

# The Beginning of the End (Part 1)

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 20 October 2019

Preacher: Bill Story

[ 0 : 00 ] So back in 1989, it feels like 18, when I was a youth pastor, I had purchased a book the year before in 1988, which was a book called 88 Reasons Why Christ Will Return in 1988. So I bought that book in 1988, and then I brought it out and showed my youth group in 1989, when Christ had not yet returned in 1988. And I asked them, any of you want to buy this valuable book? It'll prepare you for Jesus coming back last year. Of course, there were a couple of boys there that thought that would be cool to have that book. Yeah, you know, Jesus is returning in 1988, and it's 1989. Actually, it's 2019, and he still hasn't returned. I bought that book because I knew it would be false, and there are many, there are always false teachers who think they know the secret, who think they know more than others, who want to let you in on their secret that they have so wisely come up with. This is what

Jesus has warned us will happen in the beginning of the end. Deceivers will come. Well, how do we look at prophecy? We're dealing with a different kind of literature here in Mark 13. Up to this point, we've been dealing with narrative. Narrative is just simply telling the story, and we interpret that narrative very literally. Jesus went from here to here. These are the words that he taught. He taught and explained things of real present life. Now he's going to talk about future things. Well, how do we understand prophecy? We have many books in the Old Testament and a couple in the New that have prophetic writings in them. Thinking of the book of Revelation is a prophecy. It has lots of symbols in it. Lots of dramatic language. How are we to understand all of that? Isaiah, Jeremiah, the prophets of the old, Daniel. We're going to be looking at Daniel as we walk through this book because it has direct relevance to understanding verse 14 and following. How are we to read it? How are we to take it?

So that's what we're going to be careful about doing. So when we look at prophecy of the future, what is the value of it? Well, prophecy is a bit like space travel. You know, when you go out into space and you look back at Earth, you know, we've all done it.

We've all done it. No, we can imagine our astronauts going out and they look back and they always proclaim what a beautiful sight, what an incredible perspective it is. Well, they look back and they get a new perspective of the world. Instead of being where we are and kind of looking out and we only see parts of the world at a time, they get way out there and can kind of see the whole thing all at once.

And they get all, they learn new things about weather patterns. They learn new things about areas, geography and places of the earth they hadn't necessarily known about before.

[ 3 : 36 ] So with prophecy, prophecy takes us apart from our immediate circumstances where we're thinking about the here and now and gives us a new perspective because all of a sudden we're looking at things from the future. We're looking at things from a new perspective. So it gives us kind of that big picture.

Where is God going? What is God's plan? What is yet to come? What can we expect? And that's what prophecy is helping us with. To have perspective for living in the now. So Mark 13, Jesus begins an all new teaching section on future events. What will the future hold? What can we expect next? I want you to notice in verse 1, it begins with a picture. Mark tells us that Jesus comes out of the temple and as they come out of the temple, one of his disciples says to him, look teacher, what wonderful stones, what wonderful buildings. It's a bit like a tourist. You know, if you were to go to Jerusalem, you would go to certain places and say, oh, wow, look at that. You could go to that temple mount today. Of course, it's not the Jewish temple mount. It's the Muslim temple mount. It has a big gold dome on it, exactly over the Holy of Holies area, where underneath. I've been in that dome, and where you look straight down at the middle of that dome, you can see where the ark's at, because it's the only exact measured rectangle in that section. It's all rough rock, but that's perfectly

flat. Just coincidentally, the same exact size as the ark of the covenant. And you can see the foundation outlines. When I went there in 95, I had just read a biblical archaeology review article of that, so I knew what to look for. And me and my brother go in there, and I say, see that rectangle down there? That's where the ark's at. The hair on the back of your neck starts standing up. This is where the Holy of Holies was. Well, it's real. It was right there. Anyway.

So Jesus is leaving the temple. So you're like tourists, and here's a disciple. Remember, most of his disciples, except for Judas, were all from the north. They're from Galilee. They're fishermen and workers. And so they only make, you know, a couple trips a year down to Jerusalem. And so it's kind of like being on vacation again, being on tour. And so they don't live every day with the temple in front of them. They're just looking at it like, wow. And there's a reason to be impressed with the temple in 30 AD at this time. The temple was the largest temple of the ancient world.

It had been under construction by that point for about 47 years. Herod was rebuilding it. Herod, who was not a Jew, was trying to impress the Jew and get the favor of the Jews. And so he poured money and labor into this rebuilding of the temple, which had been destroyed about 200 years before Christ. One of its destructions. The outer court, just the big area of the temple mount, was 35 acres for men or for non-farmers. That's about 12 football fields. Oh, I get it now. I can see. I can picture 12 football fields. That's big. The sanctuary itself was 90 feet long by 30 feet wide by 30 feet high.

[ 7 : 46 ] This building is 33 feet this way. From that wall to there is 55 feet. The temple was just the holy sanctuary. It was bigger than this building. The holy of holies was 30 by 30 by 30.

That's not 30 feet high, right? 30 is about 30 feet is about from that wall here. I was in my tape measure the other day. So that's how big the holy of holies are. That's pretty big. Bigger than you think.

And then went another 60 feet down there. But here's the thing. The temple was covered in gold. Covered in silver. There was lots of colors. Have you ever read the description of the temple?

They were to use all these different colors and images of pomegranates and all these kind of pictures in their chair beam. And they were to use these colors. Blue, crimson, and purple.

All weaved into the carpets. All weaved into the curtains. Carpets. I said carpets. No carpets. Holy ground. And what Josephus says. Josephus was a first century historian.

[ 9 : 13 ] A Jewish historian working for the Romans. Writing a history for the Romans. But he writes about the temple both before and after it was destroyed.

So he's seen it both ways. And in its glory days he said it was really something to behold. Because if you stand on the Mount of Olives where Jesus was looking at the temple.

You're about 300 feet higher than where the temple sat on Mount Moriah. So you're looking down on the temple. And when the sun came up behind you in the east.

Right? Sun rises in the east, right? The sun shines down on this temple which is gold and silver. You know what happens? Dazzling colors.

Dazzling brightness. People approaching the temple when the sun shines on it are... Wow. The glory of the temple. I never thought of that before until I read what Josephus said about it.

[ 10 : 18 ] I was like, wow. It was impressive. It was amazing. There's nothing like that today. There's bigger buildings. There's fancier buildings. Nothing like that.

You don't have buildings covered in gold today. Do we? There are no. Fake gold. Gold paint. The chips. So have that picture.

So you can imagine one of his disciples saying, Look, Master, what buildings, what stones. Here's the other thing about the stones. The stones that were used to build the temple were massive.

Josephus measured them. He tells us that they were 37 feet long, which is from that wall to about halfway through this pew. 12 feet high, 18 feet wide.

So halfway across. That's one stone. And there were several. In the walls and the foundations. Remember, the temple kept going up as you went to new courts.

[ 11 : 26 ] Come in the court of the Gentiles. You go up steps. The next court. Up steps. The next court. Up steps. The next court. Until you're in the temple itself. The highest court. Huge stones.

In fact, people today don't believe Josephus when he says that's how big they were. But actually, you can go. You can actually go to the Temple Mount and you can see on the western side the foundation under the temple, what's now called the Western Wall.

Right? That wasn't the temple. That was simply on the wall below where the Temple Mount was. So you can still go. You can see some of the stone work there on the wall. And you can look deeper down where archaeologists have dug and you can see the stones that were there for Solomon's Temple.

You know, when they built temples in those days and when they built cities, they didn't clear the debris. They just built on top. So you have Solomon's Temple way down there and you have the next one above that one and then you have Herod's Temple.

They didn't clear it like we do today. They just kept building on top. They got higher and higher. It's kind of like the mountains, the College Mountains over there where Yale and Princeton are still competing about whose mountain is higher because they keep stacking and working there more.

[12:39] I don't know why I went there. So the picture here is they come out of this temple and it's an amazing, impressive temple.

And the disciple is fascinated and impressed. It's beautiful. But that's not how Jesus saw it. That was all external.

That's all periphery. Jesus was more concerned about what was inside the temple. We already know what he thought about the inside of the temple because whenever he'd come in and cleared it out and then condemned it.

So, Jesus responds in verse 2. Look, teacher, what beautiful buildings. Verse 2, And Jesus said to him, Yeah, look at those buildings.

Look at them. They're not going to last. In fact, not one stone upon another will be left, but all will be pulled down.

[13:59] So let's look at this response of Jesus. He tells about, we're going to look at several prophecies in this chapter. We're going to look at the first two today. First one in verse 2 about the destruction of the temple and then the next one where Jesus gives the disciples understanding of what they can expect in the days to come in verses 5 through 8.

What the future holds. He's preparing his disciples. They ask the question in verse 3. Now, verse 1, they're coming out of the temple.

Notice in verse 3, now they're across the way sitting on the Mount of Olives. Okay? If you come out of Jerusalem on the east side, you come out the gate, you go down a valley into the Kidron Valley and then you go back up the Mount of Olives and ascend up on top.

And so, since it's a little higher than Jerusalem, they're able to go about 300 feet higher and look down upon it. Amazing, my rotator cuff doesn't hurt while I'm preaching. I just realized, I can't raise my arm and I just did.

Thank you for praying. Thank you, Lord. So, so you could look at it. So, that's where they're at.

[15:17] Now they're sitting across the way and looking at it. And so, Jesus had made this prophecy about it being destroyed and the disciples asked when. When is this going to happen? And what's the sign of when these things are about to be accomplished?

We want to know when. Well, Jesus will ultimately tell them when, but first he's going to tell them of the things that happened before that and things that we can expect to be happening which are actually not the signs of the end.

So, we're looking at two things today. The, the, the first prophecy about the temple and secondly about the false signs of the end. So, first in verse two he tells us that the temple in Jerusalem will be entirely obliterated.

Leveled to the ground. Not just destroyed, not just ruined, but leveled. Obliterated. So, notice three things. First, I want you to notice his declaration in verse two.

Then we will look at the destruction as it is fulfilled and then we're going to ask the question what difference does it make? So what? What difference does it make that the temple was destroyed? So, first of all, look at what he says in verse two.

[16:30] Great buildings, where no stone will be left upon another which will not be destroyed. And actually in that statement it's very awkward to translate because Jesus uses a double negative twice.

In other words, he's saying not one stone, no stone, not one, will be left upon another. Which, that stone, each stone, absolutely not, not, not, not, destroyed.

It's very awkward to translate, but it's a way of saying this is going to be a total annihilation. Not even one stone will be left standing on another's stone.

It'll be so complete, so decimated, so obliterated, so leveled, that destruction and the ruin will be total. Now, we know that this, that this destruction of the temple was fulfilled 40 years later, in 70 A.D.

we know. This is a historical event. In 66 A.D., the Jews revolted against Nero, who wouldn't.

[ 17 : 52 ] The guy was nuts and crazy, killing people and doing whatever he wanted, burning the city and blaming it on the Christians. So there was a revolt against Nero. Nero, as emperor, isn't going to stand for that.

No emperor of Rome would. He's going to crush these people. So Nero doesn't live to 70 A.D., but this Daspasian, the emperor after him, was the one that ordered the destruction of the temple.

What's interesting is that Jesus said there won't be one stone left on another. Well, the temple wasn't actually destroyed that way. The temple was actually destroyed by fire.

That's how Rome attacked cities and they burned them down the ground. So the whole city and the temple was burned. But what's interesting is that after it was burned, the emperor ordered the general, who was Titus, who would later be the emperor, to then take every stone and pull it down. that was the fulfillment of Jesus' promise. The city was burned, the temple was burned, but it was literally the emperor saying, I want you to humiliate these people.

[ 19 : 13 ] They dare revolt against me, I will show them who's lost, who's in control. Level it. I don't want one stone left on another.

Level it. first they did it. There was no prophecy, there is no prophecy more literally fulfilled than this one.

Not one stone upon another. The city was crushed, even the walls were flat. Here's what Josephus says about this fulfillment.

moment. He says, Caesar ordered that the whole city and the temple to be raised to the ground. All the rest of the wall encompassing the city was so completely leveled to the ground as to leave future visitors to the spot, no ground for believing it had ever been in heaven.

And if you came to Jerusalem after 70 AD and visited the spot, Josephus said, it's like it never existed. There wasn't even ruins.

[ 20 : 23 ] It was leveled. Flat. Like, oh, this would be a good place to build a city. Go flat on it. So what's the difference?

Why is it important? What? Jesus tells us that this temple would be destroyed. Well, how is that significant? What does that matter? Especially 2,000 years later, why do we care?

Why is that important for Mark to preserve that? Well, think about this. How did the temple relate to Jewish life? How did they view the temple?

Was it just kind of a side thing? Like, for some people, churches are kind of a, you know, you do it on the weekend, it's convenient when you want to go. What was the temple for the Jew?

Think about this. It is how they came to God. It is where they worshipped God. It is where they fulfilled the commands that God gave them to fulfill.

[ 21 : 32 ] It's how they dealt with sin. See, the destruction of the temple means the end of sacrifices, it means the end of the priesthood. All of a sudden you've got a whole bunch of priests with nothing to do.

You have worship. Nowhere to go to worship. You have no way to come to God. It was the way that you came to God. Remember, you came, you brought a sacrifice, the sacrifice was to remove your guilt, your guilt, all of a sudden no temple, no sacrifice, no coming to God.

Now the temple had been rebuilt several times. It was built originally by Solomon in 950 BC.

It was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586. Rebuilt again later by Ezra, Nehemiah, Zerubbabel. I like that, that's a good name too.

That's Zerubbabel, that'd be good for a grandkid. He came back and rebuilt the temple, the city, the walls. Okay, that gets destroyed again in about 200 BC before Christ.

[ 22 : 46 ] And about 37 BC, Herod starts to rebuild it again. This is actually the third temple. But since then, it's been 2,000 years.

If God was going to rebuild it, wouldn't he do it by then? Don't know. He may still rebuild it. There's people that say it's going to be rebuilt.

You can actually go to Jerusalem. There's a shop there with all the temple furnishings in it. You can go in there. It's really, really cool. You see the gold lampstand?

It's about seven feet tall. Pretty impressive. Ephod they're working on in there. They've got all the right jewels and all that. They've got a red heifer out in Texas, I think. there weren't any more and they had to re-find one and make one.

Anyway, there are Jews planning to retake that temple mount and rebuild the temple. My point is simply, why has God not had it rebuilt for 2,000 years?

[ 23 : 51 ] because before no more than 400 years passed in between construction. It was 400 years between Egypt and the building of the temple, 400 years between Solomon and the next one, 400 years to the New Testament, 2,000 years since then.

Big gap. God's God's going to rebuild the temple. The temple's been replaced. Jesus said, destroy this temple pointing at himself and I will raise it up in three days.

He's the temple. He's now the way to God. He's now the way to deal with sacrifice. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. We don't need those sacrifices anymore.

If God's going to rebuild the future, I don't know why. Why would we go back to animal sacrifice?

The only reason I can think of if he wants to do that, I'm not going to argue with him.

He re-does it. It must be some mysterious reason to reach the Jews. Otherwise, I don't know why he would do it. Theologically it makes no sense. The temple's been replaced.

[ 25 : 08 ] Jesus is the temple and then Jesus said, my church is the temple. Remember, we're all the living stones put together. We're the temples. The temples were over the people of God.

God had warned Israel from the start that the temple could be destroyed. Back when Solomon built the temple, after he had built it, the Lord appeared to Solomon and said to him, if you walk before me and keep my statutes and do all that I command you to do, your throne will be established forever like I promised your father David.

But, 1 Kings 9, 6, but if you turn aside from following me, you or your children and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you, but you go and serve other gods and worship them, then guess what?

I will cut off Israel from the land that I have given them, and the house, the temple that I have consecrated for my name, I will cast out of my sight, and Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples, and this house will become a heap of ruins.

Everyone, watch what he continues to say to Solomon, everyone passing by it will be astonished and will hiss, and they will say, why has the Lord done this to this land and to this house?

[ 26 : 38 ] Then they will say, because they abandoned the Lord their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods and worshipped them and served them, therefore the Lord has brought all this disaster on them.

And so in 70 AD, God once again judges the nation of Israel. For abandoning them. They had a beautiful temple. In fact, the construction of the temple was only just finished years before it was destroyed.

About mid-60s, it was finally finished. Oh, it's done! Four years later, well, 80 some odd years of work.

Level. So, Christ gives us, first of all, prophecy of the temple being obliterated.

So the disciples naturally are interested in verse 3. They ask two different questions. Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?

[ 27 : 46 ] So they want a date. Give us a date when it's going to happen. And tell us the sign that will precede it. The sign so that we know, here it comes. they want to know.

Don't we? Oh, you said, you already said, a bunch of you already said, I don't want to know. I don't want to know. It's hard enough to live in the present. Well, these guys wanted to know because the temple was huge in their life.

This is big time change. So when's that going to happen? Are you going to do it? When's it going to happen? So, next, Jesus begins to share with the disciples what they can expect to happen next.

But this prophecy in verses 5-8 are actually just the beginning of birth pains. They're actually false signs of the end. Because here's, he said, you will see these things, these things will happen, but these are not the end.

These are just the beginning of the birth pains. it's just the beginning of an intense period of suffering. Mothers know what birth pains are, right?

[ 29 : 00 ] They wake you up, right? I have no clue. I understand. Intense. Intense.

Period of intense pain and suffering. Please refer to it. This will be a time of intense suffering, but it's not the end. So, beware.

There will be false signs of the end, but they're only the beginning. I want you to first notice the focus of Jesus' answer. What he does not give is a timetable. What he does not give is a checklist. What he gives is a very general series of events that will occur.

And the impression is they're just going to keep going. Kingdoms are going to come and go. Nations are going to come and go. Earthquakes are going to come. Families are going to come. They're all going to have to keep going.

And it's not the end. He's calling for vigilance but not calculation of the day. He's not saying, get your chart ready and we can fill it out. He's simply saying, here's some things that are going to happen.

[ 30 : 08 ] And they seem very dramatic and they seem very alarming, but they're not it. in fact, what his focus is, look at verse 5.

Jesus began to say to them, see that no one will mislead you. The word see there means to watch, to be on guard, to be vigilant. Watch out lest you be deceived.

Again in verse 7. When you hear of wars and rumors of war, what? Don't be alarmed. Don't be worried.

Don't be surprised. These things are going to happen. They're terrible, yes. He doesn't say, don't have compassion on those in famine. He simply says, don't be alarmed.

These things are going to go on and on and on. In fact, there's a sense that the end is delayed.

Well, we know from 2,000 years later, it's been delayed a while, hasn't it?

[ 31 : 09 ] Those things have been going on before the first century. But certainly since Jesus said it, they were going on between 30 AD and 70 AD. There were wars and rumors of wars, there were earthquakes and there were famines, right just in Judea.

And we've seen it ever since. So I want you to notice his focus is not on the timetable and the checklist. His focus is on be vigilant, be on the alert, be on guard against error, be on guard and do not be alarmed when these tragedies happen.

So two warnings, watch, verse 5 is guard against deception. Watch, lest you be led astray. Well, who's going to lead you astray? Verse 5, verse 6, many will come in my name saying, I am he, and they will leave many astray.

Who are these guys? They come in my name. They're self-proclaimed prophets. Self-proclaimed prophets offering a false hope.

We see them all the time. They're on TV. They got books. They got popular books. They come in the guise of religion.

[ 32 : 24 ] They come in the guise of other things. They're saviors. They got the answer for you. If you just follow their system. notice they says, they come in my name.

They claim to speak for Jesus. They claim to speak. They're Christians. And they're Christian teachers and leaders. And they claim to speak in his name.

So, what do we do? We, oh yeah, he's a Christian. Except, what he says, totally contradicts what those Christians say.

He's right. I am. It's like, well, it's their truth against my truth. So, what's the truth? How do we judge?

They not only claim, they come in his name, but they say, I am. They not only claim to speak for Jesus, they claim to speak as Jesus. And the answer, follow me.

[ 33 : 24 ] Only I got the view right. Don't listen to those other guys. I got right. If you start hearing that from this pulpit, leave.

What I will say to you is, check it out. Let's be careful that we're getting this right. Who cares what my opinion is? What is gossip?

That's why we're going to be very careful in this chapter because there's lots of different opinions. people. And we don't need to be divided by that. I'm really okay with different opinions on the future. I'm a pan-millennialist. It will all pan out. You heard it, right? Bad joke, right? Huh? Pan-millennialist. Because you're supposed to be pre-mill or a post-mill or an all-mill.

Why are we going there? That's Revelation. What is just yet? Sorry. It used to be a big deal. It used to be a big deal. In fact, no.

[ 34 : 34 ] In the first century, there was all kinds of false prophets who were leading many astray. So the apostles saw this right away. Even after Jesus' death, there were people already rising up who were claiming to be the one, claiming to speak for Christ or claiming to be like Christ or claiming to be as Christ.

The book of Acts tells us of certain ones. There were at least two named in the book of Acts. There was a Thutis and there was an Egyptian that the book of Acts recalls about how they led people astray.

Just during the early years after Jesus died. So there are these folks that come. Peter writes about it in 2 Peter 2. He says, false prophets also arose among the people.

Just as there will be false teachers among you. Peter's saying that to a church, by the way. Imagine Peter coming here and saying, there will be false teachers among you.

But whoa. What do you mean? Well, Peter knows that's how it goes. See, the deception doesn't come from that, it comes from the end. Inside the church.

[ 35 : 48 ] Maybe not in here. But it can and will. So he says, just as there will be false teachers among you.

Who, what, what do these people do? Who will secretly bring in destructive heresies? Even, in other words, a heresy is a different kind of teaching.

Orthodoxy means straight teaching. You get an orthopedic bed, right? It means it's straight. Ortho means straight. So orthodoxy is straight teaching.

Right from Jesus through the apostles to us. It's orthodoxy. It's straight. Heterodoxy, or heresy, is off the market.

Just take it a little tangent over here. It's off. Okay? So he said they bring in destructive heresies. Even denying the master who bought them.

[ 36 : 45 ] Bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality. And because of them, the way of truth will be blasphemed.

And in their greed, they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle. Their destruction is not asleep.

By the way, these people who lead people astray, they will be held camera. And I think they mostly will be exposed. God's going to reveal them.

They're not going to get away with it forever. Okay? They will be judged. In other words, Peter's also saying they're going to be judged very harshly.

Because it's not just they're responsible for them, they're responsible for hurting others. They've led sheep astray. everything. I don't want to be standing next to them on Jesuit Day.

[ 37 : 51 ] But notice the character of it. It's destructive heresy. It's sensuality. It's the way of truth is blasphemy. They exploit you with false words. They teach things like you don't need to repent to be okay.

So Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6, 9, do not be deceived. And then he makes a list of all kinds of different sins. He doesn't pick on any one sin by the way.

He lists all kinds of different sins. He said people who continue to live in these lifestyles without repentance will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Don't be deceived. No one's simply forgiven if you live unrepentant.

Don't be deceived. See that's what these guys were teaching. You're okay? Your lifestyle's fine. You're a gossip? Well, keep on gossiping.

God doesn't care. You want to sleep with somebody outside of marriage? Well, go ahead.

[ 39 : 00 ] God doesn't care. Want to continue to do what your old life has always done? Do it now as a believer? Do not be deceived.

Those who continue in their pre-Christian lifestyle without repentance will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Don't be deceived by that. He's not saying you earn it.

Okay? Don't get that. They're not saying we earn it. He's saying there's some change. And it doesn't mean you stop having those desires and all that. We all know that's still there.

But we by the spirit are working on overcoming them. We care about that. They don't just say, well, I don't have to change. Well, then someone's off.

So this is the kind of thing that deceivers will say. They take that little truth. God forgives everyone. Yes, God forgives everyone who repents and believes.

[ 40 : 01 ] They're not earning that salvation. they're accepting it. It's just when I accept it, I want to be different. Okay? That's the difference. So they find ways to kind of make your sin okay.

Or they go the other way. And they make it all about these rules and laws. You better shape up and you better, you know, get under that.

That shame and abuse. Okay. And then notice in verse 7, he has one more warning. He says, don't be alarmed when you hear about wars and rumors and wars and earthquakes and famines.

Don't be diverted from the task. Don't be alarmed. Don't be startled by wars. Don't be surprised by them. In other words, don't focus on them. They happen. They're tragic. But that's not something for us to focus on.

We can have compassion toward it. We do that when there's an earthquake and we hear people are hurt. He doesn't say don't have compassion on the people in famine. He's just saying don't make it your focus.

[ 41 : 15 ] Don't get all, oh boy, here it comes. Here's the end. Climate change. Here's the end. Don't be alarmed. bad. These things are going to happen.

As bad as they are. We live in a sinful world. And look what he says at the end of verse 7.

He says when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, don't be alarmed. Why? This must take place. This must take place. Literally, it is necessary for this to happen.

In other words, this is God's plan. This is God's purpose. Wars. Really? War is God's purpose? Yeah. Yeah.

Look at the Old Testament. Yeah. He's sovereign over this. He has a plan. He has a destiny. We trust him.

[ 42 : 16 ] And these signs of wars and earthquakes and famines are not the end. They're not the end. we think when they happen. I imagine the folks living during World War I and World War II.

I thought maybe this is the end. Right. Because it's pretty bad. Jesus says that's not the end. It's a false sign. Don't get hung up on it. And by the way, there's an impression here that you could expect some delay. It's not the end. These things are going to go on. Nations are going to come and go.

Kingdoms are going to come and go. Think about the history of the world. Egypt was a kingdom and empire. How long they last? I don't know. It's not a real act. Comes along Babylon, then Assyria, then Persia, then Alexander the Great and the Greeks, and then Rome.

At the time, each of those kingdoms were indestructible. They were in control of the world. Skip ahead. Germany, France, England, United States.

[ 43 : 30 ] They come and go. God has a timetable for each. We learned that all the way back in Genesis when God says to Abraham, your descendants, 400 years later, will come back here.

And the 400 years is because the people in the land are still on my timetable. But their time's up in 400 years and that's when you come in and take the promise. God sets a time for every nation and kingdom and country.

there's a time ticking for America. I have a lot of nationals featured in here.

Just recognize nations come and go. There's times of intense suffering. In fact, he calls it, these are the beginning of birth banks. There are times of intense suffering. They come and they go.

Don't be alarmed. Don't be surprised. Don't be callous.

[ 44 : 36 ] But don't make that your emphasis. We hear people doing that. There's books written on it. There's sermons on it. Well, here we go.

Here we go. Here we go. Here we go. Here we go. Here we go. So, the point I think that Jesus makes, that we can apply today, is here's his prophecies.

The temple will be destroyed and beware false signs of the end or only the beginning. The point I think for us today is to not be diverted from the main task. There's really one task for us to do as believers and disciples of Jesus.

Don't let these other things distract you from the task. All these tragedies are false signs. They're not the end. Focus on the one thing. Okay, what's the one thing, Pastor? We'll look at the next verse, verse 9.

Be on your guard, for they will deliver you over to councils and you will be beaten in synagogues.

Oh, thank you very much, Pastor. And you will stand before governors and kings for my sake to do what? To bear witness before me.

[ 45 : 48 ] Verse 10. And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. What's the one thing? Witness of the gospel.

That's the one thing. Don't be diverted from the task. Wars come and go, nations come and go, famines and earthquakes, yes they're tragic and let's be compassionate, but that's not our emphasis.

Don't be alarmed, don't be distracted, don't be diverted from the task. Keep witnessing the good news. Because the end is not yet. And keep doing it until the end comes.

Because God's holding off that day until everyone has been saved that he desires to save. Can I meddle with you for a minute?

Okay, I'm going to hear it. What would make a difference? You've got a meddling. Just for internal, just for self-looking, how's your focus?

[ 46 : 55 ] Are you anxious for the future and missing the present? Or are you depending on Christ to stay vigilant? Do you focus on opportunities to witness?

I want more and more for our church to think that way. I want our eyes to start turning outward more and more. To bear with what we're teaching the men about evangelism.

How do we share our faith? How do we give that? That's what we're here for. We're here to love one another, absolutely. That also is our witness. We've got to speak up once more.

Are you ready? May God keep us vigilant and on guard that we may witness of Christ in this dark world. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you that you are Lord and Savior, that you know the future, that you are in control of the future. Help us, oh Father, to have the perspective that you're giving us here, that no matter what happens in the days ahead, our task is still the same.

[ 48 : 11 ] To be vigilant, to not be afraid, to not be alarmed, but to watch out for error and to continue to look for opportunities to share your gospel.

Encourage us in this, we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.