the tenants of the vineyard. We read in verse 43 of chapter 21, Jesus says, therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to people producing its fruits.

[20 : 04] And so, what we're seeing is the fulfillment of that. The kingdom of God is being taken away from the Jewish people and given to a people who will produce its fruits. That will include some Jews, but in terms of the people of God, it's no longer Israel as a nation.

That is ending and it will officially end in AD 70, although Jesus is already bringing it to an end. The people will be destroyed. There's no special place for them. The reality is, God's people now is the church.

I'm getting ahead of myself, but we do see in Romans 11, that I believe there will be a saving of Jews being brought back into the church, but not because they're a special nation or there's some separate salvation for them, but because they will see Christ for the Messiah and they will repent of that and they will believe in Christ and become a part of the church.

All right, so I feel like I've said a lot already and haven't gotten very far. Okay, let's look, let's begin looking at the passage, verse 4. My argument or my point in this part of our passage or part of the sermon is that these are not signs.

James Montgomery Boyce in his commentary actually titled this section Signs That Are Not Signs, which I thought was a good way of saying it. I would prefer we say events that are not signs or we could entitle this point of the sermon Don't Be Led Astray.

[21 : 28] So Jesus is warning his disciples he doesn't want them to be led astray so he's warning them what's going to take place that they won't be deceived. And so his whole point in everything we're going to look at 4 through 14, that's as far as I hope to get this week and I hope I can even get that far that we'll finish this sermon.

But 4 through 14 I think Jesus' whole argument in this passage is don't be led astray by premature speculation, by false speculation about what's going to happen.

If that's true then what Jesus is describing verses 4 through 14 is the normal course of things in the church age. In the age in which we're living which I would argue is the eschaton spoken of in the Old Testament.

We're living in the end times. What should we expect the end times to be like? Jesus says here are the typical things that are going to take place in the end times. Here are the things that are going to take place in your lifetime and don't be alarmed by these things.

These things tell you nothing about the destruction of Jerusalem and I would argue even though we said verse 34 says all these things will take place in this generation. I think what he's saying in 4 through 14 is these things aren't signs because this is what's typical of the age not just to 80-70 but until Christ returns here are the typical things that are going to take place that we ought not be alarmed about.

[22 : 57] So these things will not tell you when the end will come. They're not going to tell you when the destruction of the temple will take place. And so he says basically don't be misled by false teachers and false messiahs.

And if we are careful in how we define this the false teachers and false messiahs here false teachers are those who say here are signs that Jesus is about to return. Now I'll have plenty of time to apply that later but guys you know those people exist.

Don't look at TBN but if you do there's always somebody there who's got a chart who's going to show you here's how we can tell when Jesus is coming back follow this chart and that chart or every time we have a president elected he's the antichrist we know that the ends come like Jesus was primarily concerned with the covenant people of God America.

No. Right? Jesus wasn't prophesying about America primarily. You understand? And so there are people doing that all the time. Last year maybe still now there were a number of earthquakes and we had a pandemic a global pandemic.

What are people saying? It's the end of the world! Jesus is returning this year! My argument and what so bear with me I'm going to build on this as we go through the passage but Jesus says not only are these things not signs he says no sign is going to be given for his return.

[24 : 15] We're to be expecting it we're to be hastening the return of the Lord but these things aren't signs of his return. And so people who are saying they are are false teachers. Harold Camping you guys remember Harold Camping?

He had billboards up I think he predicted the return of Christ on six different he gave the exact date Christ is returning. Six times he got every one of them wrong. Not looking good he's now no longer alive.

But he kept predicting Jesus' return I think what Jesus is teaching us in this passage don't be deceived by such people. Don't fall for such things. Don't look at current events as somehow evidence that Jesus is about to return.

And before again I'm putting it more for our age Jesus' immediate context is this the temple will be destroyed. don't be deceived by wars and we're going to talk about each of these wars, earthquakes and things like that people coming and saying to the Christ don't run out to be with that Christ he's a false one don't think that the temple is about to be destroyed because there's been an earthquake this year or a famine.

Those things aren't going to tell you that the temple is going to be destroyed and so likewise typologically they form a pattern for us as well to say that's typical for this age and that we ought not expect the return of Christ because of these things.

[25 : 33] Summary is don't speculate based on current events. He says that in verse 3 I'm sorry that was a question in verse 3 but he speaks of in verse 6 but the end is not yet.

One challenge we're going to have all along is figuring out what does Jesus mean when he says the end because that term is used various ways I think he may be using a flattening or a double meaning here but at the very least we have to understand in verse 6 the meaning of the end is the end of Jerusalem the temple and Israel as a nation.

So when you see these things don't be alarmed the end has not yet come. All these things will not tell you that Jerusalem is about to be destroyed and as I said I think we can apply that further and say these things are typical for our age too and they don't imply that Christ is about to return.

Christ is going to return don't misunderstand but these things aren't telling us when it's going to happen. So such things will characterize the age from 30 to 70 AD as well we can say as an extension the church age or the eschaton in general so avoid speculation don't be deceived by others and then he goes into the events of the time which I'm going to try to go through pretty quickly.

what I want to do is show you that Jesus I believe is speaking of the time period between 30 and 70 AD and how do we see these things happening during that time period and how they did not indicate it and again this obviously applies to us in saying again don't be deceived by whoever gets elected as president or whatever earthquakes tsunamis or plagues come upon the earth.

[27:19] so in verse 5 and verse 11 he mentions false Christ and false prophets will lead many astray well Gamaliel you may remember that was Paul's teacher but he was a Jew he mentions two such examples in Acts 5 36-37 he says for before these days Thidias rose up claiming to be somebody and a number of men about 400 joined him he was killed and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing after him Judas the Galilean rose up excuse me Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him he too perished and all who followed him were scattered so Gamaliel not a Christian argument here at all he's saying just here's history for you we've already had two false messiahs who were raised up when they were killed they were dispersed and so again we see in Acts 21 Paul is mistaken for the Egyptian who recently stirred up a revolt and led the 4,000 men of the assassins out into the wilderness so here's an example of some leader who claimed to be something who led 4,000 people out into the wilderness with him and they mistake

Paul for him and then even Paul's warning to the Ephesians elders in Acts 20 29-30 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you not sparing the flock and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things to draw away the disciples after them so how did Paul know that in the church in Ephesus there would be people who would come and try to draw people away from them and fierce wolves would enter the church perhaps because of the prophecy that's given here but also because of these are the times we live in this ought to be our expectation that there will always be fierce wolves coming among the church trying to lead people astray but here we have an example of that in 2 Peter 2 1 Peter writes but false prophets also arose among the people just as there will be false teachers among you who will secretly bring in destructive heresies so Peter's citing a historical example again in this time period and saying there were false prophets who rose up among you just as there will be in the times to come and so I think we see examples of that as well as showing us that this will continue into our age

I spent a good deal of time reading some of Josephus who was a Jewish historian and he argues that in the time of Nero there were a number of such people who rose up claiming to be prophets Nero's reign was from 54 to 68 A.D.

that will become important later on I feel like a school teacher when I say that you're supposed to remember that for the test right 54 to 68 A.D. Nero okay then wars what we know in our day there's been plenty of wars and we can expect the same thing there but this time had frequent wars especially remember the Roman Empire still conquering the world and trying to hold down rebellion against them holding down any uprisings so Josephus mentions an uprising in Caesarea in which 20,000 Jews were killed he mentions other such uprisings in Alexandria Centopolis and Damascus and then in 40 A.D.

the Roman Emperor Caligula tried to set up a statue of himself in the temple he wanted a statue of him within the Jewish temple they refused and from that point on from 40 A.D.

[30 : 51] they lived in constant fear that there would be war retaliation from Rome upon Jerusalem which in fact didn't come until really 66 A.D. but wasn't really completed until 70 A.D. and then there were other events I'm just really giving you the Roman Empire and the area around Israel but there were other parts of the known world even where there were wars going on and so of course there would be rumors you'd be hearing about you didn't have the internet back then so people would come and tell you hey there's a war going on over here and so all these things might lead them to think well is this the end and Jesus is saying no don't be deceived by that either he mentions famines and earthquakes in verse 7 you're probably already familiar probably with the most famous one of those the great famine of 44 A.D.

is described in Acts 11 28-30 Agabus stood up and foretold by the spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world this took place in the days of Claudius so the disciples determined everyone according to his ability to send relief to the brothers living in Judea and they did so sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul so what Agabus foretold actually took place 44 A.D.

there's a great famine this also will be important down the road but notice he says a famine over all the world okay it was we understand really the known world at that time but there were at least three other large famines during that time including one specifically in Rome in A.D. 51 earthquakes were common you remember there was one described in Acts 16 suddenly there was a great earthquake so the foundation of the prison was shaken and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's bonds were unfastened so an earthquake that frees God's people from prison is this a sign that the end is going to come in 51 A.D.

Seneca wrote how often have the cities of Asia and Achaia fallen with one fatal shock how many cities have been swallowed up in Syria how many in Macedonia how often has Paschus become a ruin news has often been brought to us of the demolition of whole cities at once put all that together and what's your conclusion is this the end God's destroying whole cities by earthquakes and again I'm arguing that Jesus is saying that's just the time in which we live that's going to continue don't think that's a sign of the end in the parallel account of the Olivet Discourse in Luke 21 we read in verse 11 Luke says there will be great or quoting Jesus there will be great earthquakes and in various places famines and pestilences and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven so famines and pestilences right again you hear people COVID Ebola whatever it is next right don't be misled by these it says also though he adds

Luke adds there will be terrors and great signs from heaven what might a terror and great sign from heaven look like when you're living in those days well one such thing was comet appearing and a comet appeared in 60 AD and then Halley's comet which we're familiar with which they didn't really know about appeared in 66 AD and in both instances they were interpreted interpreted as political signs that there's going to be an overthrow of government there's going to be government change and in fact Nero committed suicide not long after seeing Halley's comet Josephus wrote that there was a star resembling a sword think of a comet a star resembling a sword which stood over the city and a comet that continued a whole year and so they're interpreting these signs from heaven does this mean the ends come no not yet persecution persecution and martyrdom we know from Acts that this was the experience of the Christians I probably don't have to prove this very much you guys know as well that Nero is well known for his persecution of Christians even at times burning them in his gardens to light his gardens but Nero with Nero the persecution greatly increased and again he died two years before the destruction of the temple so persecutions are continuing but they're not the sign that it's actually the ends taking place

[35 : 09] Mark's account reads but be on your guard for they will deliver you over to councils and you will be beaten in synagogues and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake to bear witness before them so think for a second of Mark's description they will deliver you over to who to councils and you will be beaten in synagogues even the language that Mark uses typifies not modern day does it it typifies before AD 70 before the destruction of Israel there are councils that are the ruling authorities that's not true now there are the synagogues in which you would be tried again not true now and so he's speaking in terms of things that would happen during the reign of Israel as a nation in verse 10 we see false believers will turn away as a result of persecution we know that that's true that as the church was persecuted people who were just hanging around the church stopped hanging around the church right when your life's on the line if you're not really a Christian you're not going to hang around which I think

I know there's all this concern about will persecution increase in America doesn't mean that God doesn't use persecution for the good of his church right we may face more persecution in fact really what I'm arguing is we've kind of lived in strange times where we haven't faced that much persecution in America the norm is persecution so don't be alarmed if we face that and if we do understand that God may use it to purify his church and for the good of his church 1 John 2 19 we read they went out from us but they were not of us for if they had been of us they would have continued with us but they went out that it might become plain that they are all not of us and then 2 Timothy 1 15 you are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me among whom are Phygelus and Hermogagenus Hermogenus so these two he names in particular but they all depart from him and so we see when persecution when Paul's facing death and imprisonment we see that people flee from him because they don't want to face that there's an increase in lawlessness resulting in cold Christianity but you will be saved if you persevere to the end and I think this is probably just another way of saying true Christians persevere to the end they're not being misled by these things they're going to hold firm to the truth that they know now probably the hardest thing for me to argue is going to be verse 14 today

I hope let's look at verse 14 and the gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come let me first step back and say in terms of where we are in history I firmly believe that the gospel will be preached to all nations we see in revelation that there will be people from every tribe tongue and language who will sing the praises of our God so I believe that all the unreached people groups of the world will be reached before Christ returns that is a belief I hold to what I want to argue is that if we read this in light of verse 34 then what Jesus is speaking of here is not necessarily what I just described something else is being spoken of so remember verse 34 says all these things will take place in this generation so that of course begs a question is what Jesus is describing in verse 14 something that took place before AD 70 did the gospel of the kingdom was it proclaimed throughout the whole world as the testimony to all nations before the end in terms of the destruction of

Jerusalem did that take place and so what I want to argue is that I think there is a way in which we can understand this that I think it did but not in terms of the way we think of it in terms of unreached people groups today so bear with me for a second let me quote for you this is Sam Storms he writes the word whole world are translation of the term *okomene* from the Greek which literally means inhabited area a standard term at the time of the Greek world then for the Greek world then for the Roman Empire and subsequently for the then known world the same Greek word is used in Luke 2 1 same word *okomene* let me pause from him for a second and we know that it was just the

Roman Empire he's speaking of but he uses the same Greek word in Acts 11 28 we read that one of them named Agabus stood up it's a passage I read earlier declared that there would be a great famine throughout the whole world which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar again in Acts 24 5 for we have found this man Paul a plague a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes and so three times we see there's more but three times we see that word used in ways that aren't inclusive of the world the way we know the world so the temptation is for us to read the known world for us is much larger than the known world was for them so one more this is R.T.

[40 : 48] France and his commentary says that in Jesus' day this word meant primarily the areas surrounding the Mediterranean and the lesser known areas to the east around which stretch mysterious regions beyond the fringes of civilization so the mysterious areas that are the unknown world but in terms of the known world that's what this Greek term means so again as we read in English it may be hard when it says all the world but I think if we understand in terms of the Greek word all the known world then it would make a lot better sense so the question was the gospel preached to all the known world before AD 70 even that could be a hard argument to sell but I think it but I believe the book of Acts was written as an argument to prove this very thing that the gospel had reached to the ends of the world now as we look at the book of Acts the book of

Acts begins with the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven so the beginning of really the church age and we read in Acts 1 6 through 9 so when they had come together they asked him Lord will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel right what are they expecting is this the time in which the kingdom is going to be set up in terms of the earthly kingdom Jesus is return as it were he said to them it is not for you to know times or seasons that the father has fits by his own authority so even that goes to what I'm going to return he goes on and says but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth and when he said these things as they were looking on he was lifted up now think about where does the book of Acts end you guys remember where Acts ends on numerous occasions his desire to go from

Rome to Spain so he's at the capital Roman empire with the desire to go to Spain which would have been the furthest region west in the known world and then we read in Acts 28 28 that's two verses before the end therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles they will listen and so I believe the argument for Acts is that Jesus tells his ascension you're going to be my witnesses to the end of the earth and his argument is and that's exactly what happened Paul took the gospel to the end of the earth so if you're still struggling with that Paul makes that argument himself Paul wrote in Colossians 1 5 through 6 of this you have heard before in the hearing through the word of

Christ but I ask you have they not heard indeed they have for their voice has gone out to all the earth and their words to the ends of the world so that's Paul's words in Romans 10 about the gospel so what I want you to see is that our tendency is to read this and think well has Jesus transitioned is he now talking about something that's going to take place in the future beyond AD 70 and what I want you to see is that I think verse 34 gives us this parenthesis to say Jesus speaking of here are the normal course of events that take place that don't signify the destruction of the Roman empire that includes the gospel is going to advance throughout the known world and then Paul argues that it actually has taken place and so I think verse 8 argues that these things aren't signs for us to try to interpret they're not signs of destruction of the temple and if we want to extract it even further they're not signs of the return of Christ so verse 8 says all these are but the beginnings of the birth pains these aren't the signs right

I would argue that what Jesus is basically saying the church age the eschaton we're living in in terms of birth pains is we're living in a time of labor where Christ could return at any moment and there's going to be some birth pains but those don't indicate that the baby is about to be born these aren't the signs and so that's my argument they are the beginnings these things are the beginnings of what marked the age in which we're living in so our expectation ought to be that these types of things will continue and I would even extract that further to say as a type we see the gospel still advancing to the ends of the earth the way we understand the earth we're still trying to reach the ends of the earth that typifies this age but it's not a sign that the end has come now I'm running really short on time I'll give you a teaser for next week okay I believe beginning in verse 15 he says here are the true signs that Jerusalem is about to be destroyed so we see a transition take place in verse 15 so when you see the abomination of desolation spoken by the prophet

[46 : 15] Daniel standing in the holy place let the reader understand then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains so all these things that take place beforehand don't go don't run yet this isn't the end you don't have to fear that keep preaching the gospel in Jerusalem keep on with the work there in Israel don't flee yet don't follow false teachers but here's a sign when the abomination of desolation stands in the temple run get out now this is the moment we've hit the point that's the teaching for next week we're going to look at those signs and see how that points to the destruction of the temple so I feel like maybe I should have said this at the beginning we're waiting deep in prophetic apocalyptic language this isn't milk we're chewing on the big thick steak here and I apologize in some ways because my needs to

I would have trippers skipped it because it's hard for me okay but we need this and part of this is just coming to an understanding of what's being spoken of here and then I hope to draw some application in the future Let me say just a few things here first.

I've already argued events described here are events that are normal events of the age, including the age in which we live, the eschaton. They're not signs specifically of special judgment by God.

They're not signs of the return of Christ. And as I've argued, we'll see soon, even in more detail, that I believe God's not giving us any signs of Jesus' return.

We're to be expecting it to happen at any moment without knowing exactly when that's going to take place. No one's going to know the year. We're not going to be in the ballpark. So don't be led astray by false prophets, false teachers, false signs.

[48 : 18] Just go ahead and delete those emails that say forward to all your friends that this person's the Antichrist or that there's been all these earthquakes, so Jesus is coming. Just delete them. Don't pass them on. If you do, you're only helping to spread false teaching.

Then, secondly, understand that this age that we're living in is characterized by tribulation. But step back for a second and say, God is still in control.

This is a part of God's plan. God's told us. This will encourage us. God's told us this is what this age will be like. So when we lived in softness in America for so long and things start getting tougher for us and we see more persecution coming from the media, maybe coming from the government in the future, guys, God's still sovereign.

He's not somehow, Jesus hasn't been taken off the throne. Jesus is still reigning. But what we're seeing is, understand Jesus is still on the throne, but this is what the reign of Jesus looks like. That there's still going to be tribulation on this earth.

It's going to, in some ways, I would even argue, intensify. So don't be led astray by these things. God's still in control. Persecution and tribulation for the church will mean false believers will fall away.

[49 : 28] We want to be positive. God may use this to purify his church and for the good of his people. Likewise, we should not be troubled by opposition, but rather expect that opposition is the norm for this age.

People are going to oppose us. Don't be surprised by that. Thirdly, Jesus is still returning, and we're to eagerly await that return. That's what we're longing for. Lord willing, in a few weeks, we're going to discuss this in more detail, but guys, we're still longing for the return of Christ.

But what I'm arguing is that what we're seeing in the first 35 verses here isn't about that return. Jesus is trying to help us to see, here's signs of a great judgment that's coming beforehand that in some ways may typify a final judgment in the days to come, but this isn't it.

And so don't be led astray and long eagerly for the return of our Savior. Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your word, and we pray that you would make an understanding of it clear for all of us, especially in these difficult, apocalyptic, prophetic passages.

Lord, especially for us on the other side of this, that we can see clearly the things that do point us to AD 70. And Lord, where we see things that point us to the future, we pray that we would eagerly long for the return of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

[50 : 45] Lord, if there are ways in which I have misunderstood this and taught this incorrectly, we pray that that would not be what sticks in people's minds, but the truth of your word would.

That, Lord, heaven and earth may pass away, but your words will remain. Lord, we pray that that would be true for us, that we would know that, we would experience it. And Lord, give us an eager yearning for our Savior.

We pray that these coming sermons would instill that in us, and that as we see Jesus prophesying something 40 years in advance and seeing it come perfectly to fulfillment, that we would have greater confidence in the truth of your word that's been given to us.

We pray this in the name of our great Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen.