

The Final Generation, Part 1

Scripture: Mark 13:28–37

Code: 41-69

Let's open the Word of God then to the thirteenth chapter of Mark's gospel, Mark chapter 13. We are coming to verses 28 to 37 in our ongoing look at this amazing account of our Lord's life, and we're going to be looking at verses 28 to 37, both this morning and this evening. While it's not a long passage, it's loaded. And in order to cover all the ground, we're going to do that this morning and tonight. And then next Sunday we will leave the subject of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, and move right in to the things that lead up to the death and resurrection of Christ. Let me read this text for you.

Verse 28, Mark 13, "Now learn the parable from the fig tree. When its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know the summer is near. Even so, you too when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. But of that day or hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. Take heed, keep on the alert, for you do not know when the appointed time will come. It is like a man away on a journey who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the door keeper to stay on the alert. Therefore, be on the alert for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening at midnight, or when the rooster crows or in the morning in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep. What I say to you, I say to all, be on the alert."

That is an unmistakable message, an unmistakable command drawn out of a really unmistakably clear portion of Scripture. Leads me to say this, I have been teaching the Word of God for many, many years, fifty years, let's say, 43 or so here at Grace Community Church, my view of what our Lord taught in His Olivet Discourse, this sermon given on the Mount of Olives during Passion Week on Wednesday night to His disciples, as to His return has not changed. That is to say my eschatology has not changed in all these 50 years. It has stood the test of relentless study in the New Testament, as you know, through every word and every phrase and every verse of the New Testament. It has withstood the study of the Old Testament, namely the prophets. I've gone through the major prophets and the minor prophets in some detail, preached carefully through the book of Daniel, gone back and written commentaries on many of these things and written notes on the Study Bible on every passage virtually in the Bible and my understanding of eschatology, the doctrines related to the return of Christ in the end of human history, have not changed at all. This is a very important thing to say because your theology has to stand the text test. It has to survive every passage in the Scripture intact to be validated because all of Scripture has one author, that is God, who never contradicts Himself. And so, I say to you after all these many years of teaching on matters related to the Second Coming of Christ, that I am exactly where I was at the very beginning.

I also want you to understand that eschatology and what the Scripture says about the end times is not hard to understand. I should be living testimony of that because I'm not anybody especially gifted intellectually. I am simply like you, I open the Bible, I apply the same principles of interpretation to eschatological passages and prophetic passages that I do to narrative passages or dialectic

passages, and I come up with what is a clear interpretation. You're going to get an illustration of that even as we look at the text this morning.

There is a trend in evangelical theology today that basically wants to discard the discussion of the Second Coming. You can go to conference, after conference, after conference and you can be listening to the leading speakers and preachers and Bible teachers and you can be at a lot of conferences for a long time before you would hear anybody come up with a definitive message on the Second Coming of Christ. People have bought into the fact that it is...it's something about which we can be confused. I don't think that's the case. I don't think the Lord wrote His Word to make anything unclear. That's why Revelation starts out by saying, "Blessed is the one who reads this and understands," which assumes that you can understand it, not if you're a theological professor, or a Greek expert, after all, the books of the New Testament were written to a generation of new believers and they could understand because it can be understood by the same interpretive principles used to understand any ancient document and any discourse in any language in any place.

So the Word of God can be understood as eschatology can be understood. I'll go a step further. It must be understood. I don't know how people can assume that God blew the ending, that it was really clear until the end, as if the end was something to throw away, or sort of write your own ending, or come up with any view you want. I think the specificity with which the beginning is indicated in Genesis 1:2 is consistent with the way the ending is presented. I think Genesis 1 and 2 is to be understood exactly the way it is written and so is the ending, and namely the book of Revelation and all other prophetic portions of Scripture that connect to the book of Revelation. So all that to say that what we're going to look at, we're going to assume that we can understand in the very simple sense that we can understand anything written in Scripture.

Now there are some things, having said that, that we can't understand in total because they haven't happened yet. So where the speculation comes in, please, is not in understanding the prophecy, but in its fulfillment. We have to have a way to understand the prophecy itself. It is consistent with the way you understand everything else, or we're hopelessly lost. But what we can't know is the specificity of the fulfillment that has not happened. But the prophecies are very, very clear when it comes to the return of Christ. The culmination of human history occurs at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth. When He comes back, He will destroy all the living sinners who have not repented and put their trust in Him. It will be the end of all of them and they will be cast forever along with the demons and the angels, the fallen angels, demons, and Satan and the False Prophet, and the Beast into the eternal Lake of Fire.

The believers who are alive when He comes will be ushered in to His glorious Kingdom in which all the promises of the Old Testament to Israel will be fulfilled, and all the Kingdom promises repeated in the New Testament will be fulfilled and the Lord will be King over the whole earth. And Revelation 20 says it will last a thousand years, that is the end of history. At the end of the thousand years, the earth is completely disintegrated, the whole universe as we know it is imploded in an atomic implosion and replaced by the new heaven and the new earth where we will dwell in glory with Him forever. This is our hope. This is the blessed hope of every believer. We are looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. We are those, Paul says, who love His appearing. We are waiting for the glory to be revealed in us at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We live in hope.

This is so important to understand this and to understand how near this. There is no sense in you

wasting five seconds on environmental concerns about what might happen to the planet if you keep using hairspray. Please, get over it. Or gasoline, or mowing your lawn, or anything else like that. We have nothing to fear about the future because we know how it will all end. It is clearly and with great detail described for us in Scripture. The truth of the Second Coming literally fills the New Testament, introduced by our Lord Himself in Matthew, Mark and Luke in particular. And although He has said other things in these gospels about His coming, the main teaching from the lips of Christ about His return is in this message, the finish of which I just read, in this message given on Wednesday night of Passion Week, sitting on the Mount of Olives with His disciples as the sun is setting, looking back at the eastern gate, the Herodian temple and the city of Jerusalem. It's the final day that He teaches. It's the final day of public ministry. The next day He will stay in private and He will prepare for the Passover on Thursday night. Friday He is tried and crucified. Sunday He rises from the dead. Forty days later, after appearing only to believers, He ascends to heaven where He now sits, waiting to return.

But as that day ended, after His final public ministry, He sat down on that mount and said to the disciples, "That temple which you're in awe of is coming down and not one stone will be left on another. And with its destruction will be the destruction of the city and the nation. And this will be a judgment of God." And, of course, that prophecy occurred forty years later. He made that prophecy in April of A.D. 30, forty years later in A.D. 70 it came to pass when the Romans came and destroyed the temple, the city and the nation. Then He said that judgment which is going to fall on this temple and this city and this nation is only a preview of a far greater judgment to come when I return to establish My Kingdom.

And then He went on to describe what is going to intervene between then and His return. And that is called the Olivet Discourse classically, given on the Mount of Olives. It is recorded in Matthew 24 and 25, Luke 21 and takes up the thirteenth chapter of Mark. And Mark, and Matthew, and Luke are all commenting, giving their Holy Spirit, inspired insights into the very same event and the same message.

Now this is all triggered because the Apostles, the followers of Christ, are trying to figure out what is going on. On Monday, everybody said He's the Messiah. Everybody hailed Him as the Messiah. Hundreds of thousands of people gathered for the Passover, were there in Jerusalem throwing palm branches at His feet, laying their garments down in front of the animal He was riding on and hailing Him as the Son of David and the Messiah and saying, "Hosanna." And the disciples had their expectations elevated greatly.

However, the next day, on Tuesday, He comes into Jerusalem with them. Curses a fig tree and that's a symbol of the curse that's going to come on the nation. And instead of Him destroying the Gentile occupiers, the Romans, which the Jews wanted Him to do, He's going to destroy Israel. He's going to judge them. He's going to curse them as He cursed the tree. And He sets that in motion with a second symbol of that. He goes into the temple and He throws the buyers and sellers out. He just cleans the place of all the corruption and crime and then comes back on Wednesday and with the debris and litter still lying around, He occupies the temple for that full day and speaks the truth in that place for the first time in hundreds of years.

The disciples don't know what to think. They know that the leaders of Israel are after Him. They know they want Him dead. And Jesus has told them at least three recorded times that He's going to be arrested, He's going to die, and He's going to rise. And they still are trying to figure out, when is the

Kingdom going to come? And so they pose the question in verse 4 of chapter 13, "Tell us, when will these things be, the things that have to do with judgment? And what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled? What's the sign of final judgment on sinners? What's the sign of the final establishment of the Kingdom?"

They were asking the question, many of them were asking, it was an open dialogue. And Matthew records in Matthew 24:3 that one of them said, "What will be the sign of Your coming and the end of the age?" So that triggers our Lord's message on the future. And He starts answering it in verse 5 of chapter 13. I'm not going to review it, just to point it out to you. In chapter 13, verse 5 through 13, He describes history up till now and including now. And He said, "Look, before I come, the world will be characterized by religious deception, massive religious deception." Matthew, Mark and Luke all give us insight into this.

It will secondly be characterized by massive disasters, wars, rumors of wars, which means hot wars, cold wars, earthquakes. And if you put them all together, famines, plagues, all kinds of natural disasters. And it will also be, human history will, be characterized by the relentless persecution of believers, by Jews first, by Gentiles also and even in your families. So He characterizes the period of time between then, leading up until His coming, as a time of deception, disaster, and distress of persecution of believers. History tells us, He was exactly right...exactly right. That is the story of human history. It is a relentless time of religious deception. Religious deception today proliferates maybe like it never has in the history of the world, we haven't had any improvement on our susceptibility as a human race to lies to the enemy, the king of hell himself, delegated king of hell, Satan.

History has also been characterized by wars and rumors of wars. And they don't lessen. They seem to be increasing, even in our very time today and by natural disasters which seem to be getting worse and worse. Characterization of persecution goes on. Believers have always been persecuted. They're being persecuted and even slaughtered around the world today. Our Lord saw history the way it is because the Bible always corresponds to reality.

Going forward, you come to verse 14 then, which gives us a very important point in the future. There is coming in the future a time of Great Tribulation...time of Great Tribulation. Daniel, the prophet, identifies it as a seven-year period, the second half of it will be the worst of it. It's the last seven years before Christ returns.

How do you know you're in it? Verse 14, "When you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION, when that event happens, you know you're in the Tribulation." Because verse 19 says, "Those days will be a time of Tribulation such has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now and never will." It will be worse than any other time. More deadly, more disastrous, more horrific, and it's described in its detail by Daniel and particularly by John in the visions of Revelation from chapter 6 to chapter 19, in detail.

So human history described from verses 5 to 13, the final seven-year period, most notably the final three and a half year period of that seven years described in verses 14 to 23, as the worst time the world has ever seen. Now if you want the details of that, you read Revelation 6 to 19 and you have the details. Then at the end of that period of time, verse 24, "After that Tribulation when that is over," that specific time of Tribulation, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will be falling from heaven, the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken, the universe begins to

disintegrate and collapse. Then in the midst of the darkness with no sun, no moon, and no stars, they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send His angels to the far corners of the earth to collect all the elect together to go into His Kingdom."

So the Kingdom doesn't come till a long period of human history described in the first part of the sermon, a period of seven years, the last half of which is horrific, triggered by the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION, which Daniel spoke of, which is described in Revelation as the Antichrist setting up His rule and His authority in the temple of God, which will be rebuilt. That triggers a horrendous time at the end of which, Christ will come into the darkness. And when He comes, He will re-grip the universe and create a restored, rejuvenated, revived earth and its environment for a thousand-year Kingdom. That's the future.

And you notice in verse 14 it says, "Let the reader understand." The disciples wouldn't see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION. They wouldn't be alive in that future time. He wasn't talking to them, He was talking about generations that would have to read this. That would mean it would have to be written down in the Scripture with all that the Scripture says about it, that didn't happen until the end of the first century when John finally wrapped up the New Testament, about 96 A.D. with the book of Revelation. His coming is future and there is a future generation that is going to see His coming, going to see His coming. And they're going to know it's near because they see the events of the Tribulation happening all around them. That generation needs to be on the alert, that's what He's saying.

All right, now let's look at this text a little more specifically and I have a lot of things that we need to cover. I'll try to give you a course in eschatology really quick. Number one is the analogy...number one is the analogy. We're going to look at the analogy, the application, the authority, and the action. Number one is the analogy, verse 28, "Now learn the parable from the fig tree."

The assumption, folks, is that this can be learned. Okay? This is actually a command from the Greek verb *manthano*, get it, learn this. This is not intended to be obscure, this is not intended to be confusing. Learn this from the fig tree. Now again, we're back to fig trees. Just the day before, our Lord had cursed the fig tree, chapter 11, verses 12 to 14. He used the fig tree as an illustration of Israel. He went to the fig tree because He was hungry. The fig tree had no fruit. That was weird because the fruit comes first and the leaves later, with fig trees. There should have been because there were leaves, there should have been some immature fruit that He could have plucked and it would have been edible. But when He got to the tree, it had leaves but no fruit, and it was a symbol of Israel, nothing but leaves. Religious pretense, and He pronounced a curse on that fig tree and it died on the spot. It was a miracle in reverse. The only destructive miracle recorded in the New Testament done by Jesus.

This fig tree then was an illustration of Israel's barrenness. But here's another fig tree, as an illustration, commonly used as analogies. Jotham, in the days of the Judges in Judges 9, used a fig tree as an illustration. Hosea in Hosea chapter 9 verse 10 used fig trees to refer to the patriarchs. Jeremiah 24:2 refers to good and bad people like good and bad figs. Even Joel, the prophet in Joel chapter 1 verses 6 and 7 uses fig trees as an illustration of Israel under judgment. So it's a common thing.

So our Lord says, "Learn a parable from the fig tree." They were familiar with fig trees. And here is the simple way to get the lesson. "When its branch has already become tender and puts forth its

leaves, you know that summer is near."

Now that is a simple illustration. It simply means that when you see the leaves on a tree, you know the summer is near. Why? Because the leaves come in the spring. This is not too complicated. In fact, Luke says, not even a fig tree, Luke says, "All the trees," indicating its generic, it's a simple illustration, a simple illustration. And I think that's why our Lord says, "Learn the parable, get it, it's so simple." He liked to say that. Matthew 9:13 He said that, Matthew 11:29, "Take My yoke and learn of Me." You know, You can learn...there's a wonderful promise given to all believers in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, "Unto you it has been given to know the mysteries." You can learn this. No believer needs to be in the dark on these matters, any more than any other matters revealed in Scripture.

So, when the fig tree puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. It will be a time in the early spring. It uses the word there in verse 28, "becomes tender," the...actually the trunk and the branches become softened and they swell with sap as the sap begins to flow in the trunk, and the branches, and then they first put forth those little immature figs, and then immediately after that come the leaves. It was precisely happening as our Lord was speaking because it was in the spring that they had the Passover. It would have been evidence of it all around them. Obvious, spring, budding trees, summer's near, we all understand that. That's all there is to this, so simple.

What's the point of all this? Well, let's go from the analogy to the application. Verse 29, "Even so," that's the transition, "therefore, you too when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door." That's the link to application. Who...who...who is the you? Even you, too, who we talking about? "When you see these things happening. The you is the you of the people who see these things happening. What things? The things just described in verses 14 to 23, the birth pains, the birth pains of anticipation leading up to the return of Christ. All the final extreme, severe, rapid-fire labor pains, all the signs prior to the final sign which is Christ coming out of heaven in blazing glory. Whoever is alive to see these things happening, should know that the coming of Christ is near. He is near, right at the door. So if you're alive in the future, in that generation, and you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION, and all the rest of the things that begin to happen when the Antichrist establishes the worship of himself and starts the slaughter of the Jews and the believers and you're told to run and flee for your life, as we read earlier, when you see the rest of what's going to happen as chronologued for us in Revelation 6 to 19, you know that He is near. The Kingdom is near. The King is near. The glory is near. He is right at the door.

This is then, folks, really the answer to their question. Their question was...when will these things happen? His answer is...when you see these preliminary events taking place, then the end will happen. Then will be the coming or the presence of the Lord, and the end of the age.

Now verse 30 adds this verse, familiar, "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place." This generation will not pass away till all these things take place.

Now when you read that, I don't even think you have even a hurdle there, did you? You didn't have a bump in the road. There wasn't even a speed bump. You understood exactly what that meant. It means that whatever generation sees these things happening will see Christ come. What else could it mean? "I say to you, this generation, the you who see these things happening, will not pass away until all these things take place." A generation they say is 40 years and there's a lot less than that when you see this stuff begin to happen in the time of Tribulation, you know it will be ending soon.

The generation that's alive then will see the end. That simple. And yet you would be astounded, and I'm going to give you a little look at this, how many crazy views there are of that thirtieth verse.

One, that it refers to the disciples. That Jesus is saying to them, I'm going to come before you die. This *genea*, you guys, you're going to live to see the Second Coming. What? How could they...how could anybody possibly believe that? Well, because there were people who believed that there are people who believe that the Second Coming was fulfilled in 70 A.D. when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. That that was the Second Coming and that there's no other Second Coming. And the disciples were still alive, some of them, most of them. So that He is literally saying you're going to see the Second Coming in your life time.

That's impossible. The only way you come up with that view is if you just totally ignored the Bible because the description of the events that come alongside the Second Coming in the time of Tribulation are so detailed in the book of Revelation as to a third of the world being destroyed, a fourth of the world being destroyed, cataclysmic events in the sky, and on the earth, and on, and on, and on it goes, meteors hitting the earth, destroying the fresh water, destroying the salt water, killing a third of the beasts in the ocean, and on and on and on it goes, and slaughter all over everywhere. That certainly didn't happen in the little microcosm that happened on the piece of land that we call Israel. That's an absolute ludicrous view, and yet there are hyper-preterists, they're called, who have that view.

Now there are others who say that Jesus was talking about the disciples, but He was wrong. That doesn't work for me. I don't know about you, but that doesn't work for me. They say, "Oh, it should work for you because in verse 32 He says, "Of that day or hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son." So He didn't know anyway, He just took a guess.

No. Look, it's one thing to say He didn't know. In His incarnation He restricted voluntarily His attributes, temporarily, and we'll see that tonight. But He had restricted His attributes temporarily is one thing, saying something wrong is another. Self-impose limits...yes. Error...no.

Other people say, "Well, this generation will not pass away till all these things take place refers to the Jewish race, that the Jews are going to survive. Well that's true, the Jews are going to survive. But I don't think that was the issue. He wasn't talking to people who had any doubt about that. After all, they had been the recipients and the disciples knew this of everlasting covenants. God had said, He would never ever forget Israel, the apple of His eye. That is not even in question. Well why introduce to people who already know they have everlasting covenants and everlasting promises, an issue that's not an issue? And in what way is that a sign. The perpetuity of the Jews isn't the sign of anything because you can't see it as a sign because it's the way it is all the time. That doesn't make sense.

Others say this *genea*, this generation refers to sinners, that there are always going to be sinners. Well that's obvious, why say that? Of course there are always going to be sinners. They say *genea* is in the Septuagint used to translate the Hebrew word *dor* which means like an evil generation. And Jesus is saying there will always be evil people until He comes. Well that's no sign of anything, any more than being Jews is a sign of anything because that's the way it always is. Those are foreign to the context.

Now there are other people who say, and this would be a fifth thing on it, I guess, or fourth or fifth, that it refers to the people who see the birth of the nation Israel. The people who see the birth of the nation Israel. Well where does it say that? It doesn't. But that's a very popular view, that's the Hal Lindsey, Late Great Planet, if you're old enough to have read that, view. That the fig tree, because the fig tree in chapter 11 is Israel, that the fig tree in chapter 13 has to be Israel also. No, no, no. That's an illustration. An illustration is an illustration for the moment it's used as an illustration and it can't be prepared with other illustrations or used for other points of teaching or doctrine. Nothing here says it's Israel. It's simply saying this generation will not pass away until all those things take place. It doesn't say Israel. But there are many, many people who parked on this. In 1948, Israel became a state. And what was said, and this was really popular through those years, millions of books were sold that the generation alive when Israel becomes a state because that's the fig tree budding, when Israel becomes a state, that generation will not all die out. And it was even stated that a generation is 40 years, so Christ is going to come before 1988.

Sorry, didn't come in '88 '98, 2008, plus, as I said, Luke even says when he gives a comparative of this, remember they're dialoguing back and forth and saying things different ways, that Jesus said, "All the trees put forth their leaves and you know summer is near." He's not talking about one nation, there's no reason to identify this with Israel at all. That is just pure imagination.

You were right the first time, I knew you were right. It means what it obviously means, the generation that sees the signs leading up to will see the event. That is to say creation occurred in a seven-day period, right? And destruction will occur in a seven-year period. And if you're in there anyway, that generation is going to be around at the very end. It's not going to be drawn out. Very simple. The one who sees the leaves will see the summer. A generation that experiences the birth pains will see the birth of the Kingdom. The generation that sees the leaves will see the judgment that begins the Kingdom.

That really is the answer to the question. How many days after? Well, did you notice that it says, "The Son of Man doesn't know, nobody knows the days?" There's a gap in there. How long is it? Daniel, at the end of his prophecy in chapter 12, adds 75 days, a period of 75 days after the three and a half years, 1260 days, 42 months, time-times-and half a time, somewhere in there, in the days, in the hours which no one knows.

Now that leads me to a question. Who are the people who are going to be alive at that time? Who they going to be? Who are the people alive at that time? Who is this going to be important to? Who's going to be reading this? Who are the readers that are going to read and say, "I need to understand this?" Who are they?

Well, there will be non-believers, right? There will be a world of non-believers, non-believing Gentiles. There will be a world of non-believing Jews, sinners all over the planet. There will also be believers. There will also be believers. They will be in the time of Tribulation. However...and this is where I want to take a moment on a digression, if I can, do it really quickly.

I don't think the church will be there, that's us, those who have come to Christ since His ministry on earth who constitute His church because we will be raptured. The Rapture event is clearly a singular event described in the New Testament, 1Thessalonians 4; 1 Corinthians 15; John 14. It is a singular event. It describes the snatching away of the church, the catching away of the church. All of us who are in Christ will be caught away. It is the moment when the phrase in Romans 11 is fulfilled, the

fullness of the Gentiles, when the church is full, when the last elect person believes, the Rapture is triggered. We won't know who that person is, but all the redeemed will be removed.

Now when does this happen? Clearly it happens. John 14, 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians 4 describes the event with specific details. When does it happen?

Some people think it happens at the end of the Tribulation, or near the end of the Tribulation. I think it happens at the beginning. It has to happen cause it's an event...it's an event that has no judgment connected to it, very important. There is no word of judgment in any of those things. That's why our hope is called a blessed hope.

Why do I think it happens at the beginning of the Tribulation? I'm going to give you a few answers quickly. Number one, in the book of Revelation which is laid out chronologically, the things which were, the things which are, the things which will be, in the book of Revelation, the church appears in chapter 1 on earth. The church appears in chapter 2 on earth, seven churches are described in chapter 2 and chapter 3, local churches in Asia Minor. The church is there. Starting in chapter 4, the church never appears again, the word never appears again in the book of Revelation right through to the return of Christ in chapter 19, and the Kingdom in chapter 20, you will never read about the church. It doesn't say anything about the church. It doesn't describe the function of the church. It doesn't speak to what the church does or doesn't do, should or shouldn't do.

Why? Everything else in the New Testament is directed at the church. Every epistle, all the instruction of the New Testament is directed at the church. Why does all instruction in the book of Revelation to the church end at chapter 3 and you go to heaven in chapter 4 and the war machine of God is beginning to move like it did in Ezekiel chapter 1 and all the rest that flows out of that is void of the church. It talks about the Jews, it talks about the Gentiles, it talks about Jewish evangelists, 144 thousand, 12 thousand out of every tribe, Jewish missionaries, two witnesses. It talks about all of that but never ever mentions the church until you see the church in heaven at the end. Very important. The church is mentioned 19 times in the first three chapters and never again up until 19 when Christ returns.

Second, the absence of any instruction or warning to the church about the Tribulation. You would think if we were going to go through that, there would be instruction in the Bible about what we are to look forward to. But there isn't anything. It's always a blessed hope. It's always that Christ is coming. It's always that blessed hope and glorious appearing of Christ, we're looking for Christ. We're not looking for Antichrist. It's the blessed hope.

Furthermore, if the Rapture, which is an event described in Scripture doesn't occur until the end of the Tribulation, and believers go through the Tribulation, then what's the point? Why go up to come down? Because Christ is coming with His saints. They're going to run in to each other. It doesn't make any sense to put a Rapture at the end of the Tribulation, we go right up and right back down again because when you read the Rapture passages, they describe that when we go, we go to a place He's been preparing for us and we go to be with Him where He is. He doesn't come to be with us where we are. And we have the marriage supper of the Lamb and the Bema Seat rewards of judgment that occur during that period of time when we go to be with the Lord. So the Rapture would make no sense if it's just whip-whip like that, up and down, it doesn't make sense. Here's an even more important problem. If all believers are raptured at the Second Coming, if we all get raptured at the Second Coming, the Rapture is a transformation...the dead rise with new bodies, the living have

their bodies transformed into a glorious body, like unto His body. So now we're glorified in our eternal state. The question is, who populates the Kingdom?

You've got an earthly Kingdom of Christ, all the sinners have just been destroyed, all the believers have just been transformed, you better be an amillennialist because you can't have a Kingdom cause there's nobody in it. The only way you can populate the Kingdom is to have the church taken out at an earlier time, which makes complete sense with Scripture, then you have a seven-year period of the greatest revival in the history of the world with a preaching of the gospel, the conversion of a third of the Jews who become evangelists, people from every tongue and tribe and nation coming to Christ saying, "Worthy is the Lamb," the gospel preached by a flying angel and two witnesses who are resurrected in front of everybody. There's a great mass of people who are converted when the Lord comes back with His angels and His church, they're still alive. He destroys the ungodly, they are the goats, Matthew 25, and He takes the godly believers who have been converted in that seven-year period into the Kingdom, they are the sheep, come you beloved of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you. So a post-tribulation Rapture leaves nobody for the Kingdom.

Let me give you another thing to think about. Revelation 3:10, you can look at this, Revelation 3:10. "Because you have kept the word of My perseverance," He's talking to His true church, Philadelphia and Smyrna were the only pure churches, remember that? The other five had all kinds of problem. Philadelphia was one of those good churches. This is the true church. "You have kept the word of My perseverance, I will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth." That, dear friends, is a pre-tribulational Rapture verse. You've kept My Word, You're Mine. I will keep you from the hour of testing.

First let start with "hour" specific time...specific time, the hour of testing. This is...This is a specific time that is coming to test the world. This isn't some generic, general, all the time testing. It's a specific hour that is coming, an hour of testing. It describes, I'm convinced, the Tribulation time which comes to test the world like the world has never been tested and it's going to test the whole world and all those who dwell in the earth. I will keep you from the hour of testing. There's a little Greek phrase, *tereo ek...tereo ek*, I don't want to get technical with you, *tereo ek* means to be kept out of, to be kept out of. That's exactly what it means...to maintain a continuous existence outside of. You want more detail on that, you can get the commentaries on Revelation. Very important, will be kept out of that hour.

Turn to John 14 and the nature of this is important. In John 14 Jesus says, "Don't let your heart be troubled." Well, look, if I thought I was going to go through the Tribulation, that would be kind of a hard pill to swallow. What do you mean, not let my heart be troubled? What's going to happen? I mean, I don't want to necessarily live under the tyranny of Antichrist, that's going to be a horrible, terrible time every time you slice it. That's not...that's not something you should be fearful of. "Don't let your heart be troubled, believe in God, believe in Me." Here's the good news, "In My Father's house are many dwelling places, or rooms. If it weren't so I would have told you, I go to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you, I'll come again and receive you to Myself that where I am, there you may be also."

Where is He? He's talking to His disciples in the Upper Room on Thursday night, I'm going. And He goes back to heaven and says, "I'm coming to take you to heaven." Well if His Second Coming establishes His Kingdom on earth, and whatever this is takes us to be with Him in heaven, that's two different events, and they have to be separated. And there's no judgment in this passage and there's

no threat and there's no instruction anywhere in the New Testament about how I'm supposed to survive the Tribulation, how the church is supposed to survive, how we're supposed to prepare, how we're supposed to endure. There's no warnings. We're going to be with Him and we'll never be separated from Him again. Seven years later, after we've been in the place prepared for us, after we've had the marriage supper of the lamb, after we've come to the Bema Seat and received our rewards, we'll return with Him in glorified form to meet the saints who are still alive in the Kingdom. We'll interact with them as the angels did with the saints in the Old Testament.

Turn to 1 Thessalonians 4, 1 Thessalonians 4, the believers in Thessalonica were worried about Christians who had died because they were afraid since they died they would miss the Lord's coming. So he says, "I don't want you to be uninformed about those who are asleep, those who died, so that you will not grieve as the rest who have no hope." There was this idea, well they died, they're going to miss the Second Coming, they're going to miss the Lord, they're dead. He says, "No, no, you don't need to worry about that. If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, God will bring with them those who have fallen asleep in Jesus." Believe me, the dead aren't going to miss His coming. "To this we say to you by the Word of the Lord that we who are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord won't proceed those who are fallen asleep." Not only will they not miss it, they'll come first.

And what is that event going to be? Verse 16, "The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with a voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God and the dead in Christ will rise first." Of course, they have six feet further to go so that's the reason.

Verse 17, "Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with Him in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we always be with the Lord." We're going to go—that's the same as John 14, we're going to go where He is, He's going to meet us in the air and take us back to heaven. That's the Rapture. There's no judgment, there's no punishment. He doesn't destroy the ungodly. He doesn't bring any of the events that are described in His Second Coming by Daniel, or by Himself in the Olivet Discourse, the moon doesn't go dark, the sun doesn't go dark, the stars don't fall out of heaven. This is a completely independent event and it involves only believers. There's nothing about non-believers in this event at all. And this is to comfort us, so comfort one another with these words.

How could you be comforted if you're waiting for the Antichrist? How could you be comforted if you're waiting for the Tribulation?

And furthermore, you have to understand that the church is a unique entity. We came into existence at Pentecost and the church as an entity is gathered into heaven when the fullness of the Gentiles is in. We are distinct from Israel. We sing, Revelation 5, the song of redemption. We are even distinct from the Tribulation saints. If you look at Revelation 7, we're distinct from the Revelation saints.

Israel is unique. The seven weeks of Daniel are prophesied, 69 weeks from the decree of Artaxerxes to the crucifixion era, and those 69 were pronounced on My people Israel. They were the ones in the 69 weeks the church didn't exist, and we won't be there in the seventieth week which is that final seven-year period when the Lord finally saves them. That's a unique history for Israel. That's why the Bible says Jews, Gentiles and the church of God, they are distinguished. Jeremiah 30 calls the Tribulation the time of Jacob's trouble.

Romans 11, we'll end there, and it's a good place to end because it will clarify these thoughts. Romans 11, verse 17, just a couple of minutes, go down to verse 17. The olive root, the olive trunk is seen as the blessing of God, the calling of God, promises of God. Some of the branches are broken off. That's right, the Jews were broken off because of unbelief. You, Gentiles, being a wild olive, coming from your paganism, were grafted in among them and became partaker of the rich food of the Olive tree. So there was a time when the blessings went through Israel. They were cut off because of unbelief. Gentiles are grafted in, that's the church. Now don't be arrogant toward the branches. That's one of the tragic, ugly realities of church history is anti-Semitism. That's really where amillennialism comes from. But if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who support the root but the root supports you. You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith, don't be conceited but fear.

Why fear? "Because if God didn't spare the natural branches, He will not spare you either." You better make sure that you're faithful and you're legitimate and you're true. Verse 22, "Behold the kindness and severity of God, to those who fail severity. But to you, God's kindness. If you continue in His kindness, otherwise you'll also be cut off. And they also if they do not continue in their unbelief will be grafted in."

Do you see the distinction here? You have this salvation blessing trunk, the Jews were a part of it, they're cut off because of unbelief. Gentile church is grafted in, some of them are false. They'll be cut off. But in the future, Israel will be regrafted in. We're living in the time when the Gentiles are grafted in. That's the church, that's a separate entity. Israel's history sort of stopped at the point of their unbelief and it starts at the point of the Rapture of the church when they're placed back in to the true. Obviously in the church are Jew and Gentile, Galatians 3:28, even now. But I'm talking about them in terms of a national salvation.

Verse 24 says, "If you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree and grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree," that is you were yanked out of your pagan religion, placed into the true blessing, "How much more than these who are the natural branches be grafted in to their own olive tree?" If you don't believe in the future salvation of Israel, you have a lot of problems with the text of Scripture. I don't want you to be uninformed, brethren, of this mystery so that you'll not be wise in your estimation that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. The fullness of the Gentiles, that phrase speaks of the church's completion. "Then all Israel will be saved."

Whoo, that's a lot. At the Rapture, the church meets Christ in the air. At the Second Coming, Christ returns to earth with the church. At the Rapture, Mount of Olives is untouched. At the Second Coming, it is split. At the Rapture, the earth remains the same. At the Second Coming, the earth is transformed. At the Rapture, living saints are translated. At the Second Coming, no saints are translated. They're simply taken into the Kingdom alive in their human form. At the Rapture, the world is not judged and sin gets worse. At the Second Coming, sin is judged and the world is far better. At the Rapture, the reign of Antichrist is triggered. At the Second Coming, the reign of Christ is triggered. At the Rapture, the body goes to heaven. At the Second Coming, it comes to earth. The Rapture is imminent, sign less. The Second Coming has distinct signs. The Rapture concerns only the saved. The Second Coming, the saved and the unsaved.

All right, there's your eschatology 101 right there. Okay? Now tonight we're going to...we only went...I think we only looked at just a couple of verses, didn't we? So we'll do the rest tonight. But I have some things that I want further to describe about what's going to happen when the Lord comes.

Father, we thank You for our time this morning of worship and time in Your Word. We have really taken in a lot. We thank You for the consistent reminders that we have that this is a book that is divine, that its consistency and its truthfulness and its power is undiminished under all the onslaughts of those who would attack its truth. Thank You that You have given us the Spirit of God to be our teacher and a love for the truth with that. Bless this dear congregation. I pray, Lord, that You would keep them on the alert, I pray that You would work in the hearts of those who have not yet embraced Christ as Savior and Lord. May they know the terrifying things that are to come in the future and even more terrifying in eternal hell without God. I pray, Lord, today that sinners will repent and embrace Christ and that believers will rejoice in our blessed hope. I pray even now that You'll draw into our prayer room those who need Christ, those who need help, those that need prayer or counsel. Thank You, Lord, for all that You're doing in all our lives through Your truth, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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