

Salvation Through Tribulation

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[0 : 0 0] Now, I wanted to begin with those passages because I think we tend to frame our minds when it comes to tribulation and that word and that dynamic, that season, this kind of season of suffering and hardship. I think we tend to think of tribulation only as a future series of events in which we will have little to no participation. Typically, that's how our minds are framed. We hear people use that word tribulation. It's an odd word. It's not one that we use very often, but when we come to the Bible, it's there a lot. And we often frame our mind back or forward to that Revelation 7 passage, that Revelation 9 passage. And what is it that we think of? Well, there's going to be a massive amount of tribulation at the end. I'm probably not going to be around for that, but I guess it's helpful to know, right? And we think of it that way. But then as we begin to look at the scriptures as a whole, and to be sure, there is a great tribulation that is coming.

It still awaits its final fulfillment. But tribulation is not something that will only be experienced by a small percentage of believers at the end of the age. In regards to this verse in John 16, Alistair Begg said, surely that is a word for today. Jesus is not just talking about one century. He's talking about the totality of the earthly pilgrimage. And when we get here to Mark 13, Jesus introduces the reality of earthly tribulation that will culminate in eternal salvation for believers at his return. And again, it's a sobering reality that's paired with the glorious promise of God's amazing grace. And it's this dynamic, this concept that perhaps inspired John Newton to write in his famous hymn, Through Many Dangers, Toils, and Snares, I Have Already Come.

It was grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home. There's the reality of suffering. There's the reality of tribulation. There's the reality of hardship. There's also the reality of the grace of God that superintends all the events of the earth and all the things that you endure in this life. And grace will lead you home. Mark 13. Look with me at verse 14.

But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be, 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 nor enter his house to take anything out of it. And let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. That's a bit like the firefighters that come to your fourth grade elementary school class, and they're telling you what to do when there's a smoke alarm that goes off in your house. And they say, don't worry about grabbing all your stuff. Just hit the road. Get out of the house. That's a bit what Jesus is saying here. Verse 17. And alas for women who are pregnant, and for those who are nursing infants in those days, pray that it may not happen in winter. For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of creation that God created until now and never will be. And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect whom he chose, he shortened the days. And then if anyone says to you, look, here is the Christ, or look, there he is, do not believe it. For false Christ and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders to lead astray if it were possible. The elect, but be on guard.

Lord, I have told you all these things beforehand. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. Amen. Well, let's pray one more time and ask for the Lord's help as we come to this text. Because as many Sundays go, my best preparation prior to preaching is to go to the Lord in prayer and say, help. And maybe we'll all pray that prayer this morning. Father, you are good to give us your word. And you are faithful to give us the warnings that it contains here. And I ask that you would help us not to despair, though we need to be aware of what is to come. But to see the promises of your grace that are so prevalent in this passage.

[5 : 44] Open our hearts to understand your truth. And help me now as I preach your word. In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, we're picking up here where we left off in the Olivet Discourse, which is getting its name from the place where Jesus taught it to his disciples, namely the Mount of Olives. It was adjacent to the temple complex in Jerusalem, but it was outside of the city, as you well know. And as they are looking on the temple, this lesson is prompted by one of Jesus' disciples who, in amazement, looks at the grandeur of the temple and comments on how wonderful and glorious it actually was. And of course, Jesus' response to that remark by the unnamed disciple was that it would all be utterly destroyed. And so you can imagine walking out of the temple, and here is your friend that says, this is just so wonderful. Look at how amazing this is. And

Jesus immediately responds and says, well, don't get too excited about it because it's not going to be very long from now, and all of this is going to be absolutely destroyed. Not one stone will be left unturned, Jesus says. And then he leaves the disciples to ponder on that for a little bit.

They go out to the Mount of Olives, and there are four of them who approach Jesus privately, it seems, and they inquired about when this was going to happen and what would be the signs preceding its fulfillment. And so as we're approaching this text, it's important that we remember there are two dimensions of prophetic fulfillment taking place in this chapter. There's the historical dimension, which relates specifically to the destruction of the temple in AD 70. But the events surrounding the destruction of the temple point forward to the ultimate fulfillment of Christ's return at the end of the age. So there's a historical dimension to this chapter. There's an eschatological dimension to this chapter. Eschatological meaning the study of the end times and the last things, the great day of the Lord. So just as the Lord's first advent leads to the dissolution of the temple and ushers in a new covenant from God, so will his second advent that we read of just a moment ago usher in the dissolution of this world and the dawn of the new heavens and the new earth. And that's the thing that is being dealt with here in this passage. It's going back and forth between these two pictures. Now at that point, the disciples, remember, had no theological capacity for understanding religious life apart from the temple.

Apart from those forms of worship, they did not understand or comprehend a spiritual life that could be faithful and fruitful. And Jesus's answer here corrects their thinking. They thought that the destruction of the temple surely meant the consummation of the kingdom and the end of the age.

Jesus corrects their thinking and essentially says that the destruction of the temple was not the end of the age, but actually the beginning of a new era that is pushing history forward to his return.

[9 : 13] So we need to remember those two dimensions if we're going to really begin to understand what Jesus was trying to teach here. Maybe just a simple illustration of that if maybe it will be helpful to you. Have you ever used a camera that has a prime lens on it or a lens that has the ability to bring one object into extreme focus while everything else in the picture is somewhat blurred or out of focus? Have you ever used a camera like that? If you have a smartphone, perhaps you can do that in portrait mode or even if you don't know what I'm talking about with cameras, you could take your hand and put it directly in front of your face and focus your eyes on your hand. It doesn't remove everything else that you see. It just puts one particular thing in focus. Now I can leave my hand in front of my face and I can look at Mr. Kuo.

Mr. Kuo is in focus now in my vision. It's not that my hand has disappeared. It's not that it's irrelevant anymore. It's just not the primary focus of what I see. That's what's happening in Mark chapter 13.

There are elements to Jesus's lesson where the temple and its destruction in AD 70 is what's primarily in view. That doesn't mean that the end of the age and all the things surrounding the end of the age are irrelevant to that. They're still in the picture. It's just the temple's in view primarily.

And then there are elements of this chapter where it switches, where the primary view is on the end of the age. It's not that the temple and its relevance to these disciples has disappeared now.

From the picture. It's just that's not the primary thing in focus. And if you need a bit of an interpretive cheat code to help you, this has been helpful to me. It's not foolproof, but maybe it will be helpful to you. You'll notice throughout this chapter a change in the demonstrative pronouns.

[11 : 00] These things, those things. These things seems to be bringing the temple destruction to the primary focus. Those things seems to be bringing the end of the age, the return of Christ into primary focus.

But we need to remember those two dimensions that are interwoven throughout the passage. The other thing that we must remember as we study this chapter, lest we quickly go awry, is what Jesus's intended purpose was in the lesson to begin with. It certainly involves this prophetic disclosure, but the overall objective here is pastoral exhortation. So Jesus wasn't aiming to lay out a blueprint or timeline for future events. His intention here is to instruct his followers in faithful discipleship in the present. So we need to make sure that our primary takeaways from Mark 13 are linked to and flowing from Jesus's primary purpose in Mark 13. This chapter is about teaching believers to cling to the promises of God, to trust the gospel of Jesus, and to live as faithful disciples no matter what comes our way. So we don't come looking for a key to unlock all the mysteries of the future. We come listening to Jesus as he tells us how to love him and obey him as we live through those future realities. Okay, you with me?

Now verses 14 to 27, Jesus reveals that there will be unprecedented tribulation, and it would come as history progresses toward his return in the end of the age. As we'll see, this is historically foreshadowed in the first century, but the focus of thought primarily in these verses is centered on that eschatological fulfillment of the great tribulation and the return of Christ. And to aid our study, I'd like for us to center our focus on Jesus's statement in verse 23. Would you look at it with me again?

Verse 23, Jesus says, be on guard, be prepared, be alert and aware. I have told you all these things before him. So Jesus plainly in verse 23 gives us his purpose in teaching this lesson. He is forewarning them in order that he might forearm them with the truths that they need to endure. As the great shepherd of the sheep, Jesus was preparing his disciples so that they would recognize false teachers and not be deceived by them. He was arming them with truth so that they wouldn't fall away when suffering and death drew near. Remember what we dealt with last week. Your own family might abandon you. You're going to be delivered to councils. Your own life is going to be taken away. And Jesus says, I'm telling you this so that I might forearm you to be prepared not to fall away when the hardship comes. He was teaching them not so that they would comprehend all the details of the future, but so they would recognize them as they unfolded.

And though we live 2,000 years later, Jesus intends to accomplish that same purpose in us today. He is forewarning us in order to forearm us so that we can be faithful now and moving forward until the day that we leave this earth. Two things I'd like to point out in the passage. The first is this, unprecedented tribulation. Unprecedented tribulation. Look with me again at verse 14.

[15 : 05] When you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be, let the reader understand, then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. This is interesting. If you've never read this passage before, you're unfamiliar with some of the major themes of the Bible, you're going to get to this point in reading through Mark and you're immediately going to say, what in the world is this? What is this abomination of desolation? What does that mean?

Where did it come from? What is he doing? All Mark tells us is that when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be, then you need to head for the hills.

The disciples had a distinct advantage over us in this sense because they were very familiar with this term. They knew exactly what Jesus was referring to when he said it. And Mark doesn't give us very much to go on here other than to say in this editorial note, maybe it's in parentheses in your Bible, there's an editorial note not said by Jesus but given by Mark that says, let the reader understand.

That's Mark saying, I'm not going to tell you all about the abomination of desolation, but you can go back to the scriptures and you can find the information that you're looking for. I think that's what Mark is saying. And then we get to Matthew, and Matthew actually helps us a little bit more. It gives us some direction here. Matthew 24 verse 15, so when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, there's a clue for us, standing in the holy place, let the reader understand, Matthew says, then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

So where Mark says that the abomination of desolation will be standing where he ought not to be, Matthew brings some clarity to that, and he says that's actually the holy place. That's the place where God meets with his people. That is where this abomination of desolation figure is going to be, and that's what he will be doing. And then Matthew tells us that if we want some more information about that, we're going to have to go to the book of Daniel. And I'm not going to have you turn there.

[17:18] I'll let you dive into that hole later on in your own personal study. But let me just read two verses that Daniel gives us relating to this term. Chapter 9 and verse 27, Daniel's vision says, and he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. That's the desolation. And on the wing of the abominations shall come one who makes desolate until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator. In other words, there's going to be a figure that's going to come. He's going to do some really bad things. He's going to make it impossible for people to truly worship the Lord in the way that God intended, and then the Lord's going to come and he's going to deal with it. Essentially, that's what Daniel's saying in chapter 9. But then he reiterates it in chapter 11. Daniel 11, 31. Forces from him shall appear, and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering, and they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate. Now Luke helps us here because Luke mentions an army that has come around as a part of the plan of this abomination. Daniel refers to that in chapter 11.

And then we find out that this abomination is being set up in the temple. Mark helps us and personifies it. He says it's not an it, it's a he. It's an individual, and he's going to desecrate the temple of God, and he's going to be powerful. He's going to have a mighty army, and he's going to essentially cause God's people to leave the temple desolate. Now the abomination refers to the egregious behavior of this individual. Desolation describes the result of his sacrilege. And the people of Israel already had an illustration of this happening in real time. In 168 BC, perhaps you'll remember from your history books, Antiochus Epiphanes comes into Jerusalem with a mighty army. He sacks Jerusalem. He sets up a statue to Zeus in the temple, and then he sacrificed a pig on the holy altar. And so the disciples were a rare, not only of Daniel's prophecies, but they were actually familiar with evidence of this kind of behavior in history after Daniel, but before their own time. So what's Jesus saying? We get back to Mark 13.

Jesus is saying there's more of this to come. There's more of this to come, men. Antiochus Epiphanes was not the final fulfillment of Daniel's vision. And indeed, other examples are going to come into play historically through Roman leaders ahead of the temple's destruction. But none of them completely fulfill what the scriptures describe. They are shadows of a final fulfillment when the Antichrist wreaks havoc on the people of God and desecrates the true worship of God, which leads to, as Jesus says here, unimaginable suffering and tribulation for God's people. Paul speaks of it in 2 Thessalonians. He calls him the man of lawlessness. He says, let no one deceive you in any way, for that day will not come, that is the day of the Lord, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called

God or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Okay, Paul makes it very clear. We're not talking about Titus here. We're not talking about Antiochus Epiphanes. We're talking about a future figure who will elevate himself to be God. And so these verses describe this unprecedented tribulation that follows, but then it gives us a certain hope. Now, here's what I want you to see as we move forward. Okay, we're done with the history part, okay? Hang with me. I want you to see the hope that is here, because there is hope. And what Jesus begins to go through here in these next few verses is the places where hope will not be found. And then he goes through the only place that hope can indeed be found. Look at verse 14. Let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down nor enter his house to take anything out. 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 it may not happen in winter. Now, we know this had an immediate application for the disciples because the Lord gave them specific instructions. He said what they were to do and what they were not to do. And though the ultimate fulfillment of this is yet to come, Jesus was teaching these men that they would get a foretaste of this great tribulation in their own lifetime. And indeed, as I read the New Testament, I believe all of those verses we read is indicating the same thing, that there is a final fulfillment that awaits us in the future, but we will all endure a foretaste of this tribulation in our own lifetime. And Jesus says, here's what to do and here's what not to do. And all of these instructions we just read are based on a command to flee. That whenever this figure elevates himself and desecrates the worship of God, run to the mountains, which introduces an interesting question because at the end of verse 13, Jesus had just told the disciples, the one who endures to the end will be saved. And then immediately after he says, but then when this guy comes along the way, you need to run. And if you're like me, you have a bit of a question about that. Is there a conflict between enduring to the end and actually fleeing to the mountains and abandoning Jerusalem in this moment?

And of course we know the Lord doesn't contradict himself, but there's some understanding here that I think we need to have. And again, I think Alistair is helpful. He says he wants them to be absolutely committed for the faith of the gospel, but he wants them to know there's no reason to be fanatical about buildings, namely a temple, or about places, namely Jerusalem. In other words, the Lord is saying you're not tied to this building and you're not tied to this place. You're tied to the gospel. Therefore, endure to the end for the gospel. And there are times when we begin to come to the scriptures and we try to see it first through the lens of our own political or cultural perspective that we begin to confuse standing firm for earthly and temporary things with standing firm on the gospel itself. I watched a documentary last night about two baseball players who defected from Cuba in the 90s and became a really fantastic major league baseball players in the United States. But I thought as they were going through this documentary describing the condition of communism in Cuba, that it was during those baseball players' lifetime that the leader in Cuba allowed them to observe Christmas for the first time in decades. And can you imagine reading this passage as a Cuban in that time frame and beginning to wrap your mind around the dynamic of, well, Fidel Castro must be this abomination of desolation. He's refusing even to allow us to have Christmas in this moment. Do you see what I mean?

[25 : 48] You see what I mean? We can easily begin to look at things from a perspective that the Lord didn't mean for us to look and we begin to defend perspectives that's not really the point of what's happening. What is Jesus saying? Forget about Jerusalem. Forget about the temple. Forget about all the stuff that you've amassed here. There's no hope in those things. Your hope is in the gospel. So when this guy comes up, run. Run. Get out of Dodge. I believe that's the whole point that Jesus is making here. Don't set your affections and your hope and your security on earthly temporal things. No hope will be found in romanticized ideas about Jerusalem. No security will be found in houses. So he says, if you're on the housetop when this thing begins to take place, don't just run down inside the house and hunker down in the closet like a tornado is coming through and hope that you'll be safe. There will be no safety in your house.

Don't go back in to try to grab all the things that you might need as you're on the run. Just run. If you're in the field, forget about your coat. It's not going to provide the comfort that you need. No hope will be found in these earthly things. Don't set your affections there. Don't set your hope on those things. Don't set your security on those things. We have but one hope in life and death and it is in the power of God to save. And that's what Jesus is getting at. When he instructs in verse 18, pray, he says. Pray.

Pray that it doesn't happen in winter because that's going to make things even harder. In Matthew, Matthew adds, pray that it doesn't happen on the Sabbath day because that's going to create a conflict in your mind. Well, should I obey the Lord and run to the mountains or should I observe the Sabbath? Is there going to be a conflict here? Pray that it doesn't happen on the Sabbath.

Pray that it doesn't happen in the winter. Pray you're not pregnant in that moment. And it reminds me of what Paul wrote in Romans chapter 12. As we endure this life, rejoice in the hope that you have. Endure the tribulation. Be constant in prayer.

Because what is prayer at the end of the day? Prayer is a demonstration of our reliance on God alone. He says, forget about the stuff. Set your hope on the Lord. And Jesus gives us two assurances of God's sovereign grace that are to be the foundation of our hope. First, he says, hope in his restraining grace. Hope in his restraining grace. Verse 19. For in those days, there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now and never will be. That's strong. It's going to be bad. And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect whom he chose, he shortened the days.

[29 : 21] Now that's a sobering reality, isn't it? Jesus said, the world's condition is going to get worse. And at this moment, it's going to be worse than at any other point in human history.

James Edwards said, a situation is depicted that has no parallel in human history. Apart from God's gracious intervention and assistance, it will be humanly unsurvivable.

Unsurvivable, Jesus says. But it comes with an assurance that grounds our faith. We have in these two verses part of what I think is the answer to the problem of evil in this world.

Jesus said that if left to ourselves, all human existence would come to an end. He says, no human being would be saved. But by God's grace, we have not been left to ourselves.

He says, in terms of what the evil one will be doing in this world, in terms of the people the evil one will be using in this world, and in terms in relation to the own depravity of our own wickedness of heart, the only thing that will help us in those days is the sovereign God entering our world to restrain the wickedness, to hold back so that his people will be saved. The sovereign God is ruling and reigning over this world, and all of his work serves to provide salvation for his people.

[30 : 59] And no matter how terrible the situation is at the end of the age, it will not be beyond God's sovereign control, nor will it impede his power to save his elect. Now remember all those verses we read at the beginning. Verses 19 and 20 anticipate the end, but Jesus intends for us to recognize it as we face inevitable seasons of tribulation. Now, think about it. What has kept this world from descending into total chaos and calamity? And you may say, well, it seems to me that it has descended into total chaos and calamity. But take an hour or so this afternoon and freshen up on your world history, you'll find there have been many times it's been far worse. There are many places around the world today where it is far worse.

Well, what is keeping the whole of creation from descending into this utter chaos? We mourn the atrocities around the world. But what has kept other nations from committing the same heinous crimes as Putin and the Russian army? We see how God in the mystery of his providence is allowing that to unfold before our eyes. But what's keeping all the other nations from doing the same thing? We think back on the last two years and a global pandemic and all the lives that were lost in that, and we step back and we begin to ask ourselves, well, why, why, why, upon getting COVID-19, was I not one of the ones hospitalized, put on a ventilator, and ultimately that lost my life? And the answers to those things ultimately come down to, we cannot say that we are just by nature more holy and morally superior to Vladimir Putin. That's not the answer. We can't at the end of the day just say, well, I live a healthier lifestyle than many of the people who suffered during the sickness.

That's not the answer. What's the answer? It is because of the restraining grace of God that enters our world to exercise his sovereign control over human life. And if it weren't for the restraining grace of God, humans would have totally decimated our own existence.

And if it wasn't for the grace of God at the end of the age, the same would be true then. So what is the hope that we take? Yes, things are going to get bad.

Why is God going to let them get bad? Well, we don't always have an answer for that. But what is true? He's in control. And he is showing his grace. He is restraining this wickedness for his own purposes of glory and for the good of his people in this world. And we see such a helpful reminder here that the events of history are not mere happenstance. Everything that has ever been or will ever be is under the sovereign control of the one who, according to Romans 8, is working all things together for good to them who love God, who are called according to his purpose. And this work of God in the world does not remove us from tribulation, but he saves us through this tribulation. Do you see?

[34 : 37] Many people get the idea when they come to Christ that by coming to Christ, I am removed from hardship. No, it's actually the opposite. We can expect that as we come to Christ that we will endure greater hardship even than what we might have endured before. But the purpose of God's work in this world is not to remove us from that. It is to save us through all of that. Salvation is not from tribulation. Salvation is through tribulation. That's what Jesus is getting across. So what do we do? We trust the sovereign power and plan of God. What do we do when we have no answer for what's going on around us? We trust the sovereign plan and power of God. What do we do when we want to throw in the towel? We trust the sovereign plan and grace of God. And then we see his securing grace. This is his restraining grace, but then our hope is founded on his securing grace. Verse 21, and I know we need to move to the end, but just hang with me for a few more minutes, okay? Verse 21, and then if anyone says to you, look, here is the Christ, or look, there he is, do not believe it, for false Christ and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders to lead astray, if possible, the elect, but be on guard. I have told you all things beforehand. Jesus reiterates this command to beware of false saviors who will inevitably deceive the world, but there's a little bit of a difference between his mention of it here and earlier in the chapter. Here he says that they will be able, through the power of the evil one, to perform signs and wonders that if it were possible, would even deceive God's chosen.

But I want you to pay attention to the fact that Jesus says, not that these signs and wonders will deceive God's chosen, but that if it were possible, these signs would even deceive God's chosen.

Now those of us who are honest with ourselves recognize that on our own, we really have no hope of staying the course of faith in Christ. Let's be honest. On our best days, there is often doubt.

In the best of times, we may have nights where we lay in the bed and we ask ourselves the question, is this real? Is this actually what I should be doing? Is this actually what I should be believing?

And if we're honest, we know that if it's left up to us, we will be deceived because the deception will be great. I like how MacArthur said one time, he said, if you could lose your salvation, you would.

[37 : 41] So what is exactly what Jesus is getting at here? Well, the emphasis here is not on our personal ability to stay the course. It is on God's sovereign power to secure his chosen, his elect. We are in his hands. So what do we do when things get bad? We commit ourselves to the one who will hold us fast.

That as we'll sing in just a moment, those he saves are his delight. He will hold me fast. Precious in his holy sight, he will hold me fast. He'll not let my soul be lost. His promises shall last.

He will not let my soul be lost. He will not let my soul be lost. He will hold me fast. Things are going to get bad. Stay the course. How do I know I can stay the course? Because the Lord is going to hold you fast.

Trust him. Trust him. Follow him. Stuart Townend wrote a song called There is a Hope. I just want to read this second verse to you before we finish.

He said, there is a hope that lifts my weary head. A consolation strong against despair. That when the world has plunged me in its deepest pit, I find the Savior there.

[39 : 18] So through present sufferings and future's fear, he whispers courage in my ear. For I am safe in everlasting arms.

And they will lead me home. Unprecedented tribulation. Can you bear it? Of course. Why? Because you have a great Savior.

That is showing his restraining grace and his securing grace in your life now and forever. Quickly, the last point. Eternal salvation.

Eternal salvation. Verse 24. But in those days after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened. The moon will not give its light. The stars will be falling from heaven.

The powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming. He will come in the clouds with great power and glory.

[40 : 16] And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. And not one person that belongs to Christ will be left behind.

And everyone from the four winds from across all of the earth and all of the heavens will be gathered to their Savior at the moment of his return. And do you remember the illustration Jesus gave about giving birth?

It was back in verse 8. Just as a woman's contractions grow in intensity and frequency before the final moment of birth, So do all the events in verses 5 through 23 grow in intensity and frequency as we near the return of Christ.

And using this Old Testament imagery, Jesus declared that at the end of time, When all of God's plans have run their course, And all of God's people have been saved, He will return with great power and glory.

As Charles Wesley wrote, Today's the day for hymns, I guess. Low he comes with clouds descending, Once for favored sinners slain, Thousand thousand saints attending, Swell the triumph of his train, Alleluia, God appears on earth to reign.

[41 : 47] This will be the great day of the Lord. Jesus will return for his own, And he will judge the wicked, Who did not repent, Or turn to him in faith.

He will finally destroy Satan, And he will restore the world to its purpose in creation. The snake crusher of Genesis 3.15 Will bring us back to the garden, That is the new heavens and the new earth.

There will sin be no more. There will be no more death. There will be no more disease. There will be no more deception. All the righteous will enter eternal glory.

All the wicked will enter eternal death. Now there's varying opinions about how all of these events will unfold. The bottom line is this.

Jesus is coming back. He's going to redeem his own. And he's going to judge the world. You say, well what am I supposed to do with that?

[42 : 56] The only way for you to be counted righteous, As we discussed in our groups last Sunday, Is by faith in Jesus Christ. It's not that he redeems those who are not wicked.

It's that he redeems those who are not counted wicked. Because they have come to faith in the only righteous one. The son of God, Jesus Christ.

If you'd like to escape the judgment, You can only do it through him. It's a warning for us. It's a call to faith for us.

To turn our hope to our God. James Edwards said, It's equally important to note what this glorious vision of the future does not affirm.

There's no mention of a millennium. No new Jerusalem. No rebuilt temple. No restoration of Israel or the state of Israel.

[43 : 52] No battle of Armageddon. No hints how and when Christ will return. About all these things the text is silent. That is Mark 13. This preview of the future ought not to lure us to calculate when Christ will return, Nor to fear what will happen, But to know that he will come to claim his own.

His coming is his promise, And the gathering of believers to him is our hope. What do we take from this passage?

I hope you take hope. Hope that as this world does descend into chaos, Do not be alarmed. Take heart.

I have overcome this world. Through many tribulations you must enter the kingdom of God. Set your sights on that day that John saw.

That vision of an incalculable amount of people In white robes from every nation and tribe and tongue.

[45 : 01] Standing before the throne of God and the Lamb. Singing out their praise. Those who have come through great tribulation. Who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.

Who is that? That's you. That's me. That's the church. That is all of God's people through all of time. That have been redeemed by his precious son.

Hope is what we get from this.